

Curriculum Adaptation Experience of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State: The Process, Achievements and Challenges

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Abstract: The study was conducted to examine the curriculum adaptation experiences for the primary level education in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) focusing on the practice/ process, achievements and challenges. A case study method was employed with a sample of 17 curriculum workers from the Regional State's Education Bureau, Zonal and Special Woreda Departments and Offices and 2 heads and 3 panel members of the former Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR), 2 directors and 2 experts from Curriculum Development and Implementation Core Process Directorate (CDICPD) of the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE) using snowball, purposive and availability sampling techniques respectively. Interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. The interview results were qualitatively analyzed using narration on themes identified while the document analysis was used to triangulate or supplement the interview results at some points. The analysis showed that the primary school syllabi have been developed and repeatedly revised at the Federal Ministry of Education with limited participation of the SNNPRS' representatives. The students' textbooks' preparation and adaptations to the regional level in the earlier years was seen as a big achievement by region until the preparations and revisions of the syllabi and textbooks for the second cycle were taken by the MoE and written by those who won the bids. The earlier regional level preparation had given the regional state chances to adapt the curriculum to concrete regional conditions and most local needs were met using local contents and learning experiences. However, lack of experience, material resources and absence of trained curriculum staff including resistance from few groups were the challenges encountered.

Keywords: curriculum adaptation, primary school curriculum, decentralization, diversification of contents and learning experiences

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Background of the Study

Curriculum adaptation has been an aspect of the decentralization of the educational system management. As a practice, decentralized education system devolves power and encourages active participation of the people in regions and specific local areas (Crawford, 2004). Decentralization has been taken as a workable mechanism to improve students' learning achievements, increase efficiency and local accountability that lead to higher quality. Decentralization contributes to quality service delivery and resource utilization. The devolution of power in education demands political support from the national leaders and local elites, adequate planning, management and local empowerment (Khan and Mirza, 2011). Decentralization of education service delivery promotes local participation in education and it could be functional or territorial. Functional decentralization is when the Ministry of Education gives some of its functions to parallel bodies, while the territorial decentralization refers to downward distribution of control among the geographic tiers of government such as the nation, states, districts and schools (Izajda, 2006). The delegation form of decentralization implies stronger degree of decision-making power at a local level. Power in a delegated system still basically rests with the controlling authority, which has chosen to lend them to the local one. However, of all forms, the devolution form is the most extreme one where power is formally held at lower levels and the officers of which do not need to seek higher level approval for their actions (Izajda, 2006; Crawford 2002).

The decentralization of the education service depends on purposes. For instance, the reasons for decentralization of education service in developing countries are grouped under two broad categories: economic and political. The political purpose focuses on increasing democratic participation, equity and stability. The economic rationale is that decentralization is necessary to accelerate the pace and spread of the benefits of growth, to integrate diverse regions in heterogeneous countries and use scarce resources more efficiently (Crawford, 2002).

Decentralization brings governments closer to the people allowing poorer groups to get a bigger share of government services and the beneficiaries involve actively in planning and decision making at the local level. A research carried out on education in Tanzania showed that *the national political goal to provide the same education for all has suppressed the need to adjust primary education to significant local conditions* (Winkler, 2005).

Thus, the devolution of power and authority to local level institutions and establishing appropriate state structures have become the common features and practices of this time. Tanwenwald (1998) elaborates that the objective of devolution of power to states is that the devolution makes better alignment of the costs and benefits of government for a diverse citizenry; better fitness between public goods and their special characteristics; increased competition, experimentation, and innovation in the public sector; greater responsiveness to citizens' preferences; and more transparent and accountability in policy making.

Tegegne and Kassahun, (2007) also state on the purpose of fiscal decentralization, an aspect of decentralization in relation to education associating it with four objectives: democratization, regional and/ or ethnic pressures, improved efficiency and enhanced quality of schooling. They further discuss that the attempt to decentralize power in Ethiopia has been the result of pressures from regionally based ethnic and language groups to develop their own curriculum, teach in their own languages, and manage their own schools; better matches between services provided and the preferences of citizens; increased outcome relative to resources or expenditures (Tegegne and Kassahun, 2007). Thus, in the Ethiopian context, decentralization of the education system management and the localization of the curriculum are thought to serve as a remedy to address problems of poverty, gender inequality, environmental concerns, and the improvement of healthcare, education and access to technology. Community participation and boosting grass root developments play

key roles in the sustainability of programs and quality of life improvement. It brings stakeholders together to define properties for projects and programs, increased interest and sense of ownership, which in turn promotes sustainability.

Practices show that decentralization is primarily a political process. It will not be successful unless adequate provision is made to finance the developed decentralized responsibilities (Work, 2002). In this regard, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has taken the fiscal decentralization measure by devolving the financial issues to the Woreda level (Kumera, 2007). This in turn provides opportunities to do tasks at local level and address both the felt and anticipated needs and interests of the regions and their entities. Experiences of many countries show that decentralization in education is designed to increase the voice of the local citizens and to empower them more and fully participate in decision making at the local level (Marsh, 2009).

When it comes to curriculum planning or adaptation of the already developed documents, the regional states can have many and diversified contents and learning experiences and make the curriculum as varied as the different groups residing in the regional states. Marsh (2009) writes that specific local interests and the prevailing diversity can be accommodated while retaining the general objectives of education of a country kept as a frame of reference. Obviously, the current Ethiopian Education and Training Policy allows the provision of relevant, practical and appropriate education through a curriculum that reflects the immediate environment at the regional, or lower level as long as the curriculum does not ignore the federal curriculum framework. Local resources can be used as a means to achieve the preset purposes.

Along with this, the students' profiles to be achieved at the end of the primary levels (first cycle, grades 1-4 and second cycles, grades 5-8) were set at the federal/central level. They can be achieved through different subject matter contents and learning experiences/activities,

which can be derived from the student's local environment. Therefore, adapting the curriculum to local areas is possible and provides opportunities to incorporate contents and learning experience that are considered useful at regional and local levels. Hence, regional states and local governments can make use of diversified contents and learning experiences as long as they help them meet their regional interest and maintain the national educational aims and goals. This shows that there would be no threat to national integrity for what people have chosen to learn and what they consider as important for themselves and satisfies their local demands. They can make use of different subject matter contents and learning experiences of their own (Marsh, 2009). Therefore, such a practice has become a means to provide opportunities for each group to develop its culture, language, history, common psychology, environment, etc., which definitely help the regions and localities benefit from and contribute their share to the overall development of the country. Adapting centrally planned curriculum documents to local areas cultivates a sense of confidence and belongingness, and a feeling that they are equally important as all other fellow citizens and social groups in the development effort of their country.

The roles of the Ministry of Education and the regional governments with regard to curriculum preparation are defined as follows:

The Ministry of Education assists regions in curriculum preparation for first and second cycles of primary education. The regional states prepare and implement the primary school curriculum. Zonal Education Departments supervise the implementation of the curriculum. The Woreda education offices inspect the implementation of curriculum at school level and recommend improvement. It makes available adequate quality and quantity of materials. It ensures the provision of textbooks and educational materials and facilitates the distribution of textbooks and educational materials on time (UNESCO, 2006/07).

As can be seen from the roles set by the government, the federal and regional bodies have discrete roles to play so as to achieve the desired changes in the learner and the society at large. Specifically, the Education and Training Policy elaborates the procedures as to how the curriculum planning processes will be done and the attention that would be given. In other words,

The preparation of curriculum will be based on the stated objectives of education ensuring that the relevant standard and expected profiles of students are achieved; ensure that the curriculum developed and textbooks prepared at central and regional levels are based on sound pedagogical and psychological principles and up to international standards and giving due attention to concrete local conditions and gender issues (TGE, 1994a).

Though the policy clearly states the procedures to be followed, there is limited information on the curriculum planning practices, the adaptation process and the achievements scored including the attempts made to make the primary school curriculum relevant to local demands in the regions including the SNNPRS. Of the few researches conducted on the SNNPRS' curriculum planning process and its relevance to the people, Wondimagegnehu (2014) studied primary schools' curriculum relevance to the children of the pastoralists in the SNNPRS, focusing on the Hammer people and found out that the curriculum was less relevant to the local conditions. The participation of the people was very low.

As per the Education and Training Policy, the different social groups have the right to decide and use the language they want to use in the primary school grades (TGE, 1994a). The regional state being the home of 56 Nations, Nationalities and Peoples with diverse cultures and economic activities, languages, and religion had opportunities to develop primary school curriculum, which could be relevant to the people and could address local needs. Though there have been

encouraging policy provisions and diversities to decentralize the practice and utilize local experiences and resources to realize common goals, what was done was limited and there was no sufficient information on the curriculum planning activities for the primary level at the regional state in general and the curriculum adaption process in particular, especially in the syllabi and textbooks preparation. It is with such an understanding that this study was conducted to address the problems and challenges constraining the proper undertaking of this timely task.

Statement of the Problem

Decentralized service delivery in education in general and adapting primary school curriculum in particular help in making the curriculum more relevant and responsive to local needs and the learner than in the centralized and centrally fixed curriculum. The latter practice makes the service highly rigid and advocates uniformity, which is against the demands of the post modern societies of our time that favors diversification, or plural provisions for multicultural, and multiethnic societies that requires the accommodation of differences. It provides opportunities to exercise the rights of the individual and helps meet demands of the different social groups. It creates conditions that make the schools use local resources and cultures to the benefit of the learner and the society at large (Marsh, 2009).

A decentralized education service and an adapted curriculum make the education to serve its personal and social purposes. It also enhances the level of participation of every individual in all sectors and makes significant contributions to the individual's personal growth and advancements to the economic, social, political, cultural and environmental developments at all levels and aspects (Davies, 1976; Marsh, 2009).

In Ethiopia, until the early 1940s, the curriculum was imported and implemented in all primary schools (Ayalew, 1964). Even after the planning of Ethiopian primary school curriculum began at home with the support of foreign experts and donors at different periods, the curriculum was evaluated as poor, too theoretical and failed to reflect the concrete conditions of the country and had problems of relevance (TGE, 1994a; Edessa, 1994). After the change in government in the early 1990s, a new Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994a) was launched and the policy statements showed that accommodation of diversity and provision of quality education services as a right for all. This opened opportunities for diversification of the school curriculum, instructional activities, assessment and use of instructional technology, which is appropriate to the learner, local conditions and approaches. These encouraged different social groups to begin to participate (MoE, 2002).

Amdemichael, (2003), conducted a research on the participation of teachers in curriculum development for the primary schools' Teacher Training Program and reported that the participation was so limited. A comparative study was conducted by Abdullahi (2008), on the level of decentralization of the administration of the education in SNNPRS and the Ethiopian Somali Regional State but had no touch on the curriculum planning issues. Thus, none of these studies has any issues of the curriculum planning, adaptation process, its achievements and the challenges encountered.

The SNNPRS, as one of the regional states, is expected to prepare its new primary school curriculum or adapt the Federal syllabi to local realities; however, it has been limited to few activities. There have been no reports as to how the regional government has been adapting the primary school curriculum and making it relevant, responsive, and accommodate the differences by using socially accepted cultural values of the people as sources of the curriculum contents and learning experiences. Thus, the knowledge gap about the adaptation process and the practice, the achievements made and the challenges faced in

the curriculum planning would call for a standard research to be conducted. In other words, the purpose of this study was to examine as to how the curriculum adaptation processes have been made, the achievements scored and the challenges encountered.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to examine the practice how the primary school curriculum adaptation processes were made, the achievements scored and challenges encountered within the curriculum decentralization framework in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). Hence, the specific objectives of this study were to

- Investigate the conduct of the curriculum adaptation processes for the primary schools in the regional state;
- Identify the achievements secured at a regional state level in terms of experiences and curricular documents; and
- Identify the challenges encountered by the regional state in materializing the expected roles with regard to the primary school curriculum planning process.

Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the following research questions are framed in the study as guides:

1. How have the curriculum adaptation processes been made for the primary schools in the regional state?
2. What achievements have been made at the regional state level in terms of experiences and curricular documents?
3. What were the challenges encountered by the regional state in materializing the expected roles with regard to the adapting of the country's primary school curriculum planning process?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would help the public of the regional state and other concerned bodies get research-based information on how the primary school curriculum has been planned at the Federal level and made fit to the regional level within the decentralized education system provisions. It also helps the policy makers to examine the policy provisions and make decisions on the corrective actions to improve the curriculum adaptation process so as to meet the interests of diverse groups of the region and the country. It further provides information to the Federal Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureau and its lower bodies, program sponsors, donors, partners, parents and students on the possible ways of diversification and the importance of the curriculum adaptation for the primary school. Finally, the result serves as source of information for the research community and institutions by adding relevant information on the nature, scope, practice, benefits, and opportunities on curriculum adaptation.

Operational Definitions of Terms

The following terms and phrases are used in the study with the following meanings.

Contents: the elements of a subject matter such as facts, main ideas, concepts, principles, laws and theories, procedures, techniques, etc.

Cultural values: values, both material and spiritual acquired/learned from past generations in all areas of life and still functioning;

Curriculum Adaptation: adjustments or localizations made on the curriculum contents and activities to fit to the specific group of learners and local conditions;

Curriculum objectives: the statements that indicate the expected learning outcomes or end results in terms of programs set and students' behavior.

Curriculum planning: is the translation of the educational aims/general objectives into curriculum documents such as outlining the syllabi, writing the text books, teacher's guide and other instructional materials

Learning experiences: the opportunities that the curriculum offers to the learner to act or react to and acquire the desired changes in behavior. It includes the different activities and methods of teaching suggested to be used.

In conducting the study, the researcher consulted relevant literature and documents on curriculum adaptation, or localizing primary school curriculum, which are shown below in a concise conceptual framework. Normally, the central bodies prepare the curriculum framework and interested local bodies and schools modify the curriculum to fit to their reality. It was partially practiced elsewhere in Ethiopia as it was practiced in the SNNPR.

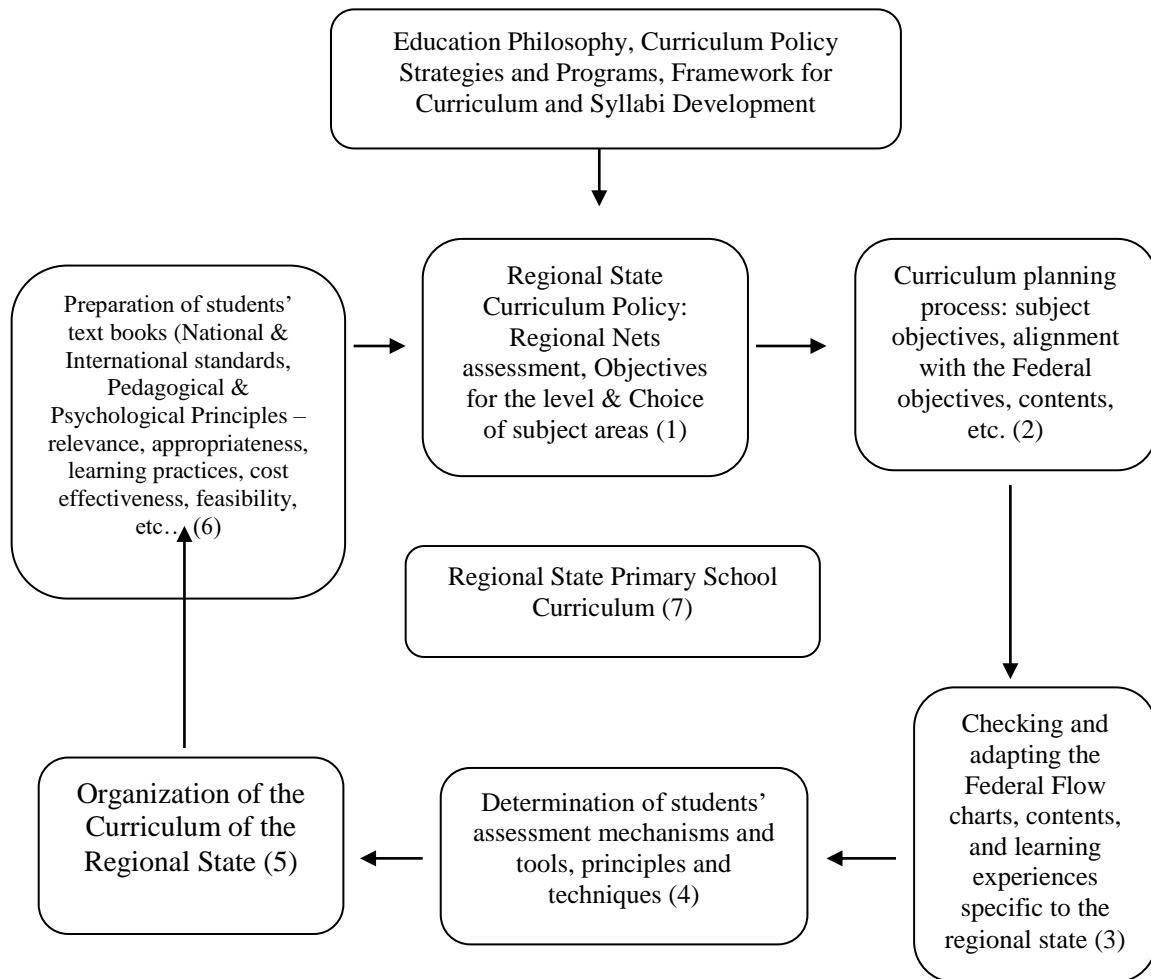


Figure 1: Curriculum Adaptation Model (Source: Adapted from Lemma Setegn, 2015)

Research Design and Method

A case study research design and method of research was used. A case study method was taken as an appropriate method to examine how the curriculum adaptation process is made and identify the achievements secured as well as the challenges encountered in the SNNPRS by taking the policy provisions and the division of roles ascribed to the Federal Ministry of Education and the Regional State (UNESCO, 2006/07). The method was selected for it provides opportunities for in-depth investigations (Creswell, 2012).

Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to collect data. The primary sources of data were the Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Process Main Performers (CEMSCPMP) and Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Process Subject Performers (CEMSCPSP) both from the regional and zonal and special Woreda levels; Commissioned Students' Textbook and Teachers' Guide Writers; Content and Language Editors under the SNNPRS Regional Education Bureau, Textbook Translators and Adapters at Zonal Departments and Special Woreda Education office as the primary sources. In addition to this, the Heads, Academic Subjects' Curriculum Planning Team Coordinator and Panel Members of the former Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) and the Federal Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development and Implementation Core Process Directorate (CDICPD) Director and former Director and two members of the Directorate were used as primary sources.

Secondary sources of data were research reports, curriculum planning guidelines, and other accessible documents from the Federal Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureau, sample Zones and Special Woredas, the Syllabi, Students' text books, Teachers' guides, Education Statistical Abstract, Annual Education Reports and

International Education Conference Proceedings on Ethiopian Education.

Samples and Sampling Procedures

At the Regional State Education Bureau, the Acting Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Process Main Performer (CEMSCPMP) and two Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Subject Performers (CEMSCPSP) and six Zonal and one Special Woreda level Curriculum workers were selected using purposive sampling technique. Five students' textbooks and teachers' guide writers and two content and language editors were selected using snowball sampling technique for they were scattered in the different educational institutions in the capital city of the region and outside of it.

The six Zones and a Special Woreda were selected using stratified sampling technique. The stratification was made by listing down Zones and Special Woredas separately and decision was made on the required number of sample Zones and a Special Woreda. Then, they were selected using simple random sampling technique by a lottery method. Thus, out of the 14 zones and four Special Woredas, Sidama, Wolaita, Gurage, Gamo Goffa, Keffa, and Dawro Zones and Konta Special Woreda were selected for the study. The syllabi for Environmental Studies and later Natural Science Subjects (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) and Social Studies (Geography and History) were selected purposively. These were selected for the subjects were considered as fields that better serve for the adaptation of contents and activities at regional and lower levels and help students get to know about their immediate environment (Dereje, 2010).

Instruments of Data Collection

The data were collected using interviews and content analyses using the sample respondents and documents respectively. Each of them was developed and used for the values it rendered.

Interview

Interview was the main data collection instrument and was used to collect qualitative data through the face-to-face contact with the interviewees. By its nature interview provides opportunities to conduct an in-depth investigation and helps extend further questions on the basis of responses of the respondent (Creswell, 2012; Berg, 2009). Best and Kahn (2003) also write that interview is an instrument that gives a chance to the interviewee to explain more explicitly what he/she knows and feels on the issue. Therefore, semi-structured interview items were constructed and used to collect data from the interviewees at the Regional State Education Bureau, Zones Education Departments and a Special Woreda Education Office as well as at Federal Ministry of Education. All the interview items were prepared in English as all the interviewees were graduates and who taught at least in the secondary schools or colleges.

Procedures of Data Collection

Interviews were made with the Regional Education Bureau Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Main Performer and Performers, and Subject Performers, Commissioned Textbook Writers, Content and Language Editors at the Regional Education Bureau level, Zonal and Special Woreda Education Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Performers and Subject Performers of sample Zones and Special Woreda Education office, student textbooks and teacher guides' writers, and content and language editors. All interviews were made at their working places with the maximum safety.

The interviews with the former ICDR heads, coordinator, and panel members were done first for they had information on the earlier practices. This was followed by the interview with the former director and the director of the Curriculum Development and Implementation Core Process Directorate and experts. This was done after the regional level respondents were interviewed for the purpose of getting solid

information on the adaptation made at the regional state. It was done so as to get detailed information about the recent curriculum revision, textbook preparations and the implementation of the General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) (GoE, 2008), which brought the takeover of the regional tasks to the center and check what happened to division of roles between the Federal Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureau in the implementation of the Education Sector Development Strategies (ESDPs) that have had proposals on the curriculum planning and revisions (MOE, 2002).

The copies of the interview items were given to the interviewees to read and follow the sequence of the interview as they were interviewed. After the interview, the notes taken from most of the interviewees were organized and given to the interviewees to check whether the recorded responses were correct and verify them for their correct recordings. This was done to minimize or avoid any misunderstanding and/or misquotation of ideas on the issue at hand.

The data collections at all levels by the researcher were done after getting permission from the appropriate authority of the department and the consent of the selected respondents. Every respondent was informed about the purpose of the study and the level of confidentiality of the data. The researcher informed all the interviewees to withdraw from participation in the study at anytime when they felt that it was not convenient to continue.

Methods of Data Analysis

A qualitative data analysis approach was employed in the analyses of the data collected. The interview results for each interviewee were coded using open coding of the raw data and later grouped using axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) according to the significance they had to the research objectives and questions. The categorized responses were written in a data sheet and the initial analyses of the interview results were done soon after the interviews were made in the

field. After the interview results were organized, refined and they were further analyzed using narrative analysis to describe the curriculum adaptation process, the achievements made and the challenges encountered in the curriculum adaptation to the locality.

The data collected at the Federal Ministry of Education from two ICDR Heads, the Academic Subjects' Curriculum Planning Team Coordinator and two panel members of the former ICDR, and the former and actively working directors of the Curriculum Development and Implementation Core Process Directorate (CDICPD) and two other members of the directorate were presented and analyzed after the analysis and interpretations were made on data collected from the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' National Regional State as supplements.

Analysis on the Curriculum Adaptation Process and Achievements

At the federal level, the curriculum was made open and flexible to further adaptation to the regional level and beyond. Regarding this, one of the interviewees, who worked as the Academic Subjects' Curriculum Planning Team Coordinator of the former ICDR, with long years of participation in the curriculum planning process before and after the change of government in 1991 and the launching of the Education and Training Policy said that:

The purpose of the curriculum adaptation process was to provide opportunities for the local community to have curriculum that is relevant to the learner and to make it practical. This desired end result was achieved to some extent. Public involvement at local level has increased. They began to produce their educational materials at regional, zonal and special Woreda levels. Such a practice didn't exist before. There have been attempts to make the curriculum more relevant and responsive to the localities. I feel that theory and practice are united in the different subjects and made people to be convinced that the education of their

children is useful to life. In the earlier curricula, theory was emphasized and it was alien to the social and economic practices of the regional or local people. But in this curriculum, the planners were guided to make it more practical and we tried to relate it to life. It was open and flexible to modification and all were informed at the curriculum validation workshops that the syllabi were not fixed once and for all, but subject to adaptation based on the concrete conditions of the region (Informant J)

As can be seen from the above information, the primary school curriculum was planned with a view to make it relevant and responsive. It shows that attempts were made to combine both theory and practice and it seems that the groups involved in the drafting of the curriculum and the validation workshops made efforts to reduce the shortcomings of the earlier primary school curricula. Thus, from the response, it is possible to understand that there were considerations made to make the primary school curriculum relevant, practical and responsive. In addition to this, it was made open and flexible to adapt it to the regional or local conditions as the region feels that it is important to consider and incorporate those contents and learning experiences into the drafted and validated syllabi.

According to another informant from the Region's Education Bureau, Informant (A), the federal syllabi provided the opportunities to the regional states including the SNNPRS to modify federally planned subject syllabi and in writing students' textbooks. The SNNPRS' practice shows that the curriculum adaptation was further made in translating some of the textbooks into the mother tongues at Zonal and Special Woreda levels. He further noted that the syllabi were not modified, but the adaptation was made while writing the students' textbooks and translating them into the mother tongues in the lower levels. According to the informant, the practice made the regional state and its lower bodies to use their local experiences, which have been closer and familiar to the learner. The federal-level subject experts drafted subject syllabi for the different subjects and validated with the region's

participation. This allowed the regional level bodies to unite theory with practice through the suggested activities when writing the student's textbooks.

In addition to the responses of the interviewees, the content analysis on the syllabi showed that there were no changes made on any of the Federal syllabi. The Regional State Education Bureau simply translated the syllabi into Amharic and then into the mother tongues of those Zones and Special Woredas that began to use their mother tongues as media of instruction. Then, it was after that the textbooks were prepared for the primary schools in the region. It was at this point that the contents and the learning experiences (activities aspect) of the first cycle subjects were adapted to the local conditions. Accordingly, the practical activities, group projects, exercises and review questions demanded the learner to do more with local issues in the first cycle grades (1-4). They provided the students with chances to learn from what they could easily sense. The illustrations were made with locally observable things. The activities and projects demanded the use of local equipment or materials for practical activities. This was done for all primary grade subjects (grades 1-8) except for English and Amharic as second languages in the regional state. Recently, the textbook preparations for the second cycles shifted to the Federal Ministry of Education and the Ministry began to prepare the textbooks using commissioned textbook writers with limited participation of the Regional Education Bureau on pedagogical and administrative matters.

One of the former ICDR heads has enumerated the following as the major achievements of the decentralization of the education service and the curriculum adaptation practice for the primary level education in the region and the benefits to the Federal Ministry of Education.

The practice of the decentralized education system and the curriculum planning made it easy to incorporate local issues that are related to their local reality. I feel that this has made it possible to make content arrangements and activities flexible and to diversify the contents and activities to be pedagogically sound and provide space to widen the scope of the curriculum. It made it possible to make it more relevant and responsive though the task was significantly limited to textbooks' preparation at the initial period. Besides this, the regional level curriculum planning for the primary schools reduced the burden of the MoE to some extent and made it to offer the support on areas, which they have serious problems (Informant B).

As can be learned from the views of informant (B), the provision of the role of planning the curriculum to the regional state level was planned to make the primary school curriculum focus on immediate environment and to make the Federal Ministry of Education to get relief by reducing its load and get time to other important tasks. Addressing local needs with centralized curriculum was a very difficult task as it was learned from all earlier curricula of the country - not only in addressing the local needs, but also in making use of local resources and relating it to the local conditions. As it began from what the learners could observe and do in their immediate environment, it was made to be pedagogically sound. It seems clear that it was taken as the first step and a practical mechanism to widen the scope of the curriculum using the syllabi developed at the center.

The other former head of the ICDR, who had active involvement in the early years of the curriculum change, says the following about the achievements of the curriculum adaptation.

The adaptation of the primary school curriculum was seen as one of the great achievements of the reform to the people in the region. They became the decision makers on the education of their children. This goes with what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was advocated for decades. It was our country that was late. At present, the regional state developed some of its educational materials (textbooks) by its people using the mother tongues. They included what they felt important in the students' textbooks. Students go outside of the classrooms and collect data from their immediate surroundings, which made it practical as opposed to the former curriculum (Informant T).

As can be learned from the above information, the achievements of the adaptation process of the primary school curriculum are diverse in nature. It is seen as a means to materialize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by making use of the mother tongues as media of instruction. The practice helped the regional state to make use of local experiences and other resources to the instructional process. In addition to this, it made students to go outside of the classrooms and collect data from their immediate surroundings. This made the curriculum more practice-oriented than it used to be. The former ICDR panel member and the other curriculum worker who have been working in CDICPD have repeated the view saying that the new practice helped the regional state to plan the primary school curriculum, though it was limited to textbooks' preparations in few subject areas until recent time. It also helped the regional state to produce textbook writers in different mother tongues, who eventually involved in the development of their own mother tongue syllabi and other materials (Informants G and O) respectively.

The interviewees in the SNNPRS Education Bureau, Zonal and Special Woreda have similar views. One of the informants, who wrote students' textbooks, developed Radio Program Script for Alternative Adult Education Program and worked a lot with the Regional Education

Bureau for a long time, responded to the question on achievements as follows:

The preparation of the textbooks on federally planned and further modified or rearranged syllabi at the regional state level for the primary schools has been encouraging. Furthermore, the possibilities to translate them into the mother tongues in zones and a special Woreda have positive impact on community's psychological makeup. They began to develop a sense of confidence for their cultural values/ experiences were included into the school textbooks. The practical activities and projects on the subjects brought the education service closer to the people and made them to own it (Informant D).

As can be seen from the above information, the interviewee who involved in the preparation of the students' textbooks and teachers' guides on the basis of the syllabi felt that the syllabi were 'modified and finalized' by the Regional Education Bureau. Zonal and Special Woreda level textbook writers translate the Amharic version of the textbooks prepared at the regional state level for the primary schools into the mother tongues. Those Zones and Special Woreda that began to use their mother tongue in teaching the subjects made the nations, nationalities and peoples of the region to feel that their cultural practices are worthy of teaching. The involvement of the community at home and in their institutions has increased. The community and the institutions responded to the different questions students pose for their practical activities, activities and project works suggested in the different textbooks. Theoretically, it is common to read different tasks that make students go out of schools and ask them questions. These made the community and the institutions to begin thinking and sensing that the school programs are their own. They come close to the school activities. One of the informants, who was actively involved in writing students' textbooks for the second cycle primary grades in the earlier times, said the following on what is achieved in this regard.

The textbook preparation on the syllabi that were provided from the Federal MoE and Regional Education Bureau made it possible to include the cultural experiences of the society. More than that the region began preparing the mother tongue languages' syllabi and the learning materials for all grades (1-12) and began working with the Teacher Education Colleges. The Teacher Education Colleges have opened mother tongue language departments and begun producing the mother tongue teachers, who would solve shortages in the mother tongue language teachers. Such programs also began in some of the University faculties found within the region (Informant T).

From the above data, one can understand that the preparation of the local curriculum materials for the primary grades has encouraged the Region and Zones to work on language studies and have been working on some of the languages for better positions. For instance, Dawro and Gamo, two zones in the region have prepared a Monolingual Dictionary in their respective languages (*Informant T*). In addition to this, the Zonal Education Departments have begun working closely with other sector offices to get information that could be used as inputs to the curriculum planning process, especially in writing textbooks. Someone who has been coordinating the curriculum issues on one of the subjects for the schools in the Regional Education Bureau said that:

The subject I am coordinating is related to an area where there are variations from culture to culture. As a coordinator, the bureau guides and supports the zones to conduct research and include all those cultural values accepted into the textbooks that would help the culture to be passed and preserved from generation to generation (Informant H).

It is possible to understand from the information forwarded above that the adaptation of the curriculum contents and activities in the textbooks' preparation have helped the region and its lower bodies to include what they considered as relevant to the learner and to the

community. The summary of the responses of the informants indicate that the cultural values that are socially approved and worthy of preserving and help in advancing what the communities of the region have been taken as textbook inputs. The interview results made with the former ICDR heads, academic subjects' curriculum planning team coordinator, the panel members and the directors as well as those experts who have been actively working at the CDICPD indicate that the adaptation has empowered the region to some extent and helped it in the advancement and preservation of the indigenous knowledge, skills, values and life practices (*Informants J, T, & M*).

The results of the interviews made at the Federal Ministry of Education and the Regional State's Education Bureau, especially with those who involved in the planning of the syllabi and preparation of textbooks as means of the curriculum adaptation process showed that the process has reduced the burden of the central body. They are relieved from the planning of every curricular materials and textbook preparation for all before the reform. They were not able to satisfy any of the regions at all times. However, the new practice made the Federal Ministry of Education to focus on setting standards, formulating new programs and giving attention to the secondary and tertiary level education (*Informant W*).

In general, it is reported that the adaptation practice has empowered the regional state to decide on what it felt important to the region's students, made the region to use its local resources and make all stakeholders to be active participants in the education of the youth, provided opportunities to learn more about adaptation of a curriculum while maintaining country-wide objectives, and it developed the knowledge and skills of those who frequently participated in the preparation of the textbooks. It also helped those few who frequently involved in the syllabi development for the mother tongues of the region to unite theory with practice using local community resources – institutions and fields. It made learning a possible means to maintain

unity in diversity without affecting other people, to involve the community and parents in helping the children at home, or in the family, provided opportunities to exercise those different contents and activities that lead to the attainment of regional and national goals in a balanced manner, provided job opportunity for those who speak the languages to be employed for instruction as teachers, textbook writers, etc; and facilitated learning in schools, which in turn reduced the number of drop outs and failures, made it possible to get involved into locally available fields of work as they had gotten lessons on that and laid the foundation for further learning in the next higher levels - secondary and tertiary level education institutions.

Even though, there were such high-level achievements in the preparation of the textbooks, there were no modifications on the syllabi. The subject syllabi were taken as they were. The regional state used them as they were developed to prepare the student textbooks making use of the regional/ local economic social, political, environmental, historical, cultural, etc conditions sources of information, mainly for the first cycle primary grades (Grades 1-4). The second cycle (Grades 5-8) textbooks were prepared by the Federal Ministry of Education focusing mainly on the subject matter contents and country-wide issues.

Challenges Encountered at the Regional State Level

The challenges encountered at the regional level were that there were no appropriate organizational structures and staffing policy that would make it possible to place more curriculum professionals at the regional level or the lower bodies of the sector. One finds a single subject curriculum performer for each school taught subjects working for grades 1-12, including the Teacher Training Colleges at the Regional Education Bureau. It was more difficult when one goes down to the Zones and Special Woredas. There have been problems of getting trained and experienced curriculum professionals to make the curriculum adaptation. Those people who were accountable to the curriculum issue were engaged in administrative and clerical activities (*Informant A*).

In addition to this, the recent takeover of the role of preparing the students' textbooks for the second cycle of the primary schools of the region and the revision of the syllabi and other materials to the Federal Ministry of Education developed the attitude of dependency (*Informant, H*). Insufficient materials and financial resources, shortage of essential data to prepare the textbooks on concrete conditions of the region and the absence of the will from some teachers to involve in the preparation of the textbooks using the mother tongue languages have been the other major challenges at the regional level.

The region was composed of highly diversified groups and addressing the needs of each of them in a short period of time was the other serious challenge. It was common that there were strong demands from a large number of communities to provide the primary school education in their mother tongues. It was difficult to do it in a short time for there were shortages of budget, trained teachers and curriculum planners in all those proposed languages. As an outlet, there was an attempt to prepare common textbooks for the people of Wolayita, Gamo, Goffa, Dawro and Konta in a language that combined the languages of the first four groups, which was abbreviated as WOGAGODA taking the first two letters of the groups. It created a serious problem in the region. The attempt could not solve the problem for each group wanted to prepare its own school materials using its language. The solution to the problem was to let each group prepare its own textbooks for its Zone and Special Woreda (*Informants T and K*). Thus, the presence of large number of ethnic and language groups made it difficult to prepare the syllabi and write textbooks to each of the groups in the regional state to date.

The other challenge to adapt the primary school curriculum was the resistance by some groups in a zone. One of the reasons indicated was the idea that if the curriculum is very much localized and the medium of instruction is the mother tongue, it will be a barrier and harmful to the mobility of the children and the family to any other places at any time (*informant Z*). The internal variations of the language made

the Zone to prefer to use Amharic as medium of instruction and the textbooks prepared at the regional level in Amharic for the first cycle and English for the second cycle including the syllabi as they were prepared.

Of course, the challenges were not limited only to the regional level, but also to the Federal Ministry of Education too. According to some of the interview respondents, lack of experiences on how to set standards, formulate flexible curriculum templates and leaving those specific tasks to the regional state were the challenges encountered both at regional state and at the Federal level.

Major Findings

The analysis made on the data showed that:

- The primary school curriculum syllabi have been prepared at the Federal Ministry of Education and the regional state's participants were invited for validation workshops and awareness creation on the documents. It was learned from the interview that the Regional, Zonal and Special Woreda level Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Performers and Subject Performers were school teachers with little or no formal training either in curriculum planning, or curriculum adaptation at the planning stage. The textbook writers and editors also confirmed that they had no training or sufficient experiences either in writing student's textbooks and/or editing the textbooks written by others.
- The adaptation of the primary school curriculum in the regional state was done through the textbook preparation. Remarkable lessons have been learned in setting practical activities, group projects, exercises and end of unit exercises to adapt the curriculum and make students to go outside of the classrooms and to learn through what they do. It was one of the areas of achievements.

- The regional state was writing the first cycle primary school textbooks and teachers' guides that were assigned to it on the basis of the syllabi approved at the Federal level. It was found out that the preparations of the textbooks for the first cycle grades' (grades 1-4) subjects were done on the basis of information collected from the region's social, economic, political, cultural, historical, environmental, etc. conditions. In addition, further adaptations were recommended to be done while the textbooks were translated into the mother tongue languages in the Zones and Special Woredas as well as at a classroom level by teachers while teaching.
- Getting trained and experienced curriculum planners was a challenge to the regional state for the practice was a new task to the region as it was to the country too. Those teachers who had long years of teaching experience were invited to write textbooks. At the early years, they had no experience or training in either the adaptation of the syllabi or textbook preparations.
- The presence of national learning assessments on students' achievements were set based on the Federal Syllabi and Minimum Learning Competence (MLC) set at the Federal level to check the students' achievements. Therefore, to satisfy such requirements and compete with others, the regional state had to comply with the subjects' syllabi.
- There was a common understanding among the education officials at different levels in the region that the diversification of school curriculum benefitted the learner and the local community. There was a strong feeling among the participants that the diversification would not be a threat to national integrity as it used to be thought in the past. However, lack of experience, shortage of educational resources, materials and some kind of resistance from few teachers were some of the challenges identified in planning the primary school curriculum in SNNPRS.

- The high level of diversity of the people in the region and its inability to prepare well-adapted or localized curriculum and provide primary education for all and make the lessons in the mother tongue languages in a short time, lack of trained human resource in adapting the primary school curriculum to concrete conditions of each locality, especially for the second cycle grades were the serious challenges the regional state encountered and was forced to rely on the help of the Federal Ministry of Education.

Conclusions

The curriculum adaptation practice for the primary level education was assigned to the Regional Education Bureau and the process also focused only on the preparation of students' textbooks and teachers' guides using commissioned textbook writers and editors. The facilitation of the translation of the documents (syllabi, textbooks and teachers' guides) into the mother tongue languages with further adaptation of each to local conditions. This was accomplished through contextualization of the contents and activities such as names of places, rivers, historical events, and major values of the zones and special woredas as facts.

The recent takeover of almost all the curricular tasks by the Federal Ministry of Education for the sake of satisfying the requirements of the GEQIP plan of action undermined the constitutional rights of the people in the region and made them develop a sense of dependency. The earlier attempt to use the information on socio-economic, cultural, historical, political activities and environmental conditions of the region in the preparation of the textbooks for the first cycle and the use of the mother tongue languages as media of instruction were considered as major achievements.

However, absence of trained human resource and lack of experience in preparing its primary school syllabi made the regional state to leave its tasks to the Federal Ministry of Education. The inability of the region to provide primary education at all primary grades with the mother tongue languages of the region forced the region to use English language as medium of instruction for the second cycle primary schools, which might have helped the region to reduce the cost of material production and human resource training demands in mother tongue languages.

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