

## **Civic and Ethical Education and History Textbooks' Portrayal of Group Identity and Students' Perspectives on their Contributions in Shaping Identity**

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**Abstract:** This study examines how social studies textbooks present group identities (ethnic and Ethiopian identity) and students' views on the contribution of textbooks in shaping their identity. Data were collected using document analysis and interview. Interview was conducted with purposefully selected ethnically diverse university students at Bahir Dar University. The contents of history and civic and ethical education textbooks were analyzed page by page. Students' interview results showed that textbooks reinforced a strong sense of ethnic identity. Students also acknowledged the contribution of civic and ethical education in respecting other ethnic groups and accommodating differences. Its contribution in inculcating Ethiopian identity was not distinctly mentioned by the students. History was presented mainly in the form of narration of facts in a monolithic manner, by excluding controversies in Ethiopian history, which students stated to have limited the lessons to be learnt from it. Ethiopian identity was presented in the form of flag, anthem, respecting diversity, tolerance, commitment to serve the country, and loving the nations and nationalities. Students emphasized recent leaders and renowned people as their heroes and heroines. Implications for policy makers and the development of a sustainable Ethiopian multinational state are drawn.

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## **Context and Theoretical Basis of the Study**

### **Context of the Study**

Since the establishment of the federal system in 1995 in Ethiopia, ethnic identity has become a major way of identifying oneself and has been a factor in various restructuring interventions in Ethiopia. It has become a vital criterion in the assignment of higher governmental positions such as ministers and ambassadors. Political parties based on ethnicity have grown rapidly and ethnic bounded associations have been gaining momentum. This political change has been exhibited in educational institutions as well, with regional anthems and flags becoming everyday features in many schools, regional colleges, and universities.

In addition to these changes, group identity in Ethiopia also seems to have taken a new form: citizens officially identify themselves based on ethnic and/or Ethiopian identity. This is not, however, to say that identification based on ethnicity is a result of an overnight political change. Indeed, uprisings for the rights of nations and nationalities in the form of student movements and guerrilla fighting have been going on since the 1940s (Alemsegid, 2004). However, until quite recently, identification based on identity has been subtly ensconced in Ethiopian society without receiving official recognition.

Conceptualizing identity as national and ethnic identity has been one of the most debated subjects in social science discourse. This is true partly because concepts like nation, nationalism, ethnic groups and ethnicity are fluid, complex and ambiguous. Moreover, given the contested past in Ethiopian history, there is no consensus among different groups on the history of the country. A lack of shared understanding on the country's past history, coupled with the absence of historical objectivism, if indeed this exists, has further complicated the issue of group identity in Ethiopia.

The way in which people identify themselves with different categorizations or groups is very important in multicultural countries. Because of the various domains into which a person can be categorized, people have multiple identities in such countries. While the development of identity by itself is a 'problem' (Herbert, 2001, p.155), one can imagine how complex it can be when people are expected to develop multiple identities. In pluralist countries, the identity of people takes a range of values and cultural elements that are shared by people of the micro in-group members (ethnic group) to those that are or should be shared by the macro in-group members (national identity). Someone who has been an out-group member (in terms of ethnic identity) could be an in-group member when it comes to national identity. It also could happen that different ethnic groups value certain aspects of ethnic and national identities differently. While maintaining their differences, ethnic groups need to respect the out-group members' values since 'mutual respect and deliberation' are the foundation for the well-being of a multicultural society (Herbert, 2001).

### **Interface among Ethnic Identity, Multiculturalism and National Identity**

Nationalism is a binding force that seeks to hold diverse groups together within a politically defined territory (Sabhlok, 2002). In the case of Ethiopia, the challenge lies in finding common cultural values, heroes and heroines, symbols, and historical pasts that are shared by various nation and nationalities that could characterize the multination state of Ethiopia. Echoing this, Haymes (1997) noted that establishing nationhood and a common identity in multicultural countries has been a problem even during the heyday of nationalism. For various historical and political reasons, the historical past of Ethiopia does not seem to be similarly perceived and shared by different ethnic groups, at least by the elites of the various ethnic groups (Alemsegid, 2004). Sabhlok (2002, p. 28) also states, "nationalism contains within its apparent singularity conflicting interpretations of what it means to be that nation contesting for space and political expressions". Be that as it may, some scholars argue that in multiethnic countries, values and symbols, which cross the boundary of ethnic groups and denote the practice and

creation of nationalism over ethnicity, are requisite. These values and symbols act as a means for integrating different ethnic groups into common nationhood and bringing national and ethnic identities onto a common platform. Common identities, based on primordial ascription or civic institutions, could be used in defining the national identity of the different groups in a multiethnic state (Sabhlok, 2002).

This is not a simple venture when past histories are perceived differently by different ethnic groups. Moreover, major cultural dimensions like religion and language in Ethiopia are so divergent that they cannot serve to emulate ethnic identities and bind together people of different ethnic groups. And yet, as indicated above, it appears there exists a consensus among researchers that some form of national identity and/or civic identity that brings together nation and nationalities are mandatory in multicultural states (Abraham, Liu, Lawrence, and Ward, 2002).

Such a perspective appears to be the underlying idea in the present day Ethiopia. When interviewed by a journalist, whether there is a fear that strong ethnic identity would loosen Ethiopian identity in the future, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated that Ethiopian identity would remain indispensable so long as it has value and significance to nations and nationalities. The Prime Minister stated that Ethiopian identity has to emanate from accepting diversity as a unifying block and underscored the inadequacy of ethnic identity to describe Ethiopian identity of a person and vice versa. It was also indicated that to gain economic, political, and human resource stability, strength and competitiveness in the world, it necessitates a unified Ethiopia rather than ethnic groups standing on their own. Such foundations and merits associated with them are supposed to be essential to sustain Ethiopian state under diversified linguistic and religious groups (EthiopiaFirst.com, 2009).

The above contention has supporters and contenders. Literature on the interface between ethnic identity and national identity also posits a couple of possibilities (Abraham, Liu, Lawrence, and Ward, 2002). Some argue that for a sustainable nation state, national identity has to be stronger than ethnic

identity (assimilationists). On the other hand, others argue that sustainability can be achieved through strong ethnic and national identity (biculturalists). Still some others contend that the interface between the two does not matter much for a sustainable nation state. Be that as it may, research on group identity suggests that identity, be it civic or national identity, could contribute to bring together diverse nations and nationalities if values, histories, traditions, and symbols of various groups are represented in the making of that civic or national identity.

Discussing the challenge of developing national identity in countries like Ethiopia where past events and histories have different and contradictory meaning to various ethnic groups of the state, Pareka (1994, p.501) writes:

In countries with a fragmented, discontinuous or disastrous past, the search for identity involves at least a temporary break with it and some measure of historical discontinuity. Some of them can have either a future or a past but not both, at least for the present, and must rely on a deliberately induced historical amnesia to maintain their political stability. Furthermore since they cannot always turn to their past for inspiration and guidance, they must either muddle through as best as they can or seek inspiration from only the partially relevant historical experiences of western states.

Pareka pointed out that nations need to develop identities that bind them together. One major way of doing that is through the teaching of social studies in schools (Naser, 2004; Coenders and Scheepers, 2003; Herbert, 2001).

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### **Role of Education in Developing Ethnic, National and/or Civic Identity in Multicultural States**

With regard to the crucial role education has in nation building, Nasser (2004, p. 221) noted that “schooling has a normalizing, disciplining, and controlling power over individuals within a society. It shapes their identities in ways that reproduce and justify the social order while the mechanisms of power stay hidden from those socialized and indoctrinated.” Thus, knowledge presented in schools may be used to justify existing social structures and ideological thoughts. From a broader perspective, there are two major explanations with regard to the role of education in shaping the behaviour and identity of individuals. The socialization theory formulated by Selznick and Steinberg (cited in Coenders and Scheepers, 2003) contends that educational institutions transmit the norms, values and models of behaviour that are believed to be appropriate in a given society. These elements of culture shape the behaviour and identity of people. The cognitive approach, on the other hand, relates the effect of education with the information and knowledge acquired as the result of learning and the development of cognitive capacities and habits. This approach also includes the central thesis of the socialization approach, the transfer of norms and values, as one of the channels where the effect of education is demonstrated. In general, some believe that schools play a major role in producing citizens in accordance with the needs of the state (Herbert, 2001).

Yet, there are scholars who argue that macro governmental policies, whether in education or other sectors, have little impact in shaping the identity of individuals. Rather, this process is a result of competing micro narratives (Khoury cited in Nasser, 2004). The micro narratives in this case refer to the various groups that operate in the society. The values and ideas that these groups propagate affect the identity people develop. Parents, community interactions and peers fall into this domain.

Proceeding on the assumption that education shapes the identity of people and reflects the ideological values of the existing social order, research on school curriculum indicates that history and civics education curricula are intended to developing identities on the youth (Ahonen, 2001; Al-Haj, 2005; Chan, 2006, 2007; Pinson, 2007). Behind this assumption is the widely held belief that history and civic education can reduce partisanship and develop a balanced view among students. Pinson (2007) also indicated that there is a wide consensus among educators and politicians that civic education can serve to bring about social change, and to develop multicultural norms, inclusive citizenship, and national identity.

It is, however, equally important to recognize that school curricula can serve these purposes only if they are designed in such a way that they promote diverse perspectives and interpretation through the provision of multiple versions of historical events and developments (Carlson cited in Su, 2007). Pinson (2007) noted that education in multicultural countries, where citizenship is a contested issue, should address contested and controversial issues in order to produce citizens who value diversity and develop tolerance. Indeed, Barton and McCuly (2005, p. 108) suggest that presenting history or citizenship education in historical narratives that are merely aligned with existing political landscapes “may actually supply raw material for the partisan narratives that their study of history is meant to counteract.” Moreover, Ahonen (2001:192) argues that history intended to reinforce a uniform identity through grand narratives may result in feelings of exclusion and ‘double consciousness’. It is only when alternative narratives of the past are addressed that history curricula will be socially and politically inclusive. He stated that:

The school is expected to support social cohesion by providing the common elements needed for identity-formation. But, individual identities in contemporary societies are multi-layered; society is a mosaic rather than a monolith. A sense of togetherness requires a Habermasian shared open space of interaction, rather than common lessons. A curriculum in the service of direct identity-politics will be inevitably questioned, and even discredited, by groups who see themselves outside its narrative.

Hence, one of the challenges for the effectiveness of civic education and history education is how the curricular materials accommodate controversial and diverse issues so that students can make connections between the present and the past with the help of teachers. Another challenge stems from the value-laden nature of knowledge in civics and history education. Some argue that the content of history and civics subjects are shaped by political and economic powers, resulting in a 'biased' knowledge that supports existing political and social structures (Apple, 1996). Apple states:

The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, and some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and "disorganize" people (Apple, 1996, p. 22).

Literature on the interface between social and political change and education shows that educational institutions and the system are subject to corresponding social and political changes. For example, during the heyday of nationalism and even during this post-modern time, educational systems have been used as organs to form the nation and shape its identity through grand narratives (Hofman, 2007, Ahnonen, 2001). States create their own 'history so that the past will explain the established fact of the (national) present', which Anderson, cited in Hofman, labeled as 'a systematic



historiographical campaign'. From this perspective, the role of education and the study of national history are essential to the establishment, the unity, and the actual daily functioning of the modern nation-state. According to Anderson, cited in Hofman, the past is created based on the present, and 'national biographies' are developed by maintaining continuity in history, even though that history might have been characterized by fissures.

Some scholars, however, disagree with this perspective. They propose that curricula should be open to diverse narratives and create open spaces for the construction of identity (Ahnonen, 2001). Similarly, some argue that controversial issues of a country's history should be part of curricula so that students have the opportunity to interact with and reflect on them. Not doing so and when "history is presented in a chronological format that addresses events relevant to the current political situation, many of them [students] incorporate those elements into an increasingly politicized historical perspective - may actually supply raw material for the partisan narratives that their study of history is meant to counteract" (Barton and McCully, 2005: 108). According to these scholars, the constructive perspective on historical understanding indicates that both children and adults do not passively internalize historical information but actively construct it in light of previous ideas and micro-narratives obtained outside of school.

In view of the above theoretical contentions, discussion on school curriculum is critical to understanding the process of regulating ethnic relations and forming identity in a multi-ethnic society (Nasser and Nasser, 2008). Schools serve, among other functions, to promote the political, economic, and cultural integration or segregation of groups in a society. Russell (2001) in Nasser and Nasser (2008) described education as 'a double-edged sword' that can build people's identity as part of a larger cohesive whole while also serving as the source of power and legitimacy for other groups to challenge the existing social order. Thus, the control of educational systems and the content of school textbooks is a powerful resource for shaping identity formation and inter-group relations within any society. Through education, a state's elite can grant or deny certain individuals or groups membership in a

nation, and have the power to produce knowledge that reconstructs their past and collective memory; a state's narrative can invoke certain aspects of identity while also suppressing other dimensions (Puri, 2004).

Since textbooks and school curricula convey facts and ideologies, and follow political trends, it is possible to deduce that they can have significant influence on what students know and how they think about others and themselves (Pingel, 1999). Nasser and Nasser (2008) also indicate that school curriculum, and specifically textbooks are useful sources for understanding the role education has assumed in the development of identity in multiethnic countries. "Texts reflect basic ideas about a national culture, and ... are often a flashpoint of cultural struggle and controversy" (Altbach, 1991 in Pingel, 1999: 1). This occurs particularly in social studies subjects, which serve as a web in linking the past with the present and create an ease in inducing value judgments for textbook writers of different affiliations. Pingel (1999) explicitly stated the issue as follows:

The field of social studies is a sensitive subject. It cannot be taught without introducing value judgments. In fact, the learning objectives aim to develop the ability to argue, to evaluate and to form rational and reasonable opinions as well as to understand and to accept, but also to subject norms to critical examination (Pingel, 1999, p. 5).

Curricula in general and social studies curricula in particular, embody values that affect students' social and identity development. This study examines how social studies curricula (civic and ethical education and history) address the formation of group identity (ethnic and Ethiopian (be it civic or national) identity) in students, analyzes the manner in which historical events are presented in these subjects, and examines students' perspectives on the contributions of school curricula and other factors in shaping their identity.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Ethiopia has been undergoing political and social changes since the incumbent government took power in 1991. A constitution that acknowledges the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities and set up the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia – ‘New Ethiopia’— was endorsed then after. Structural changes in educational institutions were also made. Primary education is now offered in mother-tongue languages in many regions. New textbooks have been introduced and civic and ethical education (a new subject), is now offered from grades 5 to university level.

It is also noteworthy that although linguistic based federalism and the growth of nation/nationality based political parties and civic associations have made ethnic identity a primary concern in public and state media discourse, it appears essential to look for thin or thick symbols, heroes, and traditions that hold together Ethiopian nations and nationalities. Such a sense of identity is necessary for national belongingness, and social and economic development. In fact, the Growth and Transformation Plan (2010, p.22) states that one of its major objectives is the “creation of suitable conditions for sustainable nation building through the creation of democratic and developmental state” wherein education is expected to play an instrumental role. As part of this venture, civic and ethical education syllabi in Ethiopia intend to produce:

- democratic citizens who safeguard their rights and respect the rights of others;
- patriotic citizens who uphold the democratic ideals and the principles of the constitution as well as defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country;
- citizens who are active participants in the political process of their country and dedicated to work for the common good;
- responsible citizens who nurture tolerant culture and resolve differences peacefully; and  
industrious citizens who are self-reliant.

Analyzing whether these bold objectives are translated into students' values is worth researching. This study was also motivated by a dearth of similar studies on curriculum knowledge in Ethiopia. Given the dominant state of knowledge about the essence of curriculum in Ethiopia — a document to transmit some content knowledge to the students — a study such as this opens the door for the study of curriculum and policy documents from broader political, social and economic perspectives. It also helps curriculum experts, textbook writers, educators, teachers, parents and policy makers in Ethiopia to have the opportunity to appreciate and debate on the roles and impacts textbooks can have in the social identity, be it national identity, civic identity, ethnic identity, and political development of citizens.

Concepts of ethnic identity and national identity refer to diverse ideas under different circumstances. Ascriptions used to identify national and even continental values can be used to signify ethnic values in other contexts. For example, Asian, African, and Latino connote ethnic values in countries such as the USA or Canada, where people from these areas have settled in as immigrants, whereas national identity is more about being an American or a Canadian. In Singapore, Chinese, Indian, and Malay denote ethnic values and behaviors whereas Singaporean denotes national identity. Yet Chinese and Indian refer to national or state identity in China or India. In this paper, ethnic identity is conceptualized as referring to in-group identification based on linguistic similarity or constructed identity to belong to a certain nation or nationalities (Agew, Afar, Amhara, Oromo, Tigray, etc) and Ethiopian identity is conceptualized to mean identification (values, behaviors, symbols and others) with the multination state of Ethiopia (Ethiopian).

This study examines the manner in which ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity are treated in social studies textbooks, analyzes the historical narratives incorporated in textbooks and describes students' views about the influence of the curricula on their identity development. The study attempts to understand the following research questions:

1. How and to what extent are ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity presented in civics education textbooks?
2. How do students assess the contribution of civic and ethical education and history education in shaping their ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity?
3. Who do students of various ethnic groups consider as their hero or model in identifying themselves with an Ethiopian identity (as portrayed in the social studies textbooks)?
4. Which factors play a significant role in shaping the identity of students?

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Care must be taken when interpreting the findings of this study. Firstly, the study is intended to explore and understand the issue of ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity and not for making generalizations. In fact, implications are drawn based on the respondents' views and textbooks' contents. The analysis of civic and ethical education and history textbooks was conducted by researchers who have limited expertise and knowledge in these disciplines. In addition, although civic and ethical education textbooks are developed following the national curriculum flow chart, the specific content of the textbooks may vary across the regional states. At the primary school level, this study examined civic and ethical education textbooks prepared by the Amhara Regional State. Textbooks for secondary education level are the same across the regional states and are not affected by regional variation.

During the interview process, the concept of group identity was noted to be unclear to students. Students shifted to personal identity at times and made limited reflections on the contribution of the curricula in shaping their group identity. Students' ethnic group was excluded from the analysis as it was felt that the representation of various ethnic groups does not suffice to make any form of conclusion. The study could have provided better intervention directions had it been comprehensive both in terms of size and diversity of representation. An attempt was made in the study to examine how students

conceptualize Ethiopian identity and whether there is commonness among cultural values, symbols and traditions students reported as representing Ethiopian identity. However, the data generated using the interview item did not suffice to make a thorough analysis and interpretation. Future study may have to attempt to present students' with some values, traditions, and symbols and ask them how they would assess these things in representing Ethiopian identity.

Issues related to nation and nationalities, people and ethnic groups, national identity, and civic identity are so fluid and complex that their conceptualizations and use suggest various philosophical and ideological orientations. We ought to make pretty clear that it was not the intention of this paper to support either of these conceptualization and ideological orientations. It would have been also useful to provide a brief account of nation building processes in Ethiopia, their consequences, and the limitations and strengths of the various efforts made so far. Yet, this necessitates thorough knowledge of past Ethiopian histories and recent political directions and corresponding theoretical and practical discourses which the writers believe that they merit by themselves an exclusive and intensive endeavor rather than being presented as a part of this paper.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample***

The study participants were selected purposefully in an effort to reach students from diverse ethnic groups. In doing so, a maximum diversity sample was employed. Using this process, twenty students from Afar, Agaw, Amhara, Benshangul Gumuz, Gambella, Oromia and Tigray were involved in the study. Due to the nature of the study and for practical reasons, the study could not include students other ethnic groups of Ethiopia. Students from the Faculty of Educational and Behavioral Sciences, who were second and third year, were invited to participate in the study and those who demonstrated willingness were selected. In doing so, the diversity of the samples was purposively considered. The sampling for document analysis comprised civic

and ethical education and history textbooks of grades 5-12. Textbooks for environmental education at primary level were also examined.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

Data were collected using the qualitative procedures of document analysis and interview.

### ***Document Analysis***

Civic and ethical education and history textbooks of grades 5-12 were analyzed. Topics and sub-topics related to identity were described and interpreted. The analysis involved examination of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs related to group identity. In addition, adjectives and descriptions that connote ethnic and Ethiopian identity were identified. Special attention was given to heroes and heroines described in the texts.

### ***Interview***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students selected from different ethnic groups to examine the contributions of civics and ethical education and history textbooks in shaping ethnic and Ethiopian identity, to investigate student conceptualizations of ethnic and Ethiopian identity, to identify Ethiopian heroes, and to examine other factors that contribute to shaping identity. The interviews were conducted in Amharic, tape-recorded and transcribed into Amharic, and then translated into English for the purpose of analysis. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

### ***Data Analysis***

The analysis consisted of two parts. The first part was an analysis of the interview data. Students' responses were described and interpreted. The second component of the analysis involved textbook analysis. Topics related to heroes and heroines, wars, and conceptualizations of ethnic and

Ethiopian identity were considered as components of the analysis. In doing so, every page of the textbooks was examined. Several key paragraphs were also noted, analyzed and then interpreted in line with the concepts of Ethiopian and ethnic issues. Although the study was intended to examine the contribution of social studies curricula in shaping group identity, useful data related to the contribution of civic and ethical education to instilling values and developing constitutional knowledge were also included in the discussion section. Civic and ethical education is referred as civics or civics education in some places.

## **Findings and Discussions**

### **Contribution of Civic and Ethical Education and History Textbooks in Shaping Students' Ethnic Identity and Ethiopian Identity and Developing Values on Students**

Under this theme, students from various ethnic groups were interviewed and asked to reflect on the contribution of civic and ethical education and history textbooks on the construction of their ethnic and/or Ethiopian identity. One of the students responded:

The civic and ethical education textbook made me to know that Ethiopia is composed of various nations and nationalities. Ethiopia follows federalism as a political system. This enables me to understand the various nations and nationalities and their identities as well. It also made me aware of the present socio-political situation. It makes me confident to know what Ethiopia is. Who am I? What is meant by my ethnic identity as part of Ethiopia?

Another student echoed the above view and stated:



Civic and ethical education has played a great role in the development of both my ethnic and Ethiopian identities because it builds basic concepts and even meaning of our identities at the national level.

Another student responded in a similar manner:

Civic and ethical education plays a vital role in the development of Ethiopian and ethnic identities. Civic education in general and topics such as patriotism in particular provide opportunity to rethink the modern sense of patriotism and Ethiopian identity.

The above responses show the role of civics education in the conceptualization of ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity and how students relate patriotism with Ethiopian identity in its new conceptualization. Students also noted that civic and ethical education textbooks helped them learn the principles of democracy and Ethiopia's constitution. Mention was also made about the place of minorities in textbooks. One student noted:

Civics education raises the concerns of minorities. In addition, the significance of civic and ethical education for Ethiopian and ethnic identity development is immense. Civic education teaches us about the vital principles of democracy such as the rule of the law, equality, justice, patriotism, responsibility, industriousness, self-reliance, active participation in communal cases and the pursuit of knowledge. In general, it addresses the contents of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia constitution that is accepted by a majority of the people of Ethiopia. As a result, civic education has a great significance in building Ethiopian and ethnic identity

Another student stated that:

Civic education has had a great influence on me to be confident that my ethnic group is as equal as others and I have gained the knowledge that each ethnic group should respect and have tolerance to live together.

Similarly, another student mentioned:

In the development of my Ethiopian and ethnic identity, it is civics education that has greatly influenced me. I should first clearly know what my rights (both democratic and human) and duties are. Beginning from grade 5 up to 12 and now at university level I learned about the constitution, country love, and tolerance and so on.

The above responses appear to show that students view the textbooks as a means of promoting equality and tolerance among different ethnic groups, instilling a sense of Ethiopian patriotism, and learning about the constitution and other democratic rights and principles. Some students reported that civic and ethical education contributed more to developing their ethnic identity than their Ethiopian identity, and some indicated that other factors played a significant role in shaping their ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity. For example, one student stated:

The introduction of the civic and ethical education curriculum has played a great role in the development of my ethnic identity rather than my Ethiopian identity. It is through civics education that I understood my constitutional rights and responsibilities. Now, I have got a chance to attend higher education. I also used my mother tongue language to attend primary education. I feel it made me realize that I have to be respected by others and respect others as well.

Another student reported that civic and ethical education has played a complementary rather than a primary role in shaping his ethnic identity:

In my view it is not the introduction of civic and ethical education curriculum that influenced the development of my ethnic identity. It is the struggle of all nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia against the feudal system of government. My ethnicity is the result of blood and bone sacrifice. When I say so, I am not denying completely its [civics education] role in shaping my ethnicity and Ethiopian identity.

Indicating the role of other groups in the development of ethnic identity, another student also reported that:

To me, it is the struggle of my ethnic group against feudalism or ...that allowed me to stand today as a member of a recognized ethnic group. Civic education also played a significant role in strengthening my ethnic identity. My ethnic identity is stronger than my Ethiopian [Ethiopian] identity. In the then system of administration, we were forced to speak Amharic, ignoring my mother tongue and my culture.

As can be seen from the above responses, subtle reference was made to the contribution of civic and ethical education to the development of Ethiopian identity. Similarly, one student stated that:

In relation to the national sense, I have been aware of the existence of different ethnic groups with different culture and religions and this makes me feel that our diversity is our beauty. It has made me aware that Ethiopia has existed as a country for a long time by the people of different ethnic groups. Similarly, the subject has helped me know that I should keep my Ethiopian identity to transfer to the next generation as my fathers did. But, I learn more about ethnic identity.

Another student raised a concern about the impartiality of textbooks and their role in developing Ethiopian identity:

In my view civic and ethical education is used to promote the ruling party ideology. It promotes the formation and strengthening of ethnic views as it narrates a lot about the past inequalities among nations and nationalities.

Another student criticized civics teaching as too theoretical, but believed that the subjects (history and civic and ethical education) have influenced his conception of ethnic and Ethiopian identity. He said:

Civic and history texts have made a great contribution to the development of my Ethiopian and ethnic identity. Civics education gave me adequate knowledge about Ethiopian and ethnic identity. The topics on patriotism developed a sense of Ethiopian identity in me. I feel that I know what I am expected to do as an Ethiopian. But, what we have learned in class and what people talk and do outside the class is quite different. Many of us could not instill the values learned in civics education on ourselves. We study the subject for passing the exam rather than employing what we have learnt in our daily lives.

From these responses, it may be understood that students believe that civics education textbooks have influenced the development of their ethnic identity mainly in creating a sense of belongingness to one's own ethnic group and in their thinking, feelings and behavior. The participants repeatedly reflected that they have acquired the knowledge and understanding of one's own and other groups (ethnic awareness), the labels used for one's own group (ethnic self-identification), the feelings about one's own and other groups (ethnic attitudes) and the behavior patterns specific to an ethnic group (ethnic behaviors).

The respondents also reported that the textbooks developed an Ethiopian identity in the sense that Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state with different cultures, language, religion and ways of living. Respecting diversity and patriotism were also mentioned as forms of Ethiopian identity. In addition, the textbooks cite the equality of nations and nationalities and contribute to the students' understanding of a pluralistic culture and nation. Students also reflected that they conceive of other ethnic groups as equally important to their own ethnic groups, which might have a positive influence in building their Ethiopian identity. However, students clearly identified more frequently with ethnic identity rather than Ethiopian identity. For example, the term "to know my ethnic identity....recognize myself equal to others" was a repeated refrain from the respondents.

Students were also asked if history textbooks had contributed to constructing or deconstructing their identity. History education is used to promote patriotism and national cohesion in many countries (Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1998 in Al-Haj, 2005). Because history plays an important role in the formation of individual and community identity, when groups with differing historical experiences come into conflict, historical debates can be used to develop critical thinking (Barton and Mccully, 2008). However, participants in this study were indifferent about the role of history textbooks. Among the many reasons, one student clearly stated:

When we talk about the history of Ethiopia, we usually come across with conflicting issues. For instance, some people consider Tewodros II as their hero because of his efforts to unify Ethiopia. Yet, others argue that he was a person who contributed to the losses of many lives. Again, I usually observe similar views to the work of Menelik II, i.e., both ideas are reflected: as a person who contributed to the success of the Adwa campaign in defeating Italy and in introducing modernity to Ethiopia. Yet, he was criticized for invading other regions to expand the then Ethiopia that led to deaths of many people. These are the realities that I am facing outside the

rhetoric of the textbooks that dominantly reflect the positive contributions past Ethiopian leaders had. The books did not address controversial issues and promoted very surface learning. To me, all the deeds of the kings should be presented fairly so that we can learn the truth and draw lessons from both their strengths and weaknesses.

Respondents reported that history textbooks emphasize historical facts and narration of past events. The students argued that the textbooks do not integrate historical events with their implications for Ethiopia. As a student stated,

To me learning the various faces of Ethiopian history gives us the chance to tolerate as well as oppose the existing and upcoming systems of government. If students are only exposed to the successes of previous and existing governments, they will not have tolerance for the minor limitations of the existing governments that may hamper the development of long-lasting democracy. We learn narrations of facts and do not discuss in detail about their effect on Ethiopia.

When one student was asked to reflect on the contributions of history textbooks in shaping his identity as compared to civic and ethical education textbooks, he said,

Yes, I do believe that civic and ethical education has contributed to developing my insights and conceptualization of Ethiopia and Ethiopian identities. However, when I look at history texts, they usually emphasize wars that may have little contribution to the future development of Ethiopia. Emphasizing this might lead to the development of hatred and prejudice in students on the basis of ethnic backgrounds.

In history textbooks, practical tasks were scarcely designed to engage students in reasoning or debate. Students were not asked to reflect on any narrative they felt to be critical for the establishment of an Ethiopian multination state or discuss events or symbols which they identify as indicators of Ethiopian identity or ethnic identity. Rusen (1994) in Ahonen (2001:13) plainly expressed the relevance of having alternative narratives in bringing social cohesion.

As history is used for identity building, any grand narrative diffused through a school curriculum tends to reinforce a uniform identity. Those with no place or role in the grand narrative will be excluded from the historical community.

Hence, in order to be socially and politically inclusive, a history curriculum must recognize alternative narratives of the past. Only in this way will people with different experiences be included in a historical community; where the past is both shared and multi-faceted, and the future can consist of options (Ahonen, 2001).

Civic and ethical education textbooks state that the history of Ethiopia has to be researched and re-written. For example, the Grade 9 civic and ethical education student textbook, under the sub-heading, 'The True History of Ethiopia,' states:

There were times in which the diverse nations, nationalities and people of Ethiopia suffered from chauvinistic attitudes and practices. Even if Ethiopia has a long history, we know very little about the diverse nations, nationalities and people's of Ethiopia. One of the problems comes from the old emphasis of historical studies and documentation given to the political history of kings and their achievements rather than to the history of the people. Modern education is a recent development in Ethiopia going back to 1908. Before the date the local effort at documenting Ethiopia history was made by

palace scribes (chronicles) and religious writers (both Muslims and Christians) who focused, in their writings, on religious affairs. The attempt of foreign writers too gave emphasis to political, military, religious (missionary) and commercial affairs. As a result, it is only in very recent years that the study of the history and culture of the different nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia has started or has become important (p.64).

In addition, the textbook extends its critique of the history of Ethiopia as dominated by some politically advantaged groups by recommending researchers to study the history of the majority. It states:

The second problem comes from political, religious and ethnic biases among writers. Many traditional writers and foreigners alike have not done full justice to the documentation of the real history of our nation, nationalities and peoples. It is only the history of some politically dominant groups that has been relatively well studied. The history and culture of the majority of Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia have been given little attention. Hence, the investigation and documentation of the culture and history of the majority deserve better attention of researchers.

As such, the textbooks may have intentionally avoided controversies and debates so as to nullify conflicting viewpoints that may arise in the classroom. Students also commented that history textbooks are provided as narration of facts rather than opportunities to enquire and reflect on different narratives. However, some argue that such narration may rather give a plain field for students to easily be swayed by polarized views and give them the raw material for questioning the purpose of learning the subject. Because of this, students cannot find their position and identity in the texts. As Booth (1980) in Barton and Mccully (2005, p. 90) mentioned, "People do not simply construct their understanding of history as a series of discrete facts, but



rather imbue them with meaning by connecting facts to each other and to broader patterns or themes.”

### **Portrayal of Ethnic and Ethiopian Identity in Civic and Ethical Education and History Textbooks**

A wide consensus exists among educators and politicians that civic and history education can serve to bring about social change and develop multicultural norms, inclusive citizenship, and national identity (Pinson, 2007). Under this theme, the textbooks were analyzed page by page in order to examine the representation of contents related to ethnic and Ethiopian identity.

Students are introduced to the concept of nation and nationality in the grade 2 environmental science textbook. On page 96 of this textbook, nation/nationality is defined as ‘a group of people who speak the same language, have similar culture and dressing, and live in a similar area.’ It asks students to state the language they speak and identify the nation/nationality or ethnic group they belong to. The textbook also states that each nation/nationality has the right to communicate and express opinions in its language. The textbook concludes that the language of one ethnic group is neither inferior nor superior to the language of another group.

This is followed by a chapter in the grade 3 environmental sciences textbook entitled ‘Recognizing and Studying our Locality’. The concept of ‘region’ is defined on page 78 as “an area occupied by people who speak the same language, or who share similar culture and history and are connected economically and socially for many years.” The textbook asks students to identify their region (Amhara in this case), identify the regional states that are neighbors of Amhara region, remember and sing the regional anthem, describe the regional anthem, identify nations and nationalities that live in the region and describe the structure of the Amhara region (pp. 78-88). The chapter then describes the meaning of nation/nationality, the Amhara nation/nationality and its language, and other nations and nationalities that

live in the region. Towards the end of the chapter, there is a sub-topic entitled 'Equality of Nations/Nationalities and Living together' (p.96) which is defined as 'respecting the language, culture, and history of nation and nationalities'. The book then asks students to predict what the consequences would be if the rights of nations and nationalities were not respected. The book concludes by explaining the 'Grand Concepts ('Talalak Esabiewoyoch'),' and mentions King Tewodros, King Menelik, Haddis Alemayehu and Artist Afework Tekele as the major figures of the Amhara people. In grade four, students are introduced to the concept of 'country/nation'. Definitions of country, national map, rivers, mountains, and the political structure of Ethiopia are given. Students are introduced to the regions and the basis for organizing the regional states' population, settlement and language. The book presents the flag of Ethiopia and asks students to write and rehearse the Ethiopian national anthem. A chapter on the origin and settlement of the Ethiopian people follows. The book also states that Habeshas, Sabeans, and Agazians laid the foundation for the present Ethiopia. The book then says:

The culture of every nation and nationality is equal in Ethiopia.  
Every nation has the right to protect and nourish its culture.  
Every nation/nationality or individual should respect the culture  
of other people (p.122)

In the grade 5 Civic and Ethical Education textbook, in the chapter on Democracy, one sub-section reads as follows (p.5):

...there are many nations and nationalities in Ethiopia. As every household has its own family and way of living, nations and nationalities in Ethiopia also have their own culture, language, dressing and feeding style. United and our country (Ethiopia) is the creation of the unity and coordination (hibret and wuhidet) of these nation and nationalities. The equality of these nations and Ethiopian people is endorsed by law to ensure that they live in Ethiopia in peace and love. Every nationality has the democratic right to use its own language,

preserve its culture, and administer itself. If not...they dare not live together with other people. To make Ethiopia a country where nation and nationalities live together in peace, unity, and love, each of them has the right to administer themselves in accordance with their desire and right.

On page 8, the book has a sub-section called 'Respecting Differences' Under this topic, differences in religion, culture, and language are expressed as fundamental/basic differences. However, the text emphasizes that these differences are not causes for disagreements and conflict. Rather their existence is a sign of beauty and love to live in unity and peace.

On page 18, in the chapter on Equality, the following are mentioned: each nation and nationality is equal; they can administer themselves, and they can use their own language. In Chapter 5 on page 33, under the topic 'Love to the Country', patriotism and nationalism are explained:

Patriotism is not only about protecting the boundaries of a country or loving the rivers, mountains, or geographical features. The true feature of patriotism is loving the people in the country. That is manifested by accepting the equality of different ethnic groups, knowing the true history of Ethiopia and its people.

In the Grade 6 civic and ethical education textbook, chapter 4, page 43, under the title 'Justice', a dialogue between two students about patriotism and citizenship explains patriotism in this way:

....patriotism varies according to the nature of systems. When a country is undemocratic, it does not respect the rights of its people and does not lead to development thereby fulfilling the interests of those people who are in position in the government's structure. It does not work for the sovereignty and respect of its people rather, it tries to express by singing for the large rivers, big mountains, wide lakes and in general to the natural resources of the country.....

In the grade 7 civic and ethical education textbook, one of its chapters states that:

Ethiopia is a country with many nations and nationalities. Among its people there was historical integration, tolerance, and respecting each other. Due to this, though the previous administrators were practicing various administrative repressions, there were not, as such, race, religion, and language based conflicts.

In chapter 5 of the textbook, one sub-topic discusses citizenship and loving one's country. Loving one's country is explained as follows:

Loving a country varies in its meaning and interpretation based on the system. In a democratic system loving one's country could be practiced in terms of offering ones time, energy, knowledge, and sometimes sacrifice to the good and development of the country. It can be also expressed in battlefield, research, ethical, diligence, leadership, being responsible, etc (p.36).

Grade 8 civic and ethical education stresses the importance of diversity, and reads:

It was said that “unity is strength” and “our diversity is beauty”. As different colors result in a beautiful picture, our nations’ and nationalities’ integrated difference is our symbol of strength (p. 34)

One chapter of the grade 9 civic and ethical education states:

With all our differences, we Ethiopians have common features that bind us together. *We share a common history, values, principles, national feelings and destiny.* These give us a common identity and enable us to live together for our common good (p.11).

It continues by stating,

... They have established a new unity on the basis of equality and other principles of democracy. This is why they have adopted the constitution of the FDRE as an instrument that binds them in a mutual trust in each other and commitment to promote shared interests. Even though we have had unjust relationships and painful experiences, we Ethiopians believe that we can fulfill our common dreams by living and working together (p.12).

When we look at the grade ten civic and ethical education textbook, we see issues that address ethnic and Ethiopian identity. For example, the third chapter, entitled “Equality of Nation and Nationality” tries to instill in students an understanding of their ethnic identity. Chapter five, under the title “Patriotism”, attempts to enhance students’ feeling of nationality. This chapter also covers topics such as patriotism, conditions for developing

patriotic feeling and knowing the true history of Ethiopia. Under these sub-headings, an attempt has been made to treat Ethiopian identity.

In the grade eleven civic and ethical education textbook, the chapters on “Equality” and “Patriotism”, addresses the issue of identity. Past inequalities among nations and nationalities, past discrimination and societal practices among various ethnic groups, and the dominance of one ethnic group over the other were given much emphasis. The grade eleven civic and ethical education recognizes that achieving the right to equality among nations and nationalities is a means for building Ethiopian identities. The textbook addresses the issue of Ethiopian identity (p. 74) as follows:

National symbols such as flags and the national anthem are important features for the identity of nations across the world. Ethiopia has a flag and national anthem which establishes its identity in the world. Our flag is flown and the national anthem played out when Ethiopians participate.

As can be observed from the representation of ethnic and Ethiopian identity in the textbooks, ethnic identity has been more frequently and strongly covered than Ethiopian identity issues. This was also corroborated by the students’ perspectives.

Although the textbooks claim that Ethiopians share a common history, values and destiny, students were not involved in reflecting on how and why. The textbooks state that differences/diversities are not causes of conflict. The other option could be to acknowledge that differences can be causes of conflict and involve students in reflecting on what should be done to alleviate their occurrence. Ethiopian identity is presented mainly in the form of flag, anthem, diversity and patriotism. Patriotism is conceptualized as respect for people of different nations and nationalities, tolerance for diversity and differences, and concern for national resources and commitment in one’s work.

### **Heroes and Heroines of Students**

Under this theme, the participants in the study were asked to identify their role model or heroes. Hutchinson (2011: 649) stated that heroes of a country are symbols of national pride; not mere historical figures. He further indicated the importance of national heroes:

Theorists and practitioners of nationalism alike have stressed the importance of national heroes in defining and unifying the national community. Beyond their actual roles as leaders in nationalist movements, these figures retain power long past their lifetimes as symbols incarnating national values and character; they are often ascribed (quasi-)divine roles and devotion in the national consciousness.

A student stated that his role model is Dr. Negaso Gidada. He explained his choice by saying:

This man comes from a very poor family where they are deprived of education and basic need for their survival. He challenged the then hardships and has become successful to the level of being president of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic and has changed the attitudes of many people towards education.

Another student identified Kitaw Ejigu as his hero and he justified his choice as follows:

...this scientist is an Ethiopian who became a member of NASA, the huge American and world space exploration organization. Many people hardly imagine that Ethiopians could not achieve this due to severe hunger, drought and war. Yet, he broke this stereotype and changed the image of the nation to some extent. Therefore, he is my model in Ethiopian history.

One student named Dr. Akililu Lema as his hero, stating:

Dr. Akililu Lema is the first Ethiopian who brought drastic change in the lives of many people in the world for discovering vaccination for the then deadly disease bilharzia. Before that time, people were easily dying of bilharzia. The biologist Dr. Akililu Lema was from a needy family but he became prominent through his efforts so that I consider him as a role model in my life.

Another student selected Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Meles Zenawi is dynamic and knowledgeable leader who possesses a well-rounded personality and thus has made this nation equal for all its nations and nationalities. He is the noblest individual in this era. He is the one who initiates and mobilizes the citizens and institutions for democracy, freedom, equality and a sense of nationalism. Therefore, I consider him as my hero in Ethiopian history.

Another student also selected P.M. Meles Zenawi for his art of leadership and knowledge. A student also identified P.M. Meles Zenawi because he plays a significant role in Ethiopia as well as the whole of Africa. One student chose Laurent Tsegaye G/medhin. He said, "He is my role model because he writes the facts with considerable integrity and he does what he believes in, what he has written is still my source of enjoyment." Another student chose *AtseTewodros II* for his attempt to unify Ethiopia. Students were also asked to identify their hero or model in Ethiopian history and to provide reasons for their choice. A student explained,



Ethiopia is a country that has passed more than 3000 years - a long history full of ups and downs. My hero or model is not the one who won in various battles against enemies, though I am not saying it is irrelevant. Rather, it is the one that mobilized the peoples of Ethiopia from end to end not by force but by their intrinsic motivation to stand for environmental protection and poverty reduction through giving qualified and committed political leadership. To me, it is our Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who is the symbol of not only Ethiopia but also of the whole African continent.

Another student stated,

It is our Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who is a strong, brilliant and committed political leader. It is his political effort in giving equal opportunity for development of all regions that made me reach this stage. I am really proud of him and appreciate his concerted energy in fighting the poverty and his attempt to eliminate it through literacy.

Another student also reflected,

Abebe Bekila is my model in Ethiopian history. He is the prominent Ethiopian marathon runner who finished the Rome race in his bare feet, and flew the Ethiopian flag in the Olympics. He symbolizes endurance.

Another student stated,

In Ethiopian history' I have a great place for *Atse* Tewodros. He is my great hero and model. He had a strong desire to introduce new technologies into our country. He was a visionary leader. Above anything else, he showed us to what extent he loves his country and respects the people of Ethiopia in his self sacrifice at "Mekdella Amba".

From the participants' reflections on heroes and/or models, it can be seen that leaders and people of recent times merit much attention. No mention was made of Menelik II, Yohannes V, and only twice was King Tewodros mentioned. The likes of Ras Alula, Aba Jiffar, Ras Gobena, Belay Zeleke and so on were not mentioned. Interestingly, except Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and King Tewodros, the remaining people were mentioned only once. Some of the heroes mentioned had no significant involvement in the politics or political history of the country. Their achievements in various fields were considered to be a reason for being heroes. It is worth considering why students place so much emphasis on recent leaders and individuals. The textbooks do not offer detailed information on the contributions of the prime minister or other leaders and people of recent times. So it may be that the focus on recent leaders and public figures is influenced by students' day-to-day experiences. Moreover, although the textbooks include sections on different historical figures, they may represent them in such a way that limits opportunities students to reflect on and evaluate their contributions. It is also possible that since students have very little in common with the historical figures or heroes of Ethiopia, they may have focused on current leaders and other renowned people.

### **Contributing Factors in Shaping Students' Identity**

From a social perspective, one's identity is entirely the product of interaction with others. As students participate in the vast range of social situations, they collect impressions of themselves that coalesce to form a sense of who they are, as well as a narrative framework that helps them explain the world

and their place within it. These insights create a dynamic identity that is stimulated by one's sense of potential and possibility (McCallister, 2004). When students were asked to reflect on the factors that had contributed to shaping their identity, students mentioned the media, parents, peers, and education as important factors, though their degree of influence varied. One recurrent theme was the significant influence that civic and ethical education played in developing and strengthening ethnic identification among the participants. A student reported:

Not only civic and ethical education, but other social studies like history, particularly modern Ethiopian history, tells us much about the interrelation among various ethnic and cultural groups. Through this educational process, I recognized various inequalities between the northern ethnic groups and kingdoms and other nations and nationalities. Due to this historical inequality, the textbooks influenced me to develop a very strong ethnic identity over Ethiopian identity.

This sentiment was reiterated by another student who said:

...even though my ethnic and Ethiopian identity development has emerged from unreserved struggle of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia, I feel my ethnic identity was strengthened through education, particularly civic and ethical education.

Another student mentioned:

With no doubt, it is education that has shaped my ethnicity within my Ethiopian identity, when I say education, particularly Civic and Ethical Education.

A student underlined the impact of civic and ethical education texts in enhancing his ethnic identity by saying:

Primarily, it is education particularly civic and ethical education that shaped my ethnic and Ethiopian identity. Civics has not only helped me to clearly know my rights and duties but it also enabled me to know my ethnic culture. In addition to this, media helped me to know about other ethnic groups' cultures and I have got a chance to appreciate and become proud of being an Ethiopian. Furthermore, as you know, our university is also a small scale representative of the whole Ethiopia as it constitutes diverse ethnic groups.

Another student was asked to compare the relative influence of media, peers, parents and education in shaping his identity. He went on to say:

When I attempt to make a comparison among education, media, parents, political parties, to me, the role of education is wide and vast. The social studies curricula, like civic and ethical education and history also made an important contribution. My parents have shaped me to have a Ethiopian identity while the civic and ethical education textbooks and recent ideological developments in political parties tell me much about ethnic identity. These factors also seem to have their own influence.

Another student stated:

Yes, civic and ethical education helps me to know more about the past inequality among nations and nationalities living in Ethiopia. The past inequality and discrimination strengthens my ethnic identity. Nowadays the equality of ethnic groups and other affirmative action might help me to develop a sense of Ethiopian identity. Ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity, in my view, cannot be developed only through formal school rather through my life experience. So, my community experiences also shaped me to have strong ethnic identity rather than Ethiopian identity.

Similarly one student mentioned,

My sense of ethnic and Ethiopian identity has been shaped mostly by education and media. My Ethiopian identity is shaped by the community, parents, and media while the ethnic identity is shaped by civic and ethical education

Yet another respondent added,

Media, parents, political parties and education have their own unique role in the development of identities. Education helps us to find a common history and be together. Some of it may be accepted by some people and may not be by others. But history education helps to develop relative common shared identity.

Another student was asked what has contributed the most to the development of his current group identity, and he said,

I think civics has contributed more to widen my horizon on various issues. When I look at the influence of my parents, it focuses on being Ethiopian. I feel civics had great contributions to understanding the various ethnic groups in Ethiopia and value my ethnic group.

When we look into the students' reflections on the contributing factors in shaping their identity, many of the students explained that civic and ethical education texts were influential in shaping or strengthening their ethnic identity over their Ethiopian identity. Yet, it should be noted that in every question of our interview, students were asked to reflect which had contributed more towards shaping their identity - civic and ethical education or history texts. Students were more inclined towards the influence of civics, and for those students whom we made to reflect specifically on history texts, they were skeptical about its contribution in building their identity (ethnic or Ethiopian identity).

Students also explained that media and parents or the community played a role in shaping their sense of ethnic and Ethiopian identity. To sum up, they agreed that civics education has a significant role in influencing their sense of identity. Furthermore, in the Ethiopian context, media has its own role in such a way that there are programs prepared and broadcasted on federalism, history culture and so forth. Political parties, especially those formed after the emergence of the FDRE constitution, encourage identities in the nation. On top of this, parents who teach their children about history and the past deeds of the nation also play a role in developing the identities of the Ethiopian citizen.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study revealed that ethnic identity and Ethiopian identity were not fairly represented in the textbooks. The textbooks were skewed in favor of ethnic identity over Ethiopian identity. Students' assessment of the books was also in line with this finding. Students clearly expressed that the textbooks, particularly civic and ethical education texts, made them understand their

ethnic identity and recognize the equality of other ethnic groups with their own. Students stated that social studies curricula reinforced ethnic values and behaviors and enabled them to learn much about the past inequalities among various groups.

Another finding worth mentioning, as reflected by students, is the deficiency of history textbooks in shaping students' identity. Almost all students were skeptical about the role history textbooks had in shaping their ethnic identity or Ethiopian identity. This was often attributed to the textbooks' sole emphasis on historical facts and narration of past events at the expense of introducing different perspectives, engaging students in reflection, and developing a thorough understanding of the creation of the Ethiopian multinational state. As mentioned in the introduction, grand narratives without open space for reflection can stifle the contribution of history education on nation building.

As reflected by students, the textbooks also fail to integrate Ethiopian identity with historical events. The content analysis of the textbooks also revealed that the study of history was mainly narration focusing on wars rather than engaging students in historical inquiry. The issue of balanced historical representation was also questioned by the participants of the study. Students indicated that the textbooks focus primarily on the good deeds of major historical figures (such as kings and leaders) and do not adequately address historical controversies. In short, history is presented as a narration of facts and the theoretical discourse summarized at the beginning of this paper appears to assume little if any significance in the organization of history textbooks.

Participants noted that the omission of significant dimensions of various historical conflicts and controversies led them to question the contribution of history education. They stated that history textbooks merely narrate historical facts or events without discussing the positive and negative consequences that would have been helpful to them, or providing them with opportunities to engage in these kinds of discussions. Hence, though the textbooks are

required to help students recognize the ideological views embedded in their social studies textbooks, and also identify contradictions within these ideologies (Carlson, 1989 in Su, 2007), they failed to expose students to multiple perspectives. As Carlson (1989) in Su (2007:232) noted, 'Only when students are exposed to varied perspectives and interpretations can they develop critical thinking skills and a more complex understanding of historical events and developments.' Carlson also suggested that teachers supplement their textbooks by providing alternative textbooks and sources that provide information on omissions of historical events in the regular textbook so as to encourage students not to accept information uncritically. In addition, Pinson (2007) noted that education in multicultural countries, where citizenship is a contested issue, should address contested and controversial issues to produce citizens who can value diversity and develop tolerance among themselves.

While the selection of which curricular contents and values to include in textbooks is undoubtedly a challenge, policymakers and curricular experts should give room to different narratives and provide students with opportunities to engage in historical inquiry. Doing so may be possible by providing students' with a balanced view of historical events. However, care must be taken that the historical contents do not have a "hydraulic function", in which offering historical win to one ethnic group based on overweening national pride or historical accounts leads to a discrediting of another ethnic group, so as to promote respect for diversity. As reflected in some of the participants' interviews, there seems to be a failure to recognize the contributions of some ethnic groups in the current content representations. So, alternative narratives that include the views of different groups appear to be necessary.

Another pertinent finding of this study is the dominant influence of civic and ethical education textbooks in shaping ethnic identity over Ethiopian identity. As revealed in much of the transcribed data, civic and ethical education textbooks have contributed to deepening students' ethnic identity over their Ethiopian identity, though some did say, "it made me recognize other ethnic identities." The textbooks encouraged students to have strong feelings about



ethnic values and behaviors, and underscored ethnic identity as the core value for human beings. The textbooks also reinforced the idea that ethnic groups should administer themselves and be governed by people coming from the same ethnic group. The 'we' essence of from a nationalism perspective appears to have been marginalized.

Ethiopian identity is represented in the form of flag, anthem, diversity, common history (though this was questioned by the students), common values and destiny. Yet very little tangible reference was made to common values and history. Rather, the books recommended that a true history of Ethiopia be researched and re-written. Tolerating the culture of others was presented as a form of nationalism. Not much was done in terms of representing symbols and heroes. Even though Ethiopians may disagree on these symbols and heroes, helping students discover who contributed what and the wrong and good deeds of Ethiopians could be useful. It appears that the textbooks need to have a reasonable place for issues of Ethiopian identity if education is to contribute to the creation of sustainable Ethiopian multination state as envisaged in the Growth and Transformation Plan. In their present form, history textbooks present historical issues shallowly and in a monolithic manner. Common values alleged to underlie different groups do not adequately show up in concrete forms in the textbooks. The issue of diversity with its opportunities and challenges also needs to be presented

In sum, the textbooks largely reflected and promoted federalism, ethnic values and symbols, and multiculturalism. There appears to be a subtle reference to Ethiopian identity in terms of sharing similar values, symbols and historical monuments. The celebration of 'Flag Day' needs to be coupled with historical events that could strengthen its meaning and the feeling citizens have towards it. Historians, policy makers and educators could dwell on what could be done in this regard.

Ethiopian history shows that Ethiopians have defended their country for years. There have been many heroes from many different parts of the country. These heroes need to have a place in social studies textbooks.

They do not have to be presented in an aggrandized manner, to the discontent of one group or the satisfaction of another; they just need to be presented as they were. It is also not to suggest that some people should be handpicked and presented as the makers or creators of Ethiopia. Heroes of Ethiopia, who contributed in one way or another, need to be equitably represented and treated in textbooks to help students reflect on and evaluate how present day Ethiopia has evolved across the years. In so doing, the representation of heroes has to transcend political divisions. The challenge in doing so is that someone who is a hero for one group might not be a hero to another group. In such scenarios, presenting the person with all the attached controversies could be useful by allowing students to reflect on both the weak and strong sides of heroes. This would of course require students and teachers who could competently present and debate on such issues. Presenting such issues in higher secondary schools and university may be appropriate since students are mature enough to reflect and deliberate. As Barton and McCully (2005, p. 111) explicitly stated:

If part of history's purpose in schools is to develop critical and informed citizens - a controversial goal in itself- educators will need to develop clearer and more explicit links between programs of history and citizenship. Without closer attention to such issues, school history is unlikely to have a significant impact on the developing political perspectives of young people.

As to the factors that contributed to shaping students identity, participant responses reflected diverse views. Media, parents, peers, and education, among other factors, were found to be important, though their degree of influence varied. Although difficult to limit the degree to which type of identity the aforementioned factors contributed, many of the respondents believed that media has influenced their Ethiopian identity positively, while education, through its textbooks, had by far the greatest influence on building their ethnic identity.

Hence, it is imperative to have thoughtful discussions on the envisaged multination state Ethiopia. In so doing, Ethiopian identity from national identity, civic identity, and loyalty perspectives need to be deliberated upon because of the multiculturalism of Ethiopia. Reflections need to be made whether a civic identity suffices to bind together nation and nationalities in Ethiopia. In a scenario when neither language, religion nor other ascribed dimensions do not provide an agreed upon basis to bind nations and nationalities together, it may be necessary to think of fostering civic values and behaviors (civic identity) that bind people together. Do we have developed institutional and structural system set ups to make citizens identify themselves with civics identities that represent Ethiopia? Are institutions and associations in Ethiopia accountable and transparent enough to create a sense of belongingness by all citizens?

Finally, as stated in earlier sections, it is pivotal that deliberations about the role of education in building Ethiopian identity are made. Questions such as do the educational provisions that we overviewed in the curricula suffice to forge any of these identities (Ethiopian identity be it national, civic, or loyalty) merit deliberations by policy makers and educators? For example, it was intended in the education and training policy that students can learn one nationality language, besides Amharic, in primary education (Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia, 1994:24). This may have fostered better understanding and interaction among citizens, created among nations and nationalities feeling of recognition by other groups, and developed a bilingual competence which citizens may need to work in regions in which a language other than their mother-tongue language is spoken. Civic and ethical education also needs to transcend from mere classroom and plasma based factual teaching and heed to those educational elements that could enhance its contribution (Tsfaye, Bohl, and Kleninknecht, *in press*). Diverse opportunities for students to have field and interactive experiences in other regions in which students would get the opportunity to appreciate and learn about cultural values and practices could be considered rather than mere repetition of contents at various grade levels. We believe that purposeful and informed deliberations and

interventions need to be made on thoughts and practices that are addressed in this paper and those which are overlooked, yet which could be more relevant and insightful, in the effort to create a sustainable multination state Ethiopia and citizens with balanced group identities (ethnic and Ethiopian identity) and loyalty to the multination state.

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