

## Population Growth as an Impediment to the Realization of Universal Primary Education in Ethiopia

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**Abstract:** *Educational planners often attribute low level of educational participation to low level of supply and governments' efforts are directed at expanding the supply of schools teachers, books and other educational materials. Little attention is given to the effect of demographic factors on educational participation. There have been surprisingly few attempts to quantify the impact of rapid population growth on the quantitative expansion of education in Ethiopia. This study, therefore, aims at exploring, through document analysis, the manner in which the present and future demographic trends militate against the achievement of educational goals in Ethiopia. Ethiopia's population growth greatly increases the number of children seeking access to school and increases the number of potential illiterates. Despite a considerable increase in primary school enrollment from about 3.0 million in 1992/93 to 5.2 million in 1998/99, the number of those out of school rose to 7.7 million in 1998/99. If the present population trend continues, the primary school-age population is further projected to reach 19.1 million in 2015 and 20.6 in 2020. The government of Ethiopia is hard pressed to provide educational facilities for the numbers knocking at the doors of educational institutions. Furthermore, the government has planned to realize universal primary education in Ethiopia in 2015. However, under the present population trend, achieving an eight years of universal primary education remains a long way off. This study concludes that the high birth rate of the Ethiopian population is a barrier to the early attainment of universal primary education in Ethiopia. Hence a variety of population projections and their implications need to be studied when long-term educational plans are formulated.*

### Introduction

Education is regarded as the democratic right of every citizen in Ethiopia. On this basis, there has been a phenomenal growth over the past four decades in government expenditure on education, provision of educational facilities and a

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corresponding increase in school enrolment. The expansion of educational facilities rests also on the view that education should be used as a powerful instrument of social, economic and political change. It is widely believed that the rapid quantitative expansion of educational opportunities is the keystone to accelerated socio-economic development. Moreover, it is believed that universal primary education would enhance the opportunities for social mobility of the poor and the underprivileged.

It is in line with these that universalization of primary education has received considerable attention in many of the developing countries and the Ethiopian Government has made important strides in that direction. Ethiopia had set for itself the target of achieving free universal primary education at different times. Since 1962/63, following the Addis Ababa Conference on African Education in 1961, Ethiopia set a goal of providing universal and free primary education by 1980.

After realising that this goal could not be achieved by the year 1980, the Socialist Government of Ethiopia prepared another document (Tentative Plan of 1976-1984) in which it set the goal of achieving free universal primary education and wiping out illiteracy from the country by 1984 (PMGE, Tentative Plan, 1976). The government again postponed this to the year 1994 in its Perspective Plan of 1984 to 1994 (Perspective Plan, 1983).

The present government of Ethiopia also puts considerable importance on education. Particularly qualitative expansion of primary education has received considerable attention in the various policies and strategies of the government. With this in view, the Federal Government of Ethiopia has also set to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015 (Education Sector Development Program, 1996).

Aggregate increases in the number of students since these plans were in effect are remarkable. Enrolment in primary schools during the Imperial regime increased from 180,500 in

1962/63 to 857,400 in 1973/74 (Ethiopia: Education Today, 1973/74). Similarly, enrolment at the primary level during Derg regime increased from around 1.1 million in 1974/75 to 2.9 million in 1988 (Dawit, 1989). Under the present government, enrolment has increased from 3.2 million in 1994/95 to 5.2 million in 1998/99 (MOE, 1999).

In spite of the remarkable progress made in the field of primary education since the 1960s, Ethiopia is still far behind from achieving its goals. The participation rate at primary level (1- 8) in 1998/99 stands at 45.8 percent (MOE, 1999). About 54.2 per cent of the school-age population is still outside the purview of the educational system. After all these intentions and the corresponding efforts to meet them in the series of national planning, why does the country seem particularly unable to meet the goals of Universal primary education?

Although the demographic factor is only one of a number of obstacles to attaining the educational goals Ethiopia set for itself, the purpose of the current study is to examine to what extent the rapid increase in population growth influenced and will influence the realisation of universal primary education in Ethiopia. The major research question is, therefore, to what extent has the rapid population growth hindered and will hinder the realisation of universal primary education in Ethiopia.

To answer these and related questions, the paper has relied on secondary sources of data and information. Major documents and policies on educational issues and plans during the three different governments (Imperial, Derg, and present Government) are reviewed and the targets of the plans are compared with the results achieved at the end of the plan period. Documents on population issues are also analysed to show the impact of rapid school age population growth on the realisation of educational goals.

Because educational planners in Ethiopia are mainly concerned only with the short-term means of coping with the children joining the school system, and have showed relatively

little interest in population policy matters, this study is conducted with the intention of attracting the attention of educational researchers and planners so that they include population policy matters in order to realise their educational plans.

## **Background**

### **Demographic Obstacles in Universalizing Education**

Primary schooling has been formally accepted as a human right for many years, but it has not been provided for all eligible children in some countries until now. It was during the early 1960s that UNESCO convened a series of conferences on the development of education in each of the major regional blocks of developing countries. These regional conferences were held between 1960 and 1966 – Karachi, 1960 for the Asian region; Addis Ababa, 1961 for the African region; Santiago, 1962 for Latin America; and Tripoli, 1966 for the Arab States. Almost all countries in these regional groupings were represented at the conferences and were thus signatories to the resolutions passed. The Conferences called for universal and free primary education to be attained by 1970 in Latin America and by 1980 in Africa, Asia and the Arab States. Schooling at all levels has expanded rapidly since these conferences. At the primary level, enrollments doubled in Asia and Latin America over the two decades to 1980, whilst in Africa they more than tripled over the period. (C. Colclough and K. Lewin, 1993).

The increases in the capacity of school systems in the developing countries exceeded those envisaged by the UNESCO conferences of the early 1960s. For the African case for example, it had been estimated that 33 million school places would be sufficient to provide for universal primary enrollment by the 1980s. In fact, actual enrollment in the same year had risen to 44.8 million, but about 56 million places would by then have been required if all the children within the eligible age-range for primary schooling were to have been enrolled (et.al, 1993).

As this clearly shows, many of the developing countries were not in a position to ensure universal provision of primary education. The reasons for the failure of achieving these goals differ between countries, and are strongly influenced by differences in domestic history, culture, and politics, as well as in economic and education policies. It is, however, possible to identify a range of factors which appear to have influenced enrollment outcomes. These include low per capita income, high rates of population growth, poor educational policies, and low demand for schooling.

Studies by Jones (1975 and 1976) show that population growth can be viewed either as a factor raising the cost of attaining given educational targets or as a factor stretching out the time period in which such targets can be reached if a ceiling is placed on expenditure. Looking at the situation of developing countries, UNESCO (1977) has shown that in order to maintain enrolment ratios of ages 6-11 constant until the end of the century, the less developed countries would have to increase their enrolment by 75 percent in the medium population project and by 95 percent in the high projection.

Another study by UNESCO (1983) shows that between 1980 and 2000, the developing countries as a whole would have to increase their primary school enrolment by 40 percent (in Africa, by 85 percent) in order to maintain the enrolment ratios attained in 1980. By a strong contrast, to maintain their comparatively higher enrolment rates, the developed countries would need to raise enrolments by only 2 per cent.

After comparing the experiences of Singapore and Thailand, Gavin W. Jones (1990) arrived at some useful conclusions about the effect of high fertility and fertility decline on educational development during the 1960s and 1970s. Both countries achieved high rates of economic growth over this period, but population trends differed markedly. In Thailand, population growth during the 1960s averaged approximately 3 per cent per annum. In Singapore, by contrast, a decline in fertility is dramatic enough to halve the gross reproduction rate

in 12 years and this decline was reflected in primary school entrants. By the mid-1970s the benefits of lowered fertility had worked themselves right through the school system in Singapore. As reported to UNESCO, between 1971 and 1977, expenditure on education had increased by 151 percent even though the enrolment showed a reduction of 5.3 percent. The number of teachers had dropped by only 1.1 percent, resulting in improved pupil-teacher ratios, and the number of schools also declined owing to the closure of a large number of small, substandard schools which were replaced by more spacious, well-constructed and better-equipped buildings (UNESCO, 1970:207). In Thailand, by contrast, the goal of seven years compulsory education was far from being reached at the end of the decade.

J.E. Jayasuriya (1982) gives another very important illustration of how the large increase in the school-age population in the developing countries is a reason for shortfalls in the achievement of educational goals. Jayasuriya examined this problem by comparing Indonesia and Japan. There are two reasons for the choice of these two countries. The first is that the sizes of their population were similar in 1960.

**Table 1 : Population of Indonesia and Japan in 1960 and 1980**

Country	Year	Population	
		aged 6-11	Total Population
Indonesia	1960	13,455,000	92,702,000
	1980	25,176,000	154,868,000
Japan	1960	12,400,000	94,095,000
	1980	11,269,000	117,546,000

Source: UNESCO. Development of Education in Asia and Oceanic: Statistical trends and projections, 1965-1985. Paris, 1978. Table 3. In: Bulletin of the UNESCO Regional office for Education in Asia and Pacific, June, 1982, No 23

The second is that over the period 1960 to 1980, they recorded quite contrasting rates of population growth, approximating a high average annual rate of 2.5 percent in the case of Indonesia, and a low average annual rate of 1.1 percent in the case of Japan. Jayasuriya noted the following points about the

changes over the period 1960 to 1980:

- The total population of Japan exceed that of Indonesia by 1.4 million in 1960, but in 1980 the population of Indonesia exceeded that of Japan by 37.3 million,
- In 1960, the Indonesian population aged 6 to 11 years was more than the Japanese population aged 6 to 11 years by only 1.05 million whereas in 1980 the Indonesian population aged 6 to 11 years exceeded the same in Japan by 13.5 million. The Indonesian population aged 6 - 11 years increased by 87.1 percent whereas the Japanese population aged 6 to 11 declined by 5.6 percent during the period.

Using the additional data given below, the enormity of the task that faced educational planners in Indonesia in 1985, as contrasted with the condition that obtained in 1960, may be seen in quite dramatic form:

- The net enrolment ratio for 6 to 11 year olds was 50.1 per cent for Indonesia in 1960, and 100 per cent for Japan;
- The Indonesian population aged 6 to 11 years was 28.236 million in 1985, while the Japanese population of the same age group was only 12.269 million.

In order to maintain Indonesia's 50.1 per cent enrolment ratio in 1985, the figures in that year reached 14.146 million, which was 7.405 million more than the enrolment in 1960. To increase the enrolment ratio to 100 per cent in 1985 meant an enrolment of 28.236 million or, in other words, 21.495 million more than in 1960. Japan, on the other hand, maintained a 100 per cent enrolment in 1985 with an excess of 131,000 above the enrolment in 1960. This example illustrates how rapid population growth makes the attainment of desirable educational goals an almost impossible undertaking.

Another approach to an appreciation of the influence of the population variable is to consider the "dependency burden" which was also described by Jayasuriyo (1987) with reference to Indonesia and Japan. For the year 1980, the youth dependency ratio for Japan and Indonesia were 36 and 79 percent respectively. Quite naturally, a large dependency reduces a country's capacity to provide basic services, such as health and education for the young people. Added to this, in Indonesia to a greater extent than in Japan, not all of the working age population is economically active. In particular, the participation of women in the economic activity is much less in Indonesia than in Japan. This has the effect of making the actual dependency greater than the theoretical rate. The real crux of the problem of rapid population growth in relation to education is that while rapid population growth releases a very large number of children into the school-age group, as in the case of Indonesia, the high dependency burden resulting from rapid population growth at the same time reduces the capacity to meet their educational needs.

The examples from Singapore and Thailand represent success stories in terms of economic growth, control of fertility and educational development. Unfortunately prospects for such success appear bleaker in many other countries particularly in Africa. School-age population growth is more rapid in Africa than in any other region of the world. Between 1985 and 2000, numbers in the 5-14 age group are expected to grow by 5 percent in the developed countries, by rather under 30 per cent in Latin America and Caribbean, and as much as 60 percent in Africa. Not only is there a bigger school expansion job to be done in Africa, but there are proportionally fewer people in the working age population to carry the burden of that schooling. By the year 2000 in developed countries the ratio of people aged over 19 to those aged under 19 will be 71:29. In Africa it will be 45:55 (Peter William, 1989).

To make these points more clearer, Fuller reports the problem facing the educational planner in one African country--Malawi. Since 1980 the child population has been growing at least by



3.9 per cent per year and primary school enrolment has grown by 3.2 percent per year. Yet the Malawi government's budgetary situation has declined. Total recurrent expenditure on education has grown just by 0.6 percent per year in real terms; thus spending per pupil is falling at a rate of 2.6 per cent per year. Educational quality--as measured by pupil/teacher ratios, expenditure per pupil, availability of instructional materials, reported rates and progression rates to the end of primary school is steadily deteriorating.

Although Malawi's economic difficulties have aggravated the situation, part of the problem in education planning, however, is the very high birth rate, and a decline in fertility would cut the costs of achieving primary school enrolment rate goals, as a World Bank projection for Malawi indicates. Assuming that recurrent costs (made up largely of teachers salaries) remained constant at their 1980 level of \$12.50 per student and that fertility also remained constant, the primary education budget would have to be doubled in real terms every 15 years in order to merely maintain the existing coverage and quality of primary education. Even with positive economic growth this will involve significant increases in the proportion of GDP allocated to education. However, rapid fertility decline will ultimately result in important financial savings. For example, with lower fertility, a 100 per cent enrolment rate could be achieved by the year 2005 at cost, which is lower than what would be required to achieve an enrolment rate of 65 per cent in the same year if fertility remained unchanged. (World Bank, 1984).

The cross-country statistical analysis presented by C. Colclough and K.M. Lewin (1993) on six developing countries, among which three are African countries, identifies a number of important characteristics which are systematically associated with under enrolment at primary level around the world. The writers demonstrated that countries with low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) tend to have low per capita income and high rates of population growth, and thus face a proportionately greater task in achieving universal primary education than do

richer countries. Among the selected countries, in four of them universal primary education has already been attained, two being low income (Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka) and two being from the middle-income group (China and Colombia). In the remaining two African countries- Ghana (low-income) and Senegal (middle-income) - universal primary education remains some way off. However, in all six countries important educational reforms have been introduced, with the intention of achieving universal access to higher-quality primary education.

China's record is important. China is one of the countries which have achieved universal primary education. China has achieved universal primary education with a lower proportion of GNP being spent on education than most other countries. This is partly because of its successful policies for slowing down population growth. Thus the task of achieving and maintaining UPE in China has been successful and more manageable than in many other countries, since in China the size of the school age cohort has remind small in relation to the increase in the population, and is shrinking.

Primary education enrolment in Zimbabwe increased from 1,715,200 in 1981 to 2,269,000 in 1989. For Zimbabwe to achieve universal primary education in the 1980s, building only 1340 additional schools and brining only 543,800 additional children to school in nine years period was enough.

**Table 2: Primary School Enrolment in Zimbabwe in the 1980s**

Year	Schools	Enrolment
1981	3689	1,715,200
1985	4234	2,216,900
1989	4501	2,269,000

Sources: Government of Zimbabwe (179-1989), In: C. Colclough, (1993:98) *Educating All the Children, Strategies for primary schooling in the south*

This shows how it is possible to realise universal primary education with minimum effort where there is low rate of school-age population. In other countries like Ethiopia where there is a large increase in the school-age population, even

building several thousands of schools and bringing several millions of children to schools will not enable them to achieve their goals.

Zimbabwe's experience in managing to double primary enrolment in the early 1980s is remarkable. After only two years of independence the primary gross enrolment ratio had risen from 60 percent to around 100 percent. This was, in fact, a consequence of introducing substantial reforms to the structure and financing of education. Schooling in Zimbabwe became compulsory, double-session was introduced, repetition was abolished, and new low-cost teacher-training schemes were introduced; there was a sharp increase in untrained teachers, pupil/teacher ratios were increased, and public spending on education was increased.

Ghana and Senegal are examples of African countries, which have been exceptionally hard hit by recession. Ghana, where the gross enrolment ratio fell from 80 to 70 by the mid 1980s, efficiency was obtained by reducing the length of pre-university school cycle and by introducing double shifts at primary level. Senegal is one of west African countries where the major constraint on educational expansion has been the high level of recurrent costs (teachers' and administrators' salaries). Senegal's reform thus sought to reduce unit costs by employing low-cost assistant teachers and by re-deploying educational administrators as teachers. Double shift system in urban schools and multi-grade methods were also introduced into the school system.

The case studies show that the achievement of universal primary education in the poor countries with low population growth need little effort if good policies are adopted (Zimbabwe). If the population growth is high, in addition to good education policies, policies on population issue is of great importance to attain universal primary education (China). Educational reform alone can contribute little to the attainment of universal primary education in poorer countries (Ghana and Senegal).

### **The Efforts made to Realise Universal Primary Education in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is now one of the countries with a rising birth rate. As a result, there is a built-in momentum in Ethiopian population which confirms massive overall numerical growth into the 21st century. Ethiopia ranks third next to Nigeria and Egypt in terms of population size in Africa. According to the 1994 estimate, Ethiopia has a population of more than 60 million in 2000 of which more than 50 percent are children and youth under 20 years of age. The Ethiopian population is projected to be 74.8 million by the year 2005 with the primary school-age population of 14.8 million (Central Statistics Authority, 1998). This shows the magnitude of the problem that Ethiopia has been contending with for some time now to achieve universal enrolment of the age group 7-14 years.

Although Ethiopia has a long and rich history of educational tradition, the formulation of educational policy and the idea of educational planning is a recent phenomenon. It is after the liberation from the Italian occupation that the Ethiopian Government began to lay down the educational foundation. The main emphasis at that time was the creation of an education system that could provide administrative personnel to run the government machinery. To meet this need reconstruction began with the re-establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1942. To enhance educational expansion an educational tax was for the first time introduced to partly finance education. From 1942 until 1955, the Ethiopian government was engaged in the expansion of the education system. Furthermore, in response to the resolution of the Addis Ababa conference on African education (1961), the Ministry of Education proceeded to expand education. Especially the objectives set down by the Addis Ababa conference on African education, that is, universal primary education by 1980, obliged Ethiopia to adopt a policy of expansion of the education sector. The Ethiopian Government has realised the importance of planning at this stage.

National development planning was introduced in Ethiopia in the late 1950s. The first five-year plan covering the years 1956/57-1960/61 was adopted in 1956. The chapter of this plan pertaining to education, however, did not show any educational target. Many people in fact came to know about its existence only when the second five-year plan was issued. Following the first five-year plan, the government established the second five year plan (1962/63 -1966/1967) which outlined targets for students enrolment at all levels. According to the plan, enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels were to be increased to 275,900, 40,830 and 1,000 students respectively. At the end of the plan period, however, the actual enrolment at all levels had exceeded the planned targets (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Students Enrolment in the three National Development Plans**

Plan Year	Primary (1-6)			Secondary (7-12)		
	Base Year	Target	Achieved	Base Year	Target	Achieved
1956/57-1960/61	104,500	---	180,500	8500	----	25,000
1962/63 -1966/67	180,500	275,900	338,700	25,000	40,830	67,400
1968/69-1972/73	338,700	616,000	857,400	67400	114000	154300

Source: Ethiopia Today Education (1973).

The government then issued the third five-year plan (1968/69 - 1972/73) in which the specific targets of the enrolment at the various levels of the educational system were provided. Broadly the plan anticipated that 18 percent of the primary school age population would be enrolled in primary schools by the end of the plan period (1973). The rates of growth of enrolment during the third five-year plan as compared with the target set were higher. Total actual enrolment at the primary and secondary levels were 857,400 and 154,300 students respectively (Fasil, 1990).

Although the Ethiopian education sector showed some expansion as shown above, the over-all provision of educational facilities was very inadequate as it could cater for only 19 percent of the primary school-age population (aged 7-

12), and only 9.2 percent of the students in junior secondary schools aged 13-14, and for only 3.1 per cent of the students in the senior secondary schools, aged 15-18 (Ten -Year Perspective Plan, 1984). Although the education system of that time was altogether inadequate to meet the needs of the country and to bring rapid economic growth, it became a vehicle to transform the Ethiopian society to some degree.

After the fall of the Imperial government in 1974, the socialist regime (1974-1991) accepted the challenge of expanding the education sector on the assumption that education held the key place to the development of the country. This view was laid down in the Program of the National Democratic Revolution of the 1976(PNDR, 1976) and in the Program of workers party of Ethiopia ((WPE, 1983). Giving emphasis to the expansion of Education in Ethiopia, the workers party of Ethiopia declared the following in its program: "In accordance with the objective realities of our country, unsparing effort will be made to provide all school age children with eight years of education which will enable them to be employed on the one hand, and to successively pursue their education at higher levels, on the other hand"(WPE program 1983:98). On the basis of the government's policy guidelines the Ministry of Education readjusted its priorities and set its immediate goals, to promote universal primary education within the shortest period of time commensurate with available resources (MOE, 1977:1). To this effect the Ministry of Education prepared a Tentative Educational Plan for the years 1976-1983.

In order to fulfil the educational demand of the country, the Ministry of Education developed Tentative Educational Plan for 1976 to 1983. One of the major educational objectives reflected in the Tentative Plan was the achievement of universal primary education before the target year (1983). To realise the objective, it was planned to increase the primary school participation rate from 21 percent to 48 percent during the first half of the Plan (1976 to 1980) and to achieve universal primary education before the end of the second half (1983). Similarly, expected enrolment ratios for the lower

secondary schools (grades 7-10) during the plan period were to increase from 7.7 percent in 1976 to 12.8 percent in 1980 and to 17.9 percent in 1983. The corresponding ratios for higher secondary schools (grades 11-12) were increased from 5 percent in 1976 to 5.6 in 1980 and 7.8 percent in 1983 (MOE, 1977: 25 - 30). In projecting these targets, the total

**Table 4: Population Components of the Perspective Educational Plan**

Groups	Percentage of population	Numbers in Million
Primary school age (7-12)	15.7	4.36
Low secondary school age (13-16)	9.1	2.52
Higher secondary school age (17-18)	4.1	1.14
Economically active persons	35.7	9.90

Source: MOE, Report on Educational Development in Ethiopia, 1977:26

population of Ethiopia was assumed to be 27.7 million in the base year (1976) and to grow at a rate of 2.55 percent from 1975-1979, at 2.74 percent from 1980 to 1984 and at 2.88 percent from 1984 - 1989 with the components indicated in Table 4. Impressive achievements have been made in primary education since the plan. As indicated in Table 5 enrolment at the primary level increased from 1,102,131 in 1976 to 2,481,017 students in 1984.

**Table 5: Enrolment of Students During the Tentative Plan**

	1976	1980		1984	
	Base Year	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
Primary	1102131	1551500	1811253 (117%)	2795000	2481017 (89%)
Lower Secondary	140817	174000	186084 (107%)	294500	302756 (103%)
Senior Secondary	90091	186000	185217 99.6%	285700	275076 96%
Achievement in Percent					
Total	1333039	1911500	2182554	3375200	3058849

Source: Central Planning Supreme Council (1985): Report on the Six Year Educational Development in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

During this time enrolment at all levels increased from 1,333,039 students in 1976 to 3,058,849 in 1984. When these

figures are compared with the targets of the tentative plan, 114.1 percent and 90.6 percent of the target were achieved in 1980 and 1984 respectively. At the end of the plan period the gross participation rate was reported to be 47.2 per cent for the primary schools. However, this figure was misleading because children in the rural areas started school late and hence there were many over-aged children in the system. Increase in the number of schools during the plan period was also remarkable. Table 6 below depicts a large increase in the number of schools during the tentative plan (1976 to 1983).

**Table 6: Increases in the number of schools during the plan period**

Year	1976	1977	1980	1985
Primary	3693	4862	5822	7147
Lower secondary	554	650	788	852
Senior secondary	123	157	180	207
Total	4370	5669	6790	8206

As indicated in Table 6 the number of primary schools increased from 3693 in the base year to 7147 in 1985. The number of lower and senior secondary schools increased from 554 and 123 in 1976 to 852 and 207 in 1985 respectively which raised the total number of schools to 8206.

**Table 7: Growth of teaching staff during the plan period**

	1979 Base Year	1980		1984	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
Primary	29040	31517	31139	47973	44815
Lower Secondary	3864	4321	4645	6649	5937
Senior Secondary	3770	4563	4347	7306	7051
Total	36674	40401	40139	61928	57803

Another significant target of the plan was to increase the number of teaching staff in line with increased enrolment. To realise the final target, it was planned to increase the number of teachers at all levels from 36,674 in 1979 to 61,928 in 1984.



little left for other forms of educational materials. These problems were exacerbated by the effect of price increases of educational materials.

The other final target of the plan was eradicating illiteracy from the country. In recognition of the importance of literacy for accelerated socio-economic development, the Government of Ethiopia launched a National Literacy Campaign in 1979. As reported, by 1983 a total number of 14.1 million Ethiopians were literate (Perspective Plan, 1984). However, the accomplishment of successful campaigns in eradicating illiteracy from Ethiopia could rapidly become diluted if primary school system could not serve the ever larger cohorts of the school age children. In Ethiopia where the primary system fails to meet this challenge, the call for eradicating illiteracy would never be met in a single campaign. Despite these difficulties the Government again planned a Ten-year Perspective Plan to achieve universal primary education.

During the tentative educational plan of 1976-1983, the number of students increased substantially as result of the expansion. Being aware of the effort required to achieve universal primary education, the Government again planned to achieve universal primary education and to eradicate illiteracy by the end of 1993/94. To this end, the government planned the Ten Year Perspective Plan. More specifically the targets to be fulfilled during the plan period in the area of general education were spelt out as follows:

- Primary education, that is, grades 1-6, will be universalised by the end of the plan period;
- Illiteracy will be completely eradicated and continuing education will be the dominant feature of general education.

Enrolment in primary level was planned to increase from 2,481,017 in 1984 to 5,248,000 students in 1993/94. The target was to raise enrolment ratio at this level from 47.2 percent in 1984 to 100 percent in 1994. The target for the

As a result, the number of teachers increased from 36,674 to 57,803. This shows that 93.33 percent of the target was achieved (see Table 7).

One of the final targets of the Tentative Educational Plan was to achieve universal primary education before 1984/85. However, in spite of all the efforts made by the Government of Ethiopia, only 47.2 percent of the elementary school age population attended school in 1983/84. One may ask an important question here: how could the enrolment ratio remain only 47.2 percent in 1984 when the plan of increasing students enrolment at the primary school was achieved by above 90 percent in the same year? The problem lies outside the education sector. The growth of elementary school-age population was faster than it was initially assumed. The substantial gains during this period in raising the population of children in school, though impressive, did not enable the Government to achieve its final target. If the school-going age groups had not been growing very fast, the massive increases in enrolments would have been enough to achieve universal primary education in a shorter period of time.

In addition, the above quantitative data are admittedly crude and partial indicators of progress. The figures do not indicate the quality of education given except that the literacy figures appear to indicate some acquisition of basic skills, presumably through primary schooling. The expansion of the educational system brought about inevitable strains on the system with adverse effects on the quality of education. This development created some pressure on the Government's budgetary resources. The recurrent budget on general education had been growing at only 10.5 % per year between 1974 and 1983 while the student population was increasing at 12.6% per year during the same period. The percentage share of recurrent expenditure on general education in the total recurrent budget of the central government went down from 12.1% in 1974 to 9.2% in 1983 (Ten Year Perspective Plan, 1984). Since nearly 96% of the recurrent budget allocated to formal education was being absorbed by salary payments for teachers there was

teachers of this level was to increase from 44,815 in the base year to 104,800 in 1994. Enrolment in junior and senior secondary schools was to be increased from 302,756 and 275,076 in 1984 to 879,100 and 381,300 students in 1994 respectively. The number of teachers at junior and senior secondary schools was to be increased from 5937 and 7051 in 1976 to 26,700 and 12,200 in 1994 respectively.

**Table 8: Expected Number of Enrolment in the Ten-year Perspective Educational Plan (1984-1994)**

Educational Levels	1983/84	1989/90		1993/94	
	Base year	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
Primary	2,508,900	3930600	2,855,846	5248000	4,005,708
Junior Secondary	277,500	556400	447,587	879100	462,586
Senior Secondary	261,600	333900	426,413	381300	357194
Total	3,048,000	4,820,900		6,514,400	

Source: For 1983/84, Tentative perspective Plan, 1984; for 1989 and 1993/94: Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 1998.

During the 1984 -1994 period enrolment at primary and junior secondary levels increased from 2.7 million students in 1984 to 3.1 million students in 1994. However, if we compare this with the target, i.e. 6,127,100 (primary + junior secondary) only 50 percent of the target was achieved. According to the perspective plan, primary school enrolment ratio would be raised to 100 percent in 1994. But the gross primary enrolment ratio dropped from 45.9% in 1984 to 22% in 1993/94, (World Bank, 1995).

While more primary school-age children are attending school, the percentage remains low. The number of children out of the school system has increased from 3.3 million in 1978 to 5.4 million in 1988 and it was further projected to increase at an alarming rate. According to the medium variant projection, the school age population (age 7-18) was estimated at 19.7 million in 1995 (OPHCC, 1991). The budget implication of the ever-increasing school-age population in terms of providing schools, educational materials and teachers is apparent. In order to reach the planned enrolment ratio of 100 percent at the primary level in 1995, the figure in that year must reach

9,206,000 which is about 6.5 million more than the enrolment in 1995 (2,722,192). Increasing the enrolment ratio to 100 per cent by 1995 (according to the target of perspective plan) will mean an enrolment of 11.8 million. But by 1995 less than 3.0 million were enrolled in primary schools while more than 8 million were out of school. This illustrates how rapid population growth makes the attainment of desirable educational goals (targets) a difficult undertaking.

When the current Government came to power, the Ethiopian education system was suffering from multifaceted problems. The main problems were related to the issues of relevance, quality, equity and access. Inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teachers, shortage of books and other teaching materials indicate the low quality of education provided at all levels. With regard to access, towards the end years of the Derg period enrolment was decreasing which is attributed to the prolonged effect of war and instability. After achieving rapid growth in enrolment at all levels between 1974 and 1983, the development of Ethiopian education declined in the later half of the 1980s as indicated in Table 9.

During the latter half of the 1980s, the Government's preoccupation with civil war led to a drastic decline in enrolment. As indicated in Table 9 gross enrolment ratio decreased from 41.9 in 1987 to 23.1 in 1992.

**Table 9: Gross Enrolment Ratio at Primary Level (1-6)**

Year	1985/6	1986/7	1987/8	1988/9	1989/90	1990/1	1991/2	1992/3
GER	37.4	40.8	41.9	40.3	36.5	32.7	26.5	23.1

Source: MOE, 1994. Basic Education Statistics.

The World Bank estimated the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at primary level to be 22% in 1991/92 (World Bank, 1993). This gross enrolment ratio at the primary level placed Ethiopia last among the countries of the world with the least developed education system in terms of access.

Many teachers are under-qualified or unqualified and generally poorly motivated. Their teaching is teacher-centred with a heavy focus on rote learning. There was no or little emphasis on intellectual stimulation, practical application, or student-centred learning. In the light of these educational problems, it has become imperative for the Ethiopian Government to design an appropriate education and training policy that gives insight for the overall educational development.

**Table 10: Indicators of Primary education in years 1992/93**

Items	indicators in number
Primary School-age Population	9.3 million
Total Primary Enrolment	2.0 Million
Number of Primary Schools	8,226
Number of Primary Teachers	68,237
Education Expenditure/GDP	3.5%
Education's share of total Gov't. budget	12%
Education's share of Recurrent budget	18%
Primary share of total Education budget	47%
Non-Salary share of primary Education	13%

Source: World Bank, Education Sector Public Expenditure Review, 1993

Responding to the challenges that the education system of Ethiopia faced during the late 1980s and early 1990s (low enrolment, poor quality, inadequate curriculum, inequalities among sexes, regions, urban and rural, etc.) the Government of Ethiopia adopted the current Education and Training Policy that intends to systematically and gradually alleviate these problems. In 1994 Ethiopia adopted a new Education and Training Policy and Strategy (ETPS) to restructure the education system and expand its accessibility in a form that is directly relevant to the present and future requirements of the economy. The policy envisages:

*"... bringing up citizens endowed with a human outlook, countrywide responsibility and democratic values having developed the necessary productive, creative and appreciative capacity in order to participate fruitfully in development and the utilisation of resources and the environment at large".*

Since then education has started to occupy a strategic position in Ethiopian's development priorities. Major developments in the field of education in Ethiopia since 1994 have created a favourable environment of improving access to and quality of primary of education. These include the strong priority attached by the Government to human development, the formulation of the Education and Training Policy (1994), preparation of the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) for the period 1997/98-200021/2, and progress in regard to the decentralisation of planning and management of primary education.

To this effect, the Ministry of Education prepared a short-term plan for the years 1994/95 to 1996/97). The short-term plan is aimed at particularly enhancing the quality of primary education by developing new curriculum, upgrading teachers quality, improving school environment and constructing schools. The major targets to be achieved during the plan period (1994/95 -1996/97) were:

- Expanding access by raising primary enrolment ratio from 27.5 percent in 1994/95 to 33.72% in 1996/97 by constructing 5,394 new first cycle primary schools (grades 1-4) and by upgrading 7376 old primary schools structure (1-6) to new primary school structure (grades 1-8),
- Developing and implementing new curricula for grades 1-8 schools;
- Developing and implementing a New Teacher Training Institutions curriculum that corresponds with the New Primary Education;
- Giving re-orientation programs to the existing teaching staff to enable them to use the new curriculum and improve their carrier structure;

- Developing some TTIs into Diploma Programs (12+2) and constructing eight new TTIs, and
- Setting a minimum school standard and facilities.

Considerable progress has been achieved since 1994. Changes and reforms have been made in the education sector which included curriculum reform and changes in the educational structure, the decentralisation of the management of education, improving access to primary schools and inequalities among sexes and regions.

The current curriculum, which is believed to overcome many of shortcomings of the old, is implemented in all elementary schools (1-8) throughout the country. A new structure of the formal education system has been developed and is now being introduced across the country. Prior to the Education Reform of 1994, general education was divided into primary (1-6), junior secondary (7-8) and senior secondary (9-12) with national examinations given on completion of each level.

The New curriculum offers ten years of general education consisting of eight years of primary education and two years of general secondary education (9-10) with the second cycle of secondary education (101-12) which prepares students for higher education. Primary education is divided into two cycles comprising grades one through four of basic education and second cycle of grades five through eight of general primary education. According to the New Education and Training Policy of 1994, there will also be a system of technical and vocational training which will be offered to the graduates of each cycle.

Educational management in Ethiopia was highly centralised with the Ministry of Education involved in all the levels – lowest to longest. According to the Ethiopian Government's proclamation No. 41/1993 and the Education and Training Policy of 1994, all regional states have a wide range of power to manage their own affairs including the management of education below the tertiary level. The Education and Training

policy emphasises decentralisation of administration by giving more power and authority to the regional Education Bureaux. Based on the Proclamation and Education and Training Policy Guidelines, regions have already started discharging their responsibilities and exercising their powers. The responsibility of allocating and managing resources for primary and secondary schools rests on *Wereda* Education Office, which is accountable to the Zonal Education Bureau, and in turn the Zonal education Bureau is accountable to the Regional Education Bureau. The responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education is limited to providing professional advice, regulating standards, co-ordinating nation wide plans and managing tertiary level education.

There are encouraging signs that enrolment at all levels is increasing since the plan was implemented. The increase in primary enrolment has been particularly remarkable. The number of primary schools (1-8), on the average, has grown by about 6% over the last three years, while enrolment at the primary level (1-6) and junior secondary level has increased by 21.2% and 7.3% respectively. The absolute number of students at the primary level (1-8) according to the new structure has increased from 3.1 million in 1993/94 to 4.1 million in 1996/97, which raises the gross enrolment ratio of the same level (1-8) from less than 20% in 1992/93 to 37.1% in 1996/97 (40.1% for grades 1-6).

**Table 11: Change in the number of primary school teachers, students, schools, and Gross Enrolment Rates (1994/95-1996/97)**

Year	1994/95		1995/96		1996/97		Annual growth rates	
	1-6	7-8	1-6	7-8	1-6	7-8	1-6	7-8
Schools	9276	1230	9704	1304	10204	1472	5.9	7.6
Teachers	83113	11544	89189	12932	92526	13262	7.3	5.3
Students	2722102	376230	3380068	407851	4005708	462586	21.2	7.3
GER(1-6)	29		34.6		40.1			
GER(1-8)	24.1		32.0		37.1			

Source: Adapted from Education Statistics Annual Abstract. Education Management Information System, MOE, 1998:16-19.

In the mean time, as part of a remedy to the acute problems of



the education system, the Ministry of Education has designed the Education Sector Development Program (SEDP) for the year's 1997/98-2001/2 in 1996. Following the short educational plan and its implementation, the Ministry took a new path to develop the education sector. As per the objectives of the Education and Training Policy, a long range-rolling Plan was developed with a focus on the comprehensive development of education over a twenty-year period.

Within the framework stated in the current Education and Training Policy and Strategy (ETPS) the Government designed the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP). The ESDP translates the policy statement into action. It covers the first five years of the 20 year program. The program envisages the expansion of education opportunities and is the first step in a long-range program to achieve universal primary education by 2015. The main thrust of ESDP is to improve educational quality and expand access to education with special emphasis on primary education in rural and undeserved areas, as well as the promotion of girls' education. The program was launched in 1997/98 with government fund and support from ongoing donor assistance. As per the final goal of the ESDP to make primary education universal by the year 2015, the goals for the first five years (1997/98-2001/02) are stated as follows:

- More children will attend school with the enrolment expanding from 3.1 million to 7 million in 2001/02, which increases gross enrolment ratio from 30 percent to 50 percent. To accommodate the four million additional children, 2500 new primary schools will be built. Class size will also be allowed to rise from an average of 33 percent to 50 percent, so that more fund can be allocated to other teaching materials.
- More girls and rural children will attend primary school education, thereby increasing girls' participation from 38 percent to 45 percent;
- The quality of education will be improved by providing a textbook for each child in core subjects, improving

educational facilities and improving teacher training;

- The curriculum will be more relevant;
- School efficiency will be improved by reducing dropout and repetition rates;
- Financing of education will be improved by increasing public spending to 19 percent of the government budget and 4.6 percent of the National Output, and encouraging the private sector and community financing.

The implementation of ESDP requires quite great efforts and hard work by all parties. Its success at all levels depends on the active support of all members of the society from central and regional governments down to the community level. Its implementation thus requires capacity building for efficient management, efficient use of resources and monitoring and evaluation at all levels.

There is increasing concern about the inadequate financial resources of primary education. Financing of primary education falls short of the level required for expanding and improving primary education because of the low-income base and total dependence of the education sector on public financing. A major challenge, therefore, is to mobilise adequate financial resources for expansion and qualitative improvement of primary education and to utilise existing financial and human resources more efficiently.

To fully implement the Education Sector Development, 5,060 million Birr capital expenditure and 7,191 million Birr recurrent spending is required. The Government is committed to spend 73 percent of the total education expenditure over the five years period and to mobilise additional resources from donors, private sector, community and parents to fill an anticipated financing gap. The financing of this expenditure will require a partnership of the public sector, private household communities and international financial institutions.

Gross Enrolment Ratio at the first cycle primary level (1-4) is encouraging. Considering the year's 1994/95 through 1998/99, the gross enrolment ratio for grades 1-4 increased by more than 100%. The Gross Enrolment Ratio has increased from 30.3 percent in 1994/95 to 68 percent in 1998/99.

But the gender gap, which was 15.1% in 1994/95, has increased to 30.3 in 1998/99. Goss Enrolment Ratio would have surpassed the 68 percent if the dropout ratio had not been significant in the last five years. More than one-quarter of grade one pupils dropped out before reaching grade two. The dropout rate in grades one range from 28.5 percent in 1994/95 to 27 percent in 1997/98 (MOE, 1999:48).

**Table 12: Primary School Gross Enrolment Ratio by cycle**

Year	First Cycle (1-4)			Second Cycle (5-8)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1994/95	37.7	22.6	30.3	17.0	13.9	15.5
1995/96	58.3	32.2	46.0	19.3	13.8	16.6
1996/97	69.6	39.4	54.8	21.1	14.5	17.9
1997/98	77.8	45.7	62.0	23.7	15.2	19.5
1998/99	82.9	52.6	68.0	27.3	16.8	22.1

**Source:** MOE, Indicators of the Ethiopian Education System, 1999: 9-11

Unlike the first cycle, the Gross Enrolment Ratio at the second cycle of primary schools has been increasing at a smaller rate. The GER at this level increased from 15.5 in 1994/95 to 22.1 in 1998/99. The gender gap at this level is even worse. It has increased from 3.1 percent in 1994/95 to 10.5 percent in 1998/99.

The national Gross Enrolment Ratio for grades 1-8 in 1998/99 was 45.8 percent, ranging from 7.1 in Afar to 90 percent in Harari. Except in four regions (Afar 7.1%, Somalia 8%, Amhara 40.4% percent, and Oromia 45%), the enrolment ratio in the other eight regions including Addis Ababa administrative region is between 56.8 percent in SNNPR and 90 percent in Gambella.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio, however, provides a rather narrow

measure of progress towards universal enrolment. One important factor that should not be overlooked in connection with enrolment is the fact that there is a very high proportion of over-aged children in each grade of primary schools. The official age of admission of primary education is seven.

In reality, however, the age range of the children who are admitted to first level education is very wide, ranging from 7 to 14. The average age of pupils who joined grade one for the entire country (urban and rural) in 1994/95 is 11 years (PHRD, 1996). According to the Household Demand for schooling study (PHRD, 1996), in 1994/95 only 12 per cent started school at the right age which is seven years. About 62 per cent of the biggners started at the average age of 10 years and above, followed by 8 years and 9 years in that order. The existence of significant numbers of over-age pupils in schools is due to high rate of repetition and admission of over-aged children to grade one. The national Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in 1994/95 was only 17.8 which is by far less than the gross enrolment ratio (MOE, 1999).

**Table 13: Primary School Gross and Net Enrolment Ratio (1-8)**

Year	Gross Enrolment Ratio			Net Enrolment Ratio		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1994/95	28.9	19.0	24.1	20.7	14.7	17.8
1995/96	39.8	24.0	32.0	28.0	18.6	23.4
1996/97	46.4	27.5	37.1	32.3	21.5	27.0
1997/98	51.7	31.0	41.6	43.4	28.0	35.8
1998/99	55.9	35.3	45.8	47.0	31.9	39.6

As can be seen from Table 13 the net enrolment ratio provides an indication of the extent of over-ageing of enrolment due to late entrance to school and successive grade repetition. Only 17.8 per cent of primary school aged children were enrolled in the appropriate level of schooling in 1994/5. It remained very low (23.4% and 27% in the years 1995/96 and 1996/7, respectively) until the implementation of ESDP in 1997/8. For the years 1997/98 and 1998/99 the NER increased to 35.8% and 39.6%, respectively.

Although more children are now enrolled, and there are more new schools and teachers, the educational system still has enormous problems, particularly in primary schools, which include:

- enrolment ratio remains low
- rural areas and girls are under-represented
- the quality of education is low
- the system is inefficient
- funding is inadequate
- management and planning is weak

The limited number of schools and their distribution is a problem for many children who should travel 5-10 kilometres every day to schools. Urban areas have a higher proportion of children in primary education than do rural areas and enrolment ratios vary widely by regions ranging from 90 percent in Harari region to only 7 percent in Afar in 1998/99. Girls are less likely to be enrolled than boys in rural areas ranging from 5.1 percent in Somali to 83.5 percent in Addis Ababa in the same year (MOE, 1999).

The reason for these patterns is partly due to inadequate funding. Ethiopia's per capita income is one of the lowest in the world (only 110 dollars). Spending on education has increased substantially, rising from 2.6 percent of national output in 1992/93 to 3.8 percent in 1995/96. The government is spending 13.7 percent of the government budget on education. However, spending on education still falls short of what is required because of the country's low-income base and the reliance of education on public financing.

Given the fact that the majority of the population (31.7%) is now residing in a state of poverty and there remain numerous development goals and tasks ahead, it would be difficult to allocate more funds to the education sector than is given at the moment. Under such economic constraints and rapid population growth, planning for universal primary education for

all school-age population (7-14 ages) and achieving it in the near future would not be realistic.

The reason for low enrolment is not only inadequate funding. Ethiopia's rapid population growth is one of the reasons, if not the major one, for the failure to achieve universal primary schooling. Ethiopia has the second largest population in sub-Saharan Africa. But the country has the lowest primary school gross enrolment ratio in the world, with only 45.8 percent of school-age children enrolled to school in 1998/99, which is by half less than other African countries. The primary Net Enrolment Ratio in Ethiopia, which is only 39 percent in 1998/99, places Ethiopia among the least in educational development even in African standards.

The population size of the country as of the date of the census (October 1994) was reported to be 52.3 Million. According to the projection of Central Statistics Authority (1998), it is currently estimated that Ethiopia has a population of around 62 million people in the year 1999. During the years between 1995 and 2005, an average of 1.8 million people will be added to the population each year, while the average will increase to 2 million during 2006-2020. The projected school age population 2020 is indicated in Table 14. For the purpose of convenience a single year projection for the years 1995-2000 and a five years projection for the years 2000-2020 is used.

Even if we cannot talk of overpopulation in Ethiopia, population growth still goes some way in explaining why the country finds itself overstretched to provide universal primary education. Ethiopia with its present population of over 60 million, is the most populous country in Africa. According to the CSA population projection, with the present annual growth rate of about 3%, total population of Ethiopia will exceed 83.5 million by 2010 and will approach 106 million in the year 2020 out of which more than 20 million are primary school-age population (CSA, 1998). This means that Ethiopia's economy must also attain a two-fold increase, just to keep pace with the present supply of education.

During the last seven years, great efforts have been exerted to expand educational settings. Between 1994/95 and 1998/99 enrolments at the primary level increased from 3.2 million to over 5.2 million students. However, the educational plans have tended to fall behind the social demand for education. In spite of the expansion of the enrolment, the number of out-of school children is rising significantly.

**Table: 14 Projected school age population size of Ethiopia in thousands (1995 - 2020)**

Year	Primary school age population			Secondary school (15-18) age population	Total school-aged population
	7-12	13-14	7-14 (total)	15-18	Total (both levels)
1995	9,095	2,733	11,827	4,977	16,804
1996	9,094	2,898	11,983	5,130	17,113
1997	9,197	2,993	12,172	5,283	17,455
1998	9,333	3,041	12,374	5,435	17,809
1999	9,537	3,072	12,602	5,581	18,190
2000	9,773	3,110	12,883	5,726	18,609
2005	11,545	3,209	14,754	6,366	21,120
2010	13,616	4,094	17,710	6,803	24,513
2015	14,583	4,556	19,139	8,780	27,919
2020	15,681	4,937	20,618	9,313	29,931

Source: Central Statistics Authority, 1998.

At present, the Net Enrollment Rate is still low (39.6) although Gross Enrollment Rate is approaching 50 percent (45.8%). Besides this, the prevailing weak economic infrastructure and resources particularly land resource will be adversely affected by the rapid population growth. At present the pressure of population on natural resources is already alarming especially in the rural areas where the population is growing faster than the economic development. These examples illustrate that the realisation of universal primary education for all school-age population (7-14 ages) in the coming 15 years ( by the year 2015, according to ESDP) requires rethinking in terms of not only improving the educational system but also addressing population issues.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

To promote economic and social development, Ethiopia has placed considerable importance on education. Achieving universal primary education has become the target for some years now and thus different educational plans have been initiated to realise the target. Significant educational progress has been made in Ethiopia during the imperial period and a large proportion of children entered the school system. Enrolment at all levels increased from just 196,000 students in 1960/61 to over 1 million students in 1972/73. The socialist Government of 1974 - 1991 had taken immediate steps as it came to power. In its two educational plans (The Tentative Plan of 1976 - 1984 & Perspective Plan of 1984 - 1994), the Government had aimed at achieving universal primary education by 1984 and again by 1994. Significant increase in the number of enrolment at the primary level since then has been remarkable. During 1974-1989 period enrolment at the level increased from just one million to more than two millions.

Since the fall of the Socialist Government in 1991 and the coming of the Federal Government of Ethiopia, improving access to primary education continued to be one of the major objectives. The Ministry of Education readjusted its priorities and set its immediate goal, among others, to promote universal primary education by 2015. To this effect, the Ministry of Education prepared the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) in 1996 to solve the problems of the Ethiopian education in the 21st century. The absolute number of students at the primary level increased from 3.1 million in 1993/94 to 5.5 million in 1998/99, which rose the gross enrolment ratio of the same level (1-8) from 22% in 1992/93 to 45.8% in 1998/99.

Although Ethiopia has made enormous progress in education in the last several years, it still lags behind other developing nations with regard to enrolment rates. Despite the considerable increase in primary school enrolment, the numbers of those who are not in school still show an increase.



The advances since the 1994/95 are seriously threatened in part by circumstances outside education.

Educational progress in Ethiopia has lagged behind that of many developing countries during this time, not because Ethiopia has ignored education; and not because it has failed to spend considerable and increasing sums of money on education. What Ethiopia has failed to do is to give sufficient school places to all school-age children in the face of rapid population growth. Progress has been made, but the inescapable fact is that most of the educational expansion that has taken place has been a static expansion to keep pace with the rising number of children.

The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) placed great emphasis on education, and if its targets are to be achieved, the coverage of the educational system will have to be expanded considerably. Nevertheless, under the present population trend, the goal of eight years of primary education (grades 1-8) for all school-age children remains a long way off. Even with a gradual decline in fertility, to achieve the goal of universal primary education in the foreseeable future will require a heightened commitment in terms of the share of the GNP that should be channelled into education. However, Ethiopia, as one of the poorest countries with slow economic growth and rising population, cannot afford to allocate most of its budget only to education.

The fact that the high fertility rate has not improved over the past ten years implies that there will be no significant change in the population growth of Ethiopia in the near future. The projections of school-age population for the year's 1995-2020 show that the school-going age group will grow very rapidly and their share of the total population will still rise slightly above the current level. In terms of this projection, the school-age population will reach its maximum rate of growth in the coming few years.

According to the projection, the primary school-age population

(7-14) will almost double itself during the 25 years (1995-2020). It will increase from 11.8 million in 1995 to 20.6 million in the year 2020. Here it needs to be mentioned that because of massive increases in the size of school-age population, the existing number of school places must double every 25 years to maintain the same proportion of children (45.8% in 1998/99) in the school. However, if widespread and rapid reduction in fertility should occur the growth rate of the school-age population would slacken more quickly.

Given these unwelcome facts, the need for an early and rapid decline in fertility is clear enough, but there is doubt that fertility will decline in the near future without sound fertility reducing programs. The need for family planning programs and other programs directed toward the reduction of fertility has normally been left to other agencies. The uncertainty of future fertility trends, the possibility of modifying these trends by government action, and the important effects such modification would have on the quantities to be fed into the planners' equations tend still to be inadequately recognised. This lack of recognition is probably a major reason why educational goals are not achieved as planned.

The situation should be changed and education officials at the federal and regional levels should be much more involved in the formulation of population policy and programs. Employing different population projections (lower, medium, and higher growth rates) with alternative assumptions for fertility and mortality, though it would add complexity to planning, would make explicit the uncertainty of future trends. Furthermore, it would focus attention on the benefits from a reduction in fertility. For these reasons, lowering the rate of population growth should be one of the primary aim of educational planning. An educational planning agency would not feel that it had done its job unless it includes in its planning some mechanisms of lowering population growth.

People want more children for a variety of reasons such as prestige, carrying on the family name, supplementing income,

security in old age and so on. In most rural areas, because of the high infant mortality rates, a family must have several children to ensure that at least some will survive to take care of the parents in their old age. Hence there is a desire for large families, as insurance against a very uncertain future. If there is a greater assurance that children would survive to adulthood by lowering infant mortality then people may not need or want large families.

Hence, one prerequisite to reducing the number of births and hence the population growth rate, paradoxical as it may seem, is to reduce the mortality rate. But because this issue is closely related to socio-economic and cultural situations of the country, it should be considered as an integral component of all development processes. But educational system has one way or other to contribute its part to reduction of fertility rate.

Although there is no doubt that education itself (particularly education of female) exercises an inhibiting influence on fertility, population education- the inclusion of population content in the curriculum should be a deliberate effort in this direction. In addition to family planning programs, the inclusion of population education in the curriculum should be one of the most important means for inhibiting rapid population growth.

Acceptance of the idea of a small family norm through decreased fertility is a matter of understanding and awareness to be developed through human, educative and pervasive approaches in line with the principles of free will. The prerequisite for this purpose is education, especially population education. As a new component of the educational program, population education is expected to be able to develop a positive attitude towards population issues, among the students/audience in particular and the society in general, so that the people voluntarily accept the idea of a small family as a medium of welfare and happiness. Mental change cannot be achieved in a short time. It is a long-term process of continuous and systematic education.

But once this mental change is established, there is a strong base on which to build further effective performances contributing to the rapid decline of population growth. At planning level it is necessary to expose decision-makers and persons of authority to the need for introducing population education programs. In this regard both-in-school and out-of-school population education programs can be employed in several similar strategies. National workshops can be conducted and study tours should also be organised to acquaint decision makers with various population situations, issues and programs. These activities can serve to assess the needs and direction for introducing population education programs in the country.

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