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Issues of Gadaa Teaching: Possibilities and Challenges

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Abstract

Despite the urgent demand of the Gadaa system as a solution for the socio-political and economic crises of Ethiopia, the revitalization, and the integration of the system into academic arena has faced persistent challenges. This study examines why teaching the Gadaa system matters and relate it to the state policy, resource as well as globalization issues. The study employed historical research methods and relied on the data obtained from secondary literature and oral sources. In this study I argue that efforts to revitalize and teach the Gadaa System hitherto has faced challenges from the preexisting hegemonic-education system that used to deny peoples' identities and negates their knowing of self. The result was the problem of securing indigenous knowledge such as the Gadaa in curriculum, identifying its contents and lack of access to resources to undertake the project. The deeply contending political environment and historical narratives about the Gadaa system have been the primary challenging issues in the renaissance and recognition of the Gadaa system in the academic arena. On the other hand, the long lasting campaign to cleanse Oromumma by disintegrating the Gadaa system led to the distortion and corruption of its values and practices. This has also made the acquisition of knowledge and skills on the system a demanding issue. Thus, reconstruction of historical narratives, reform of curricula, careful works on its contents and pedagogical aspects, producing competent trainers and the institutionalization of the system itself are prerequisites of Gadaa teaching.

Keywords: Oromo, Gadaa, Revival, Education, Issue

I. Introduction

Knowledge production entails the self and interaction with others. Hitherto knowledge production processes have been dominated by state that sponsored western philosophical thought and worldviews, which undermined and devalued indigenous knowledge that is equally

relevant. The dynamics of political power and identity that mediates the process of knowledge production and validate the use of knowledge about the marginalized peoples have not been subject of study.

To what extent people know and practice the *Gadaa* system? Can *Gadaa* teaching be a vehicle for teaching the values and skills of democracy and contribute to the national peace and development? What factors have deterred the realization of revitalizing and teaching the *Gadaa* system? These are all critical questions facing the Oromo today in the national contexts. I shall attempt to answer these questions not as a curriculum professional, but by critical analysis on why the *Gadaa* system is important to the Oromo vis -a-vis the history of knowledge production in Ethiopia since the early twentieth century.

In this article, I argue that the *Gadaa* system as the totality of the Oromo Civilization, by which the Oromo used to promote their wellbeing and maintained their security and sovereignty, has greater advantages in assisting the creation of a peaceful system of government and developed nation. I will also point out why the revitalization and integration of the *Gadaa* system have been top ranging issue in Ethiopia. To do so, four basic issues, which I believe, are important to examine about the implementation of *Gadaa* teaching in Ethiopia. These include power– knowledge nexus, historical framework of curriculum preparation (policy issues), globalization, instructional methodology, as well as resource issues.

1.1. Understanding the Gadaa system

The *Gadaa* system is broadly defined as the socio-political economic, system of the Oromo people. It is a holistic system that affects every aspect of Oromo lives.¹ By holistic system, it means that no elements of the *Gadaa* system can exist apart from the system in which the stands for the common values of the people in terms of political, economic, cultural, spiritual, social and administrative processes.

Scholars who have carefully studied and placed Gadaa system in its historical and cultural context have admired it. It was characterized by a respectable self-government, dignity and complete

¹ Lemu Baisa, "The Democratic Political System of the Galla of Ethiopia and the Possibility of its use in the Nation building," USA George Washington University, 1971; Asmerom Legesse. *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. New York: The Free Press, 1973 (Legesse, 1973); Dinsa Lapisa Abba Jobir, "The Gada System of Government and Sera Chafe Oromo," BA Thesis, Department of Law, Addis Ababa; National University, (1975).

political, economic, and cultural rights that can serve as the basis of social equality, inclusiveness, and sustainable development.² In times of the *Gadaa* administration, the Oromo experienced peaceful, stable, and free way of life with one another and with non-Oromo. They were also able to maintain rich nature and healthful climate.³ The institution was based on the important ideas of peace and democracy that has also influenced several neighboring peoples such as Sidama, Gabra, Burjii, Saakuyyee, Walayita, Kondso, Gede'oo, Nyika, Nabdi, and Maassai who have practised similar institutions like the *Gadaa*.⁴ The practices of *aadaa* and *seera*- a sacred set of laws governing behavior and maintaining peace and order in society makes the institutions alike.⁵

With that understanding the findings of a number of studies underscore that the *Gadaa* system contributes in nation building, peace and development, and recommended the revitalization of the system in social-political lives and the incorporation of this indigenous knowledge into curriculum. The revitalization of culture, history and identity was officially recognized by the Article 39/2 of the FDRE constitution in 1995.⁶ The *Gadaa* system has been also registered by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity in November 2016. Given these, there have been attempts to integrate the *Gadaa* system in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. However, the endeavor is so complex and problematic. One the one hand, integration of the *Gadaa* system in curriculum has become one of the top ranging issues in Ethiopia that is worth studying.

The outcome of the paper was assumed to have significance for curriculum professionals, government officials, and other partners to ensure the implementation of genuine *Gadaa* teaching. This study might also have a potential to inspire others to conduct studies concerning the issues thereby initiating stakeholders to contribute towards the realization of effective *Gadaa* teaching. Here, I do not have the idea that the issues discussed alone could affect the real incorporation of the *Gadaa* system in curriculum. My main concern in this paper is to analyze issues challenging the

² Lemu Baisa, "Gada Value: The Building Blocks of A Democratic Polity," in *Journal of Oromo Studies*, v.1, no.2, (1994), p.50.

³ Martial de Salviac, *An Ancient People, Great African Nation*, translated by Ayalew Kano, (East Lansing, Michigan, 1901), p.21.

⁴ C.F.Beckingham.C.F. and G.W.B. Hunting ford G.W.B, *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1954, p.212.

⁵ E Watson, "Examining the Potential of Indigenous Institutions for Development: A perspective from Borana, Ethiopia", *Development and Change* 34(2), (2003), p.287.

⁶ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution (1995) art.39./2.

achievement of teaching *Gadaa* only from the perspective of the power– knowledge nexus in Ethiopian context.

2. Materials and Methods

After I have identified that there was an urgent demand of incorporation of the *Gadaa* system in academic arena to promote its values and practices, I have employed the following materials and methods to identify challenges it has faced. This manuscript has been produced based on data culled from travelers account, oral evidences, archives, and secondary literature. The techniques of data collection employed were detail reading of the available written document, assessment of state policy of education, and assessment of activities to revitalize and integrate *Gadaa* values in curriculum, and interviews with Oromo elders and scholars. Among the potential data sources, travelers' accounts provide data on Oromo governance system, how the Gadaa system used to function, and how the Oromo under the *Gadaa* government experienced stable and peaceful socio-political lives, health environment, and climate in the pre-conquest periods. Research works by anthropologists, historians, linguistics and others are also referred to understand the essence, and how different factors led to the decline and distortion of the *Gadaa* system. Study results from different angles are helpful to draw the fundamental values and skills of the system worth developing in academic arena as well as urge for the renaissance of the *Gadaa* system.

Like some secondary sources, archives particularly state proclamations and curriculum designs are significant inputs that helpful to understand a history of the state knowledge production systems and its stand towards indigenous knowledge. These are important evidences on the dynamics of power, social difference, and systems of knowledge production from the early 20th century onwards. Moreover, I have obtained data on what the Oromo experienced under repressive state and how they used to preserve *Gadaa* knowledge from Oromo elders through interview methods. Oral sources have offered me a broad picture on dynamics of socio-political and cultural in Ethiopian context. Elders are libraries of Oromo culture and history. *Gadaa* values and skills entails Oromo lives, world views etc that are obtained from the day-to-day lives of the society. Interviews with elders are also helpful to understand the historical state-society interactions, ways how their culture and history have been distorted and what difficulties in the Oromo in general experienced in preserving their knowledge and practices. Assessment of the processes of the revival and integration of the *Gadaa* system since 1991 has provided me data on why reviving the *Gadaa* system matters and challenges it has faced. Finally, the data obtained in different methods are analyzed and discussed. Thus, in this article I have briefly discussed the benefits and possibilities of

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integrating *Gadaa* values in academic arena and issues challenging the implementation of *Gadaa*
teaching in Ethiopian context.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Benefits and Possibilities of *Gadaa* Teaching

In response to the exiting socio-political and economic crises in Africa, several scholars in recent time strongly advise the return to African indigenous institutions of governance. Broadly speaking, most of the indigenous institutions of governance across African states are more democratic and more egalitarian systems than the state imposed legal institutions in several respects. Since 1980s, scholars and international institutions have characterized indigenous knowledge as significant resources for sustainable development.⁷

In sub-Saharan African countries, in particular where democracy and rule of law are proclaimed but not converted into practice, it appears crucial to look into alternatives that can fill governance gaps. It is in this context that the *Gadaa* system as an indigenous democratic institution of governance is sought as a resolution for leadership crisis. *Gadaa* is one of African's long functioning traditional institutions through which the Oromo used to maintain their identity, culture, unity and egalitarianism and peaceful coexistence with their neighbors.

The benefit of reviving the *Gadaa* system is primarily to restore Oromo civilization and identity. In support to this Asafa Jalata emphasizes that "...without refining and restoring elements of the original Oromo political culture of *gadaa*, the Oromo society cannot fully develop *Oromummaa*, which is absolutely necessary to achieve national self-determination, statehood, and democratic governance."⁸ Because of its unique system of governance, scholars who carefully studied and placed the *Gadaa* system in its historical and cultural context strongly suggest its relevance to the contemporary system of governance. They argue that the *Gadaa* system is useful and contribute to peace, democracy and development in Ethiopia. If so, what aspects of *Gadaa* knowledge and values can be adopted in academic arena so that the system can be further developed and utilized in governance? With this understanding it is worth indicating some major *Gadaa* values and skills feasible for Academia. Here I tried to discuss the values and skills from administrative, social

⁷ Agrawal, Arun, "Dismantling the divide between indigenous and scientific knowledge", in: *Development and Change*, Vol. No. 26, 1995: pp. 413-439.

⁸ Asafa Jalata, *Gadaa (Oromo Democracy): An Example of Classical African Civilization*, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, March 2012, F.144.

relations and solidarity, peace, and development concepts that are highly intertwined in the *Gadaa* system.

1. The notion of *Nagaa*: The essence of the *Gadaa* system is all about the safeguarding of *nagaa*, which is the peaceful interrelationship between creatures and nature.⁹ The notion of the link of *Gadaa*---*Gaaddisa*---*Heera*---*Dhugaa*---*Waaqa* explains the essence of the *Gadaa* system and the place of *nagaa* in Oromo culture. *Nagaa* is the central value of the *Gadaa* system. In order to achieve *nagaa*, the Oromo devised cardinal norm *safuu ad beeraa* that maintained order in the interrelations of the society with the creator and creature. Central to the maintenance of *nagaa* (the natural and social order) are the human balanced activities on land as part of nature, not as master of everything on earth.¹⁰ The most essential part of this concept was the fact that the entire human life cycle touched almost all features of the land and the need to regulate human activities. These values function to maintain and ensure egalitarianism, equality, security and unity as well as to prevent and resolve conflict.

2. *Heera* and *Seera* (rule by law): the *Gadaa* system fundamentally works for and by *seera* (law). A number of interconnected cultural rules, custom, and norms supplemented *Seera*. *Kakaa Oromo* (the Oromo oath) was the great rule of law, which prescribed that an Oromo shall not kill another Oromo. It was a great norm that used to maintain the Oromo unity. *Kakaa Oromo* was initially aimed at unifying the Oromo under one system of government and work for common interest.¹¹ The other important issue in relation to *seera* was *Seera Caffee Oromo*, generally included *Seera Eebbaa* (blessing law), *Seera Biyyaa* (the law of the country), *Seera Bultii Birmadaa* (law of persons), *Seera Yakkaa* fi *Seera Balleessa* (criminal and civil laws) and etc. In this case procedures of law making (*seera tumaa*) and its contents can be incorporated and studied in both secondary and tertiary levels.

In this connection, the *Gadaa* system accommodates basic principles of a democratic constitution such as: the election of a leader through a democratic process, limitations on the power of leaders, identification of the term of office of leaders, identification of three branches of government

⁹ *Nagaa* implies the peaceful natural and social order, which was the result of the balanced relations between human beings and the land, human and *Waaqaa*, *Waaqaa* and the land.

¹⁰ Mario Aguilar, "Keeping the peace of the Waso Boorana becoming Oromo through Religious Diversification: in *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Inquiries*, ed. Paul Baxter (Uppsala: Nordika African Stuitutet, 1996), p.190. Children were taught in the folklore, proverbs, myth, tales, and riddles about environment including land, plants, animals, rivers etc to instruct them on the human position and the intimacy between *Waaqaa* and land, as well as on how the disturbance of the land would result in the disturbance of natural order as a punishment to humanity.

¹¹ Dinsa Lapis Abba Jobir, "The Gada System of Government and Sera Chafe Oromo," Addis Ababa; National University, 1975, p.101

institutions and their powers, and the processes of amendment of laws.¹² Thus it is vital to adopt supreme laws under *Gadaa* governance system, separation of state and religion, the principles of rule, popular sovereignty, democratic Participation, Accountability (*buqqisuu*), midterm assembly for evaluation, free, fair and periodic election, the rights of women, minority rights, limitation of office to a single term, separation of power, *Gumii* (the National Assembly), the legislative power, the executive power (elective leaders), justice system and others. These values can be not only incorporated in curriculum but also be adopted by policy makers and practitioners to promote peace and democratisation process in the Horn that is suffering from sickness of politics.

3. *Bulchiinsa* (administration): As indicated above the essence of *Gadaa* was to be *Gaaddisa* (*dawoo*) to provide protection for *lammii* (members). This implies that the *Gadaa* government was responsible for governing the society handling issues of war and peace and coordinating the nation's defense, management of intra-Oromo clan conflicts and dealing with non-Oromo people as per its *aadaa* and *seeraa* permitted. The value that the *Gadaa* political system was based on consensus as 'a judicial instruments within the community' and as an alternative to organized physical force as opposed to modern day state political system. A great lesson can be learnt from its principle of protection. In sense that any democratic country desires to realize the supremacy of the constitution, it is possible to have *Gadaa* principles based constitution for its greater protection.

4. *Dinagdee Qajeelchuu* (resource management and development). Witnesses of Oromo land prior to Abyssinian conquest indicate that the Oromo were able to maintain balanced humanenvironment relations. Travelers who lived or conducted scientific research among the Oromo recorded the environmental wisdom and history of their land use. Their accounts were witnesses of Oromo environmental ethics through which the Oromo were able to obtain sufficient produce and maintained balanced relationships between agriculture and the environment. Among the witnesses, de Salviac explained the Oromo land *a garden without boundary*. He noted "Healthful climate, uniform and temperate, fertility of the soil, beauty of the inhabitants, the security in which their houses seem to be situated, makes one dream of remaining in such a beautiful country." ¹³ Similarly, A.H.S. Landor, an English traveler in the early twentieth century, stated:

¹² Asmarom Legesse, Oromo Democracy; *An indigenous African political System*: Asmara, The Red sea press, Inc. (2006),

¹³ de Salviac,p.21.

There are few regions in Africa which are richer than the...{Oromo } country. Its picturesque mountain masses are well wooded and the valleys are regular gardens. The climate is ideal, water for irrigation plentiful, and the soil so fertile that it will produce anything with the minimum labor...¹⁴

For centuries, the Oromo have developed an environmental wisdom that regulated full range their interaction with environment and with one another. This entails the allocation, use, conservation, and preservation aspects. *Gadaa* devised effective resource allocation formula. The system proved peaceful share of resources and balanced use of resources. The rich Oromo land result is purely the result of their environmental wisdom to maintain natural and social equilibrium that have become resource base for the generation including the non-Oromo.

Competition on scarce resources in the Horn is inevitable. In this sense, the mechanisms devised in the *Gadaa* system to avoid resource-based conflict could be a remedy for such crisis. Hence, it is worth incorporating mechanisms of economic regulations, resource use and environmental in education.

5. *Hawaasa Gurmeessuufi ceesisuu* (organizing and transforming values and principles. documents that appeared since the 16th century, appreciate strong social organization and solidarity that were the factor behind the success of the Oromo. Even Abba Bahrey, who wrote on Oromo in 1593, stressed on history, their social organization, and their victories against their counterparts.¹⁵ The *Gadaa* system organizes the society into eleven *gadaa* grades and generation. The systems were devised to organize the people for solidarity, balanced relations and sustain generations. In addition the system devised several mechanism of social integration such as *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* through which the Oromo incorporated large numbers of non-Oromo communities. Historically, the process proved stability among the Oromo and contributed to the social cohesions, integration, of the Oromo with neighboring peoples.

In the *Gadaa* system members and generations exercised rights and obligations turn by turn and through balanced system. One worst crisis horn of Africa is the lack of transforming the society, settling lasting resolution. Nowadays, during the worse social crisis we need to organize youth and

¹⁴ A.H.S. Landor, *Across Widest Africa: An Account of the Country and the People of Eastern Africa, as seen During a Twelve Months of Journey From Djibouti to Cape Verde* (London, 1907), pp.120-121.

¹⁵ Bahrey, *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646*, trans and ed, C E Beckingham and C W B Huntingford, London: The Hakluyt Society, (1954), p.11.

different sections of the society and let them enjoy their rights and discharge their obligations. Such values should be adopted to ease socio-economic and political crises.

6. Beekumsa-oguma-dandeettii (skills)

According to the traditional Gadaa instructional methodology, members of the gadaa grades achieved knowledge and skills from active lower grade to passive grades. Education was based on the physical and mental maturation levels of members. Beginning from lower grades training and apprenticeship involved talent based discharging of family and social responsibilities. These include talents including dialogue, oratory and various skills. The art of public speaking is highly valued in Oromo society; “the forms of delivery, the wit of the speaker, his tone of voice, his posture, eye contact and ability to command the attention of the audience” are skills to be honed and admired.¹⁶ They also learn songs, parables, proverbs, cultural and historical maps, and other social skills that they can use in public speech to praise the living and dead heroes or to criticize and ridicule cowardice and traitors.

The other values of the *Gadaa* system include leadership, organization, and warfare. Training for tough physical labor and muscular strength were compulsory requirements for efficiency of work, leadership and fighting. Such skills were criteria of elections and measures of efficiency on social, economic and political matters. *Gadaa* used to train cavalries fighters known as *Buttuu*, a special military regiment (those who snatch).¹⁷ Such successful gallant fighters were capable of multi-dimensional tactics by the use of horse, gorilla, and face to face fighting. This talent enabled the Oromo to defend their territory and made the Oromo best fighters and victorious in every combat the Oromo participated both individually and socially.

The revival and teaching the Gadaa system has three major benefits. First, it brings significant *Gadaa* value to the scholarly stage and wider implementation. The process brings what Michel Foucault says “the rehabilitation of ‘suppressed forms of knowledge” that validates indigenous knowledge. Secondly, it helps to revive *oromummaa* (Oromo identity) that promotes self and the respect for others' identity. Thirdly, the integration of the *Gadaa* system in curriculum can be best ways bridging indigenous institutions of governance to modern democracy. The incorporation of

¹⁶ Gemetchu Megerssa, *Knowledge, Identity, and the Colonizing Structure: The Case of the Oromo in East and Northeast Africa*, (Ph.D. diss.: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (1993), p.36.

¹⁷ Dereje Hinew, "History of Oromo Social Organization History of Oromo Social Organization: Gadaa Grade based Roles and Responsibilities," *Science, Technology, and Arts Research Journal* 1(3) 2013, p.14.

the *Gadaa* system into the curriculum promotes new ways of learning and system of knowledge production.

3.2. Critical Challenges in the practicability of Gadaa Teaching

Since the early 1970s, the *Gadaa* system was the major subject in Oromo studies. A number of stakeholders are also interested in the revitalization and the promotion of the *Gadaa* system. This coincides with the Oromo cultural renaissance. The turning point in this case was the registration of the Gadaa system by UNESCO as an intangible heritage and the subsequent efforts to integrate the system in curriculum at different levels. Nevertheless, the revitalization and teaching of the *Gadaa* system teaching has faced a number of challenges. These challenges entail state policy issue, curriculum decisions issues, and resource and globalization issues as discussed below.

Effects of Hegemonic Curriculum Tradition

The plan to incorporate the Gadaa system in the national curriculum has been a point of hot debate. Why Gadaa education is an issue? The answer is to be found in the history how the Oromo and their culture have been treated in Ethiopia in general and a history of modern education and knowledge production system. It lies in the interest of the state, the ruling class and their legacies.

Beginning from the early 1900s when modern education began, the Ethiopian education system and its curricular components were influenced by European and American education system the purpose of which was the imposition of western and the Amhara culture under the pretext of modernization. The fundamental principle that dictated the development and implementation of its curriculum was political interest.¹⁸ Emperor Menilek, aristocracy, and foreign advisors were interested in modernizing Ethiopia by introducing a French-oriented education mainly to master languages such as French, Italian, English, Arabic, and Amharic. The system set on a hegemonic tradition of knowledge production system.

Whose Knowledge Matters? During the imperial period, the Ethiopian state repressed and marginalized peoples it forcibly conquered. Subsequently, the state implemented policy of assimilation in the aim of building a single unified Ethiopia.¹⁹ The state educational policy employed common culture and common language as a precondition of unity, which was also misconceived with homogeneity. Diversity was regarded as a curse and serious obstacle of building

¹⁸ A.Bishaw, Education in Ethiopia: Past, present and future prospects, African Nebula, Issue 5. USA: Texas State University (2012).

¹⁹ Mordich Abir, *Education and National Unity in Ethiopia*, African Affairs, Vol. 69, No. 274. (Jan., 1970), pp. 44-59.

Ethiopia. Thus, in its education policy, the states were engaged in homogenization that involved the destruction and abuse of knowledge bases such as peoples' language, history, and culture. The system resulted in the society-state rivalry since the latter had imposed the social and political culture of the ruling class in its education policy and the society struggled for representation of their culture in curriculum.

Modern education was designed to achieve the policy of amharisation. The effort was to integrate many cultures into Amhara culture. Modern education was a powerful ideological vehicle for state domination and exclusion of subaltern groups. The process aimed to realise preserving a strong united nation through marginalizing indigenous values such as the *Gadaa* system. The schooling process was designed to terribly depersonalize, de-root learners from their culture, history, and identity. The existing condition did not allow the study, documentation, and promotion of indigenous knowledge.

In the history of the imposition of western and Ethiopian culture and theories of knowledge complemented by the denial that the Oromo culture had any contribution to the civilization of the country has perhaps done much damage as any other project of imperial enterprise since 1900s. Indeed as Mohammed argued the ontological as well as the epistemological colonization of the Oromo led to the degradation of the *Gadaa* institution through which they disintegrated Oromo identity and indigenous knowledge in particular.²⁰ Because of which Oromo elites including Birgeder General Tadesse Biru began movement to preserve Oromo culture and language and to study Oromo history, which has been completely neglected.²¹

During the *Darg* regime, the socialist-oriented education stressed the inculcation of the ideology as the prime objective. It is commented that education was mainly conceptualized as an important means to secure political power.²² In general, during the imperial and military governments, curricula were designed not based on the economic, social, and cultural realities of the country. In other words, the education system was divorced from practice, the contents were largely restricted

²⁰ Mohammed Hassen, "Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo," *Northeast African Studies* 9 (3): (2002).15-49.

²¹ Abir p.58.

²² Tekeste Negash, *Education in Ethiopia: From Crisis to the Brink of Collapse*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institute (2006).

to abstract book learning, and the curriculum was less capable of solving the problems of the country.²³

In the post 1991, the government has developed a new education and training aimed to the reorganization of the curriculum and introduction of ethnic languages as medium of instruction. There is a remarkable in terms enrollment, equity, and access for education. Nevertheless, hegemonic tradition of curriculum development and marginalization of indigenous knowledge in particular are still visible. For the government incorporating *Gadaa* in curriculum means bringing the culture of the dominated majority into the center. People on power create knowledge, and at the same time knowledge constantly induces the effects of power.

Gadaa education is therefore an issue because restoring the *Gadaa* contributes to the unifying and consolidation of Oromo nationalism. It is feared that the *Gadaa* system as an emblem of an Oromo cultural totality could empowers the nation to achieve the self-determination that the people aspire to.²⁴ For Ethiopian ruling elites' who have no depth knowledge about the *Gadaa* and contempt for the Oromo culture, the *Gadaa* system has no significance at all.²⁵ The frustration is that *Gadaa* education can change contents and objective of learning against the interest of party supporting curriculum for dominance. Thus, the underlying hegemonic tradition is a challenge in the quick recognition and legitimacy of the *Gadaa* system in curriculum. Resistance to the revival of the *Gadaa* system comes from the government, institutions, and individuals regarding themselves as champions and guardians of Ethiopian unity. This implies the lack of recognition of peoples' culture and history. If *Gadaa* education is to contribute to national peace and development then the old hegemonic narrative that dominated Ethiopian curriculum cannot be simply replaced with a new inclusive curriculum. The case in point is the recent reaction to the incorporation of *Gadaa* to the History of Ethiopia and the Horn and recently that of primary schools.

Curriculum Issues

When thinking to incorporate the *Gadaa* system in curriculum who are the learners, what (the content) and how (instructional methodology) are also issues to be addressed. The first issue is to

²³ Ministry of Education, *The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (2002).

²⁴ Asafa, Gada...,p.144.

²⁵ Admasu Shunkuri, "Geda Militarism and Oromo Expansion: A Counter-Commentary;" *Ethiopian Review*, vol 3, no 11 (1993), p.53.

identify the learners' maturation or level of understanding. This entails asking whether *Gadaa* education is for the Oromo alone and for all school-attending citizens.

The second issue is having the complexity of the *Gadaa* system in mind what *Gadaa* aspects are included in specific syllabus. One problem visible in the curriculum developed so far is the ambitious attempt to teach all aspects of the *Gadaa* system without sorting contents to fit for the purpose. *Gadaa* system can be studied at deferent levels by relating it to peace, political culture, social organization, law, leadership, resource governance, human rights, development, social welfare, social integration, election and power transfer, religion, language arts, history, critical thinking, civic, music, nature study and other additional activities designed to provide the cultivation of proper physical culture, healthy social interactions, and nurturing positive psychological growth.

Once we have identified our learners and the curriculum constructs, the big deal would be how should the *Gadaa* system be taught; instructional approach. This issue involves whether we strictly follow the *Gadaa* traditional pedagogically approach or adopt the established scientific method to teach *Gadaa*. The core value of the *Gadaa* system lies in its instructional methodology, which follows learners' level of mental and physical maturation. However, strict observance of the *gadaa* pedagogical design might take a learner several years to complete. Synchronizing by softening it with the established science might distort/exclude some essential values of the system in which culture and nature are inseparably interconnected. *Gadaa* education also requires travel to *Gadaa* centers and observance of the practices taking place at the centre. This raises a question how to teach co-curriculum activities that requires practical engagement.

Resource Issue

The third issue is the inadequate finance and knowledgeable persons to make *Gadaa* teaching effective. In particular, producing knowledgeable teachers awaits the implementation of *Gadaa* teaching. Curriculum is developed and implemented by knowledgeable and adequate finance. It is obvious that awareness on the *Gadaa* system is not uniform across the Oromo land. The fact that some Oromo have been detached from the *Gadaa* system led to the distortion of the knowledge and practices of the *Gadaa* system. For instance, during the efforts to revitalize the *Gadaa* system *Gadaa* leaders were elected from adults. The system did not involve children and the youth. This is a great challenge for the sustainability of the system. Neither family grew their children according to *Gadaa* system nor did the elected *Gadaa* leaders teach the young as their heir.

Nevertheless, experiences beginning from 1991 reveal that lack of resource (material and human) have been barriers in revitalizing the *Gadaa* system. The effect of government decision on budgets and employing personnel in culture and tourism offices, whether intentional or not, has been to reduce the efforts of the revival of the *Gadaa* system. The office has no sufficient budget for the purpose and some of the cultural experts' do not know Afaan Oromo at all let alone the Oromo culture. Some Abbaa Gadaas have been ware engaged in corruption and fail to obey *gadaa* rules and regulations. Inevitably, similar situation in terms of resource limitation would expect the efforts of *Gadaa* education.

Globalization Issue

Globalization, which also involves the dissemination of western culture, since the 16th century, has threatened indigenous knowledge and skills. The assumption is that the effects of globalization on the cultural, social, and political entities of the powerless people are worse. In terms of its influence on indigenous culture, it is noticeable in three major ways: curriculum, religion, and media. First, students are taught curriculum that is dominated by western culture that ranges from classroom teaching learning to a more philosophical concern. Successive regimes in Ethiopia developed curriculum that favored western science rather than indigenous ones. The system assisted the Ethiopian elites to maintain the existing statuesque through dominating power and knowledge.²⁶ On the other hand, it process silenced indigenous cultures that are storehouse of indigenous knowledge. It gave is less opportunity to the Oromo children to understand their traditional culture. For instance, since 1991 also the major objective of education and training policy has targeted to achieve millennium development goal as per the criteria set by western powers. For that purpose the state has formulated policies that contradicts peoples' unique ways of life and interfere in indigenous culture.

Secondly, there is misconceptions and misunderstanding among some Christian and Muslims. They tend to mix the exercise of *Gadaa* and the religion *Waaqeffannaa*. From this wrong perception and from the interest of devotion to their religion they do not have interest and are not willing to engage in the practices of the *Gadaa* system. It is not difficult to think the multidimensional effects of such perceptions on the efforts *Gadaa* system.

Thirdly, globalization is a means of dissemination of global culture that is accelerated by the advance of technology. Globalization advocates cultural universalism that has negative impact on

²⁶ Abir, p.59

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the indigenous cultures and knowledge. The youth are more familiarizing themselves with modern technology are being more affected. The system has gradually alienating the younger generations from their culture that could also affects the realization of *Gadaa* education.

4. Conclusion

As far as the curriculum development is concerned several factors challenge the realization of *Gadaa* teaching. From the points discussed above one can conclude that four major but interrelated factors limit the efforts of *Gadaa* education. In the first place, the legacy of hegemonic tradition of curriculum development implied that indigenous knowledge such as the *Gadaa* system has been marginalized and an effort to promote such culture is regarded as a movement against Ethiopian unity. I have attempted to discuss the tension between the state imposition foreign culture and the society yearning to develop their culture. Secondly, the approach how to study *Gadaa* matters. As the *Gadaa* system is complex it requires either adopting *Gadaa* traditional instructional methodology or cautions integrating with established ways of learning, both of which have their merits and demerits. Thirdly, *Gadaa* education can be an issue in relation to lack of deep knowledge about the system and adequate budget for both curriculum development and implementation. A century of marginalization of the *Gadaa* system resulted in the distortion and shallow knowledge of the system. A limited allocation of budget also affects the realization of *Gadaa* education. Hence, I argue that the effective *Gadaa* education rests on the extent to which state entertains the question of identity, culture and history, allocate budget and promote indigenous knowledge for better peace and development as well as to defend the negative effects of globalization.

5. Recommendation

In order to realize the revitalization and teaching the *Gadaa* system the following issues must be resolved. First, Ethiopian historiography and curriculum how it shaped peoples history, identity and indigenous knowledge should be deconstructed. New curriculum design is required to integrate indigenous knowledge. The Oromo must be empowered and own decision-making power to promote and genuinely educate their *Gadaa* system. Empowerment also helps the society to control resource, communicate d concerned bodies, train human power, make *Gadaa* teaching practical by deciding what, and how deliver knowledge about the *Gadaa* system. The system also helps the society to develop their identity and resist the negative effects of Globalization. Given these issues are resolved there is no reason why *Gadaa* revival and education will not be successful and contribute in peace building and development.

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