

Adwa in Ethiopia's High School History Curriculum: The Interface among History, Pedagogy, Ideology and Nation Building

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Abstract

The principal objective of this research is to assess the representation of Adwa in the Ethiopian secondary school curricular resources, especially textbooks and syllabus. I argue in this study that Adwa has not been given the coverage it deserves in Ethiopian secondary school curricular materials; syllabus, text books and other teaching-learning resources. I claim that high school history during the two regimes, the Derg and the EPRDF, have not been sufficiently exploited to promote our national consciousness, our historical achievements and the nation's glorious past. The study demonstrates the linkage between power and knowledge creation, and the historical truism that states tend to support educational system and policy that guarantees their own survival and perpetuation. By so doing the study purports the instrumentality of Adwa in fostering community cohesion, patriotism, a sense of common past and other useful civic virtues, an objective which had not been adequately exploited thus far. This study therefore aims to demonstrate (mainly on the basis of content analysis of the resources at hand) that our shared common past such as the victory of Adwa had not been given the coverage it deserves in Ethiopian Secondary School curricular resources, reiterating that this has been a missed opportunity to promote community cohesion and national unity.

Keywords: Adwa, curriculum, syllabus, content-analysis patriotism, civic virtue, nation building

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Background: education, power, ideology and curricular objectives

To begin with, I would like to underline a few points so that readers will be able to capture the key message as well as the central argument of the study, which still keeps nation building in focus. In this study nation building refers to those processes or activities intended to foster a sense of nationhood through organized deliberate efforts, educational or otherwise, of forging common interests, community cohesion, collective aspirations, cherishing common past and common heritages. Such are the core values that would ultimately keep multi-national or multi-ethnic states such as Ethiopia maintain their unity and forsake the danger of separation and disintegration through the process of smelting of the particulars into the universal (Bennett, 1998, pp.15-16; Wetherell, et al., 2007, p. 31; Bauman, 1999, p. 38). In order to attain this, the instrumentality of education is beyond dispute. The role of the state in this regard is a key variable to be considered. The state, way beyond financing the sector, also is involved in shaping and influencing education and educational policy. Ernest Gllener in his seminal work *Nations and Nationalism...* argues that the Nation State would be nothing if it has not taken possession of the schools. He writes “At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor... The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence.” (1983, p. 34). Tekeste Negash seems pretty much in the same vein when he writes; “The role of education is primarily ideological, that is, the reproduction of nationalism, patriotism and the perpetuation of classes...” (1990, p. ix). Yet some others view the role of the state in education as an unnecessary intervention from an “external agency” (other than those directly concerned with institutions such as schools and school administrations, teachers, students and parents) as something that amounts to the “instrumentalization” of education (Anderson & Karathwohl, 2001, p. 10). However, the fact remains that “Political theorists since Plato and Aristotle have stressed the importance of education in developing good citizens. Today, most nations of the world consider education as a means of molding adults who will advance society and contribute to community cohesion” (Lerner, Nagai & Rothman, 1995, p. 1).

The need to educate young people both for the well-being of the individual and the welfare of society or the nation makes the state one of the major actors in the formulation of educational policies and curriculum designing. Most educators the world over concur with the idea that school curriculum and educational objectives need to be grounded on some clearly outlined organizing principles. One such principle that occupies the center stage is the principle of “education for nation building.” The common values and the shared tradition as well as civic

virtues that educators teach their pupils would definitely help them to develop a sense of common identity, strengthen their common bonds and assume their obligations and civic responsibilities. It is here that the role of the state in education becomes imperative. Through the school system the state has the responsibility of regulating education, the curriculum and schools in the interest of national welfare (Walker, 2003, p. 14-15).

This appears truer in the responsibility of schools to teach history. “It is only through a sense of history,” Arthur Marwick writes “that communities establish their identity, orientate themselves, and understand their relationship to the past and to other communities and societies. Without knowledge of history we, and our communities, would be utterly adrift on an endless and featureless sea of time”² (Marwick, 1989, p. 14; see also Commager, 1965, p. 92). Owing to these multiple benefits from teaching and learning history, we ought to help our youth to acquire some degree of historical knowledge. Two compelling reasons can be cited here. States as representatives of a political community have stakes in the education of the young. In fact this is not so much because governments and rulers “fear history,” as Kaye (1996), likes to describe it cynically. Rather, the crux of the matter is found in the words of George Orwell, ‘he who controls the past controls the future’. Most importantly, history is inexorably related with power for the reason that the approval of the past is a legitimating credential for both the upholders and those who subverts (Phillips, 2000, p. 10).

Secondly, as a matter of responsibility, states should use education, in our case more specifically history teaching, as a tool to nurture virtues, collective identity and a sense of nationhood essential for coexistence and living together. When seen from the vantage point of nation building, one would completely agree with Tekeste Negash (2018, p. 111) who argues that governments, as a working hand of the state, have a very serious role to play in the development and guidance of the education sector. Education should not be left alone as “independent variable in all endeavours towards socio economic development, or in our own context, education for nation building” (see also Toggia, 2008, pp. 319-320). As has been noted, this implies that the role of the state clearly goes well beyond financing the education sector.

²John Tosh also stresses on the necessity of historical education to cultivate what he calls “social memory” transmitted whether through oral traditions or school text books which he believes is vital to explain or justify collective identity, or a nation, which otherwise might sound as an abstraction (John Tosh & Sean Lang 2006, p. 3).

That Ethiopia is a country of thousands of years of tradition of statehood is not to be disputed this time. Equally not to be disputed is the fact that successive regimes in Ethiopia over the last hundreds of years proved to be unable to bring the nation-building process to fruition, and unable to create a feeling of national unity even when they have ample opportunities and untapped resources that could be used to that end. One such opportunity would be the treasure of a glorious past that can be taken as a source of pride not only to Ethiopians but to the entire black race living near and far alike. A case in point is the victory of Adwa, on which this paper is focusing. At this juncture, we shall resort to scrutinize whether or not the Adwa victory has been purposefully called upon to propagate national unity and national consciousness in our textbooks as would be normally expected.

I will particularly evaluate how much of our experience of textbook writings of the *Derg* and EPRDF period have been geared to address clearly defined national goals. It is a global practice that history textbooks are / should be written in line with the best interest of the nation/ country, especially in terms of guaranteeing its perpetuation. The very purpose of the creation of academic subjects such as civics is the promotion of national interest and setting rules as to how to live together in one nation enjoying our rights and observing responsibilities. History is an older discipline and states have also put greater amount of trust on history teaching, history curriculum and textbooks as very useful vehicles to equip their youth with the fundamentals of living together and nation building. A prominent educator underlines this mission of history teaching when she writes: “As far as the teaching of history is concerned, there is no doubt that in most countries and most regimes, the main aim has always been to pass on a common culture and inheritance and, more specifically, to construct or consolidate ‘*une conscience national*’ (a national consciousness)” (Fumat, 1997, p. 158).

The question to be posed at this juncture is whether textbook writing in Ethiopia follows these customary practices, conscientiously promoting national interest and glorious moments of the nation’s past. The study also evaluates the roles that governments in power in Ethiopia during the period under study were supposed to play in contradistinction with international norms and practices.

Methodology

Content analysis is the method I have chosen to treat the subject under study. Content analysis is better understood as a research technique that draw inferences by systematically measuring and analyzing texts, verbal, symbolic or pictorial data (Krippendorf, 2004, p. 18; Amare, 1998, p. 2; Berelson, 1952, p. 18). In content analysis research the data sources/base are texts which include among others,

printed materials, recorded speeches, visual communications, works of art and artifacts - in our case here textbooks - and syllabus; used for teaching history in Ethiopian secondary schools. The major aim of using content analysis, Krippendorff (2004, p. 18) points out, is to find out how frequently are words, phrases, statements, paragraphs or entire articles appear in a given text. This is done by counting the frequency of the 'Unit of Analysis', in this case the selected items with a direct connection to Adwa, and record them on a coding sheet ready for a quantitative analysis. In addition to this, some authorities (Berelson, 1952; Robson, 2002) advise that the contents and themes whose frequency of occurrence in a text is to be quantified need to be identified by the researcher on the basis of their connection, or linkage to the issue under study, in my case Adwa.

Man's search for his past has gone further with greater degree of sophistication and methodological refinement and so is history as a discipline primarily dealing with the past. This study, however, attempts to engage Adwa, not so much as a historical subject with its own cause, course and consequences than an inquiry that objectified Adwa itself; measured the frequency of its appearance in a given text, and analyse how it is used in curricular materials with nation building in focus. History is involved here because, firstly Adwa is a historical phenomenon; and secondly, the investigation is on curricular materials used in high school history classes. Why the content analysis method is employed in such a study which, at first sight, looks more of historical, has to do with the trend that historical research itself has progressively liberalized to use a repertoire of methods. On top of that, the literature about content analysis has an encouraging piece of advice that "Historians are naturally inclined to look for systematic ways to analyze historical documents, and they soon embraced content analysis as a suitable technique, especially where data are numerous and statistical accounts seem helpful" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 12. See also Amare, 1998, p. 9).

In an important note, this study that picks up issues in history teaching appears to be a junction between two individually well-established and equally decisive disciplines - history and pedagogy- in mentoring the young and cultivating good citizens. In an attempt to contextualize the problem, a reasonably sufficient discussion and an overall assessment of the state of education, more specifically high school education, in Ethiopia during the Derg and EPRDF periods has been made. On top of all, the quantitative content analysis, we have also attempted to examine qualitatively the presentation, narration and portrayals made about Adwa.

The representation of Adwa in high school history textbooks and syllabus

This section is designated for a longitudinal study of the changes and continuities on the contents and quality of curricular resources used for history teaching in Ethiopian Secondary Schools. Here, we examine the major changes that occur on the curriculum material, especially history text books and syllabus, introduced for school history during the *Derg* and the EPRDF periods. We will scrutinize the basic orientation, ideological or the otherwise, and the changes that have been made on the curricular materials, if there were any, both in terms of representation and substance/portrayal of the Adwa victory with the possible causes/ reason for the changes.

High school history textbooks: The *Derg* period

In the interest of giving context to our impending analysis of the curricular materials, let us make a brief assessment of the overall state of education, more specifically high school education, in Ethiopia during the middle and late *Derg* period. This is roughly the 1980s. The early *Derg* period is intentionally omitted from this analysis for the reason that, the nation let alone the educational system, was on the cross roads which path to follow and was literally confused. Yet there was the urgent need of replacing curricular materials in use at all levels with a new and a “revolutionary” one. Those experts in charge of the educational policy for the new regime did not seem to have a clear idea which path to follow and which country’s model to emulate. Wide range of slogans and demands reflected varying interests: ‘education for production’, ‘education for social change’, ‘education for class struggle’. These were circulating among teachers, experts and students alike. In fact, the overarching principle, especially in teaching social studies which includes history and geography was demonstrably Marxist- Leninist in orientation (Haile-Gabriel 2007 E.C. pp. 344-345).

Tekeste expressly admits that he relies on the information he gathered from two prominent high schools, namely Menilik II and Entoto Comprehensive Secondary School, both in Addis Ababa, and information obtained through a third party from one additional high school, Barca [Barka] Comprehensive Secondary School in Asmara, then part of Ethiopia. His temporal reference for his visit and observation in the two high schools mentioned above was 1988, which gives me an assurance that we both are talking about the situation of high school education in Ethiopia in the 1980s. The phrase he used to explain the state of affairs in Ethiopia’s secondary school education, ‘decline in quality of education’, to my judgment is a mild language to represent a much worse situation. Tekeste started

his analysis with the language problem which was farther compounded by overcrowded classrooms that made Ethiopia's high schools of those days a place of 'depressing experience', to borrow his phrase. His data from observation made him genuinely sympathetic to teachers in Ethiopia's high schools. They live under the pressure of a heavy work load, about 30 periods a week, demoralized and least motivated (Tekeste, 1990). If the veracity of the above comment, on the basis of days, probably weeks of, observation in three high schools from three big Ethiopian cities are to be validated, it may be legitimate on my part, to add a couple of empirical facts from my own lived experience about the overall state of affairs in Ethiopia's high schools during the 1980s.³ Indeed teachers were demoralized and under-motivated not only because of the language problem that hinders communication in classrooms, even more so because of their very low salary (subject to a deduction of 23 % for 'Call of Motherland' that amounts to 125 birr out of 500 birr gross salary for a first degree holder) that profoundly affected their lives. Most teachers were bored by the very profession from which they still get their livelihood. If you happen to ask most of my colleagues in those days they would have told you that they all are there temporarily. Teaching among these folks was not considered a profession but a place for a short- stay. Against this background, I concur with Tekeste Negash's very apt description of Ethiopia's educational system of the 1980s which goes as "Ethiopia has no functioning secondary education system" (1990, p. 48).

That being said, now let us narrow down our analysis to the subject of history teaching and the curricular materials used in High School history during the Derg period. In the first place it was only two periods per week that was allotted for history as a subject for 9th and 10th grade students. This even was for those students assigned in the academic stream. Those in the vocational stream were not required to attend history classes and history teachers were not assigned for these sections. The number of subjects a student in grade 9 was expected to learn in class has risen from 7 in 1974 and to 14 since 1978 (Tekeste, 1990, pp. 48-51). The boredom and exhaustion is much higher among history teachers for two reasons. Firstly, in as much as it is a verbal discipline, language fluency matters more. This implies that where there is a language problem, communication and thereby

³I was a close observer of all those developments Tekeste was talking about ever since my deployment as a high school history teacher since 1983 in the then Gojam *Kefle-Hager* and continued in that capacity throughout the 1980s.

instruction is almost impossible. Secondly, the lecture method, which was the most commonly used teaching method by most history teachers of those days, made instruction a very daunting exercise, especially given the language barrier as well as the crowded classroom, about 100 students in a single class.

Our inspection and reflection on history textbooks in use during the *Derg* period begins with grade 11 and grade 12 textbooks for reasons that they share many commonalities both in terms of their objective and their contents. In an attempt to propagate socialism and the history of socialist countries, both these textbooks were used as tools for teaching the basic ideological tenets of socialism / Marxism- Leninism. In terms of content, they were direct copies from the work of a Russian historian. According to one observer, grade 11 and grade 12 history textbooks were ‘*photographic representation*’ [emphasis added] of a book by a Russian Professor, A.Z. Manfred, *A Short History of the World*, published in Moscow in 1974 (Tekeste, 1990, p. 67; Haile Gabriel, 2007, p. 346). It can be called a carbon copy of the work of someone who might not have a reasonably sufficient knowledge about Ethiopia, and without the slightest effort to rearrange the material into a textbook or teaching material suitable for teaching Ethiopian students in those grade levels.⁴ Therefore, I don’t intend to waste much time commenting on the grade 11 and grade 12 history textbooks. Simply because there is no Ethiopian history content in any of the chapters or syllabus for these grade levels.

As far as grade 9 and grade 10 history textbooks and their relevance to our theme of analysis is concerned, in the first place these two are the only grade levels in the Ethiopian high school system of the 1980s where Ethiopian history contents were included in history textbooks. In the grade 9 textbook, out of a total of 184 pages, only 38 pages are devoted to Ethiopian history contents. Those contents cover the period from about the end of the wars of Ahmed *Grag*n (early 1540s) and stretch up to the rise of Emperor Tewodros II to power (1855). It completely avoided contents dealing with the ancient and medieval history of Ethiopia about which the country is still proud of, and it can hardly be justified why it abruptly starts from the end of the first quarter of the 16th century. It is not my objective here to critique the quality of writing and the range of other substantive problems that hampered the readability and acceptability of the material as a student text.

⁴ I know both these two textbooks, more than that, they were almost my teaching companions, in much of my high school teaching years, making my life very boring and a struggle against the wind to motivate students and call for their attention almost every minute in class.

Even if I wish I would not do it in a more accurate and scrupulous manner more than what Tekeste Negash had done years back.⁵ Yet, it is essential to express a reason of practical significance why I did not engage this textbook more than the above brief introductory lines. The Ethiopian History contents of the textbook did not go beyond the mid-19th century which means, Adwa, a historical phenomenon of 1896, is not treated at all. There is nothing directly relevant for my purpose in the grade 9 textbook, hence a very simple decision was made to skip it and see what may be found in the grade 10 textbook.

The Grade 10 history textbook I am going to interrogate here was first published in the year 1980. The title page of the book shows that it was published by the “Educational Materials Production and Distribution Agency.” It seems that it was authored, or as stated in the book, ‘prepared by’ a cohort of experts who had preferred to call themselves “Social Science Panel.” Names of members of the panel have not been provided. As is often the case in committee works, personal accountability, and even credit when it is due, could not go to any recipient. Two important notes from my own observation are: firstly, two chapters are devoted for Ethiopian history. In terms of pages, Ethiopian history topics occupy 120 pages out of a total of 323 pages. One may complain in this case about too much than too little, especially considering the two periods per week allotment which was the case throughout the 1980s. Second, I can see that this one, again unlike the Grade 9 textbook, includes ‘Review Questions’ at the end of each chapter, which is very commendable from pedagogical point of view.

Once again, it is not my objective here to evaluate the quality of the writing, or make a substantive analysis of the Ethiopian history contents treated in these two chapters of the Grade 10 textbook.⁶ The issue of our particular concern, Adwa, is found in Chapter 9 (Rise of the Ethiopian Feudal Empire State), sub- chapter 9.2 “The Rise and Development of the Ethiopian Empire State (1889- 1974)”; more specifically under the entry 9.2.1 entitled “The Reign of Menilik and the Battle of Adowa.” A total of 14 pages are devoted to a discussion about the rise of Emperor

⁵For detailed appraisal of these textbooks, interested readers may refer TekesteNegash(1990, pp. 55- 57).

⁶Again credit to Tekeste Negash who analyzed this book and the chapters there exhaustively. I once again recommend, for those who are interested in such details, to refer to the work of this author, *Crisis of Ethiopian Education*, 1990, pp. 60-70.

Menilik II to power and related historical process, including Wuchale XVII, which led to the Battle of Adwa. To my judgment, it seems a reasonably sufficient dose in as much as it is only for this grade level alone. The problem is that this is the only pages where Adwa is discussed throughout the entire high school history curriculum.

I do not need to make a content analysis by counting how many times Adwa or Menilik, or any of the other prodigious heroes of Adwa are mentioned in this particular chapter. It suffices to underline that the focus here is, the rise of Menilik to power followed by the discussion about the origins of Adwa and the final outcome of the military confrontation. I would rather examine here whether or not the narration, the main story told and the conclusions made are in line with a singularly important purpose, which is nation building. I think it is not to be refuted that the Adwa victory is the victory of the Ethiopian people led by Emperor Menilik. In fact it is the victory of the entire black race against western imperialism. It is a victory made possible through the blood and sweat of all Ethiopian people of different religious creeds, ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is not the victory of Emperor Menilik and his courtiers alone; not the victory of the Tigreans alone; not the victory of the Amhara alone; not the victory of the Gurage alone; not the victory of the Sidama alone; not the victory of the Somali alone; not the victory of the Walayta, Kaffa, Gumuz, Kambata, Gedeo.... alone. All Ethiopians shed their blood to make this happen.⁷

There are two relevant issues that emerge from page 237 of grade 10 History textbook, published in 1980. Firstly, the victory of Adwa is attributed to the Ethiopian people in a more general expression using “the broad masses,” borrowing a term from the Marxist –Leninist discourse fashionable in those days. Secondly, the coming of Negus T/ Haimanot of Gojam and *Ras* Mengesha of Tigray to Addis Ababa can be inferred as the support Menilik enjoyed not only from the nobility of the provinces, but the peoples of these regions. No matter how one tries hard, those very few statements on the page mentioned above are deficient inputs to teach, unless it is by a very intuitive teacher, that Adwa is a collective achievement of all Ethiopians, and that it is our common history that keeps us together by forging a sense of cohesion.

⁷Apparently a call for mobilization Menilik made in the name of St. Mary did the miracle of putting the Emperor at the command of a numerically formidable force in less than four months that flocked to northern Ethiopia from almost all corners of the country. That is what historical sources testify to (Berkeley, 1968, p. 126; Maimire, 1997, p. 71).

The question comes, does the textbook under discussion take it as its principal mission to educate the youth, in this case using Adwa, that we are people of one nation, or state? Have our educators then and now been paying attention to education as a tool for nation building? There is nothing at all in those pages of grade 10 History textbook clearly, purposefully and unequivocally state that Ethiopians scored such an incredible victory over Italian imperialism because they acted in unison. A description of the facts, although no less important, without a meaningful interpretation/message to those youthful minds shows the ineffectiveness of the educational system. The country is paying the price today for not educating its youth about their common heritages and a shared common past.

On accounts of my own textual investigation and personal observation of grade 10 history textbook in use in Ethiopian High Schools in the 1980s, I approve the following conclusion by a research undertaking almost contemporaneous to the period under discussion; "... in countries such as Ethiopia where the problems of nation building dominate the entire attention of the state, the educational system is far from fulfilling its task" (Tekeste, 1990, p. 67).

Adwa and the "Mega/Kuraz textbooks"

In this section we are going to examine whether Adwa has been adequately represented and effectively exploited to teach our young about patriotism and national consciousness. Here the curricular materials we are going to engage are history textbooks, for grade 9, 10, 11 and 12. I refer to these texts as the "Mega/Kuraz Textbooks" because their preparation and publication was done under the auspices of today's 'Mega Publishing Enterprise' (which was known as 'Kuraz International Publishers' until it was purchased by Mega in 1996). The earlier was responsible for grade 9 and 10 text books, while the latter was responsible for the production of grade 11 and 12 history text books. Grade 9 and 10 text books were published in 2005 while grade 11 and 12 text books were published in 2006. They all have been reprinted several times by the Ministry of Education who had appropriated the copy right for all the text books.

One can clearly see that these four text books are grouped into two. This was so not only because the two categories of text books were published by two different publishing houses, Mega and Kuraz. Most importantly, the contents to be covered in these two groups of history textbooks, which were organized chronologically, were the same in the first group and in the next group. Their difference has been a matter of depth of the contents. This means contents treated in grade 9 and 10 textbooks will be repeated in grade 11 and 12 textbooks respectively. This was because Senior Secondary School education had been

arranged according to the '8-2-2' structure where primary education would be completed in grade 8 to be followed by four years of secondary education: two years of general secondary education and two years of preparatory secondary education. The first two –years cycle will be completed as students finish grade 10, and the second cycle which was known as the 'preparatory cycle' will be completed as students finish grade 12 with a rite, known as the School Leaving National Exam (formerly ESLCE). It is clearly stipulated in the 1994 Education and Training Policy that "General Secondary Education (grades 9 and 10) aims at preparing students to identify areas of interest for further education and training. The preparatory level (grades 11 and 12) prepares students for higher education, or choosing a career" (Rajendra & Adriaan, 2013, p. 25; also MOE, 2008, p. 1). Our knowledge and understanding of these cycles is important because the high school curriculum for all subjects had been organized in line with these structures. Therefore, it is imperative that our content analysis will be guided by this arrangement of the textual and curricular material.

As mentioned above, students are expected to get some history lesson in the first cycle because of the assumption that a segment of the group might go to the technical training after completing grade 10. For the first cycle of secondary education (grades 9 & 10), Ethiopian history contents are divided into two halves and the middle of the 19th century was taken as a dividing line. I cannot say in definite terms that these number of chapters are devoted for Ethiopian history contents, because in both textbooks, the authors and the syllabus itself often fuses African and world history contents with Ethiopian history contents in a single chapter.⁸ Grade 9 history text book comprises of Ethiopian history contents that stretch from the ancient period to the mid -19th century. Whereas the grade 10 textbook is devoted to treat Ethiopian history contents from the first half of the 19th century up to the end of the *Derg* period. What a huge task for both students and teachers to cover these textbooks within the allotted two periods a week! Not a single enterprising teacher whom I know in my high school teaching career managed to finish these books within the time limit.

The grade 9 history textbook is indicative that there is a marked progress in the Mega/Kuraz textbooks as compared to the textbooks of the *Derg* period that

⁸For Example see the content page of History grade 9 textbook (2005) and you will find Unit Two entitled Ancient and Classical World Civilizations'. Out of the four sub- topics such as 'General Survey of Ancient World Civilizations', 'The Rise and Expansion of Islam', only one, sub-topic 2.3.- 'The Aksumite State' is evidently an Ethiopian History content.

were in use during the 1980s in that a considerable space has been devoted to Ethiopian history contents. The grade 9 textbook has 87 pages discussing Ethiopian history contents unlike the previous grade 9 textbook which had none. Yet, because of the chronological arrangement of the textbook students would not be exposed to Adwa throughout their stay in Grade 9.

The grade 10 history text needs a special attention here for the reason that we find Adwa discussed at length. Owing to the chronological distribution of Ethiopian history contents in the four high school textbooks, Adwa and historical developments of the second half the 19th century is found in the grade 10 textbook. The other textbook where developments of that epoch are treated is on the grade 12 text book. The 10th grade textbook has a total of 260 pages with a unique, pedagogically commendable, appendage of a glossary. Here, out of a total of eight units, four (Unit 2, 3, 5 and 8) are designated for Ethiopian History contents. Only in one unit, this is Unit Two, Sub - Unit 2.4. “Italian Colonialism in the Horn of Africa”, that the issue of Adwa has been brought on board.

The table below would help to measure the degree of representation of Adwa and its stalwart patriots in the grade 10 history textbook used to teach high school history since 2005. It is in this part that we apply the quantitative content analysis method to garner data that would ultimately lead us to pass our judgment whether or not Adwa has been sufficiently represented.

Table 1: Grade 10 (Unit Two - pp. 66-81)

	The Content	Frequency\Repetitions
	Battle of Adwa	13
	Menilik II	24
	<i>Etege</i> Taitu	4
	<i>Ras</i> Mekonene	1
	<i>Fit.</i> Gebeyeh	-
	<i>Ras</i> Alula Engeda	3
	<i>Ras</i> Mengesha	4
	Wuchale Treaty	9

What does this table tell? My conclusion is that Adwa is not sufficiently represented and the text book is not capable of imparting useful values for nation building such as patriotism and sacrifice.

In terms of substantive discussions made about Adwa the narration in the grade 10 textbook could hardly be linked with any clearly defined objective, or learning outcome dedicated to the cause of national interest and nation building, or fostering national consciousness, or a shared glorious past. Only 14 pages are devoted to the historical developments that led to Adwa, the military confrontations that reached its climax at Adwa in 1896, and lastly the victory and its aftermath. “The Reign of Menilik and the Battle of Adwa” is a sub-topic which is relevant to our discussion here, because this sub-topic, at least in part, is dedicated to a discussion about Adwa. Out of a total of 14 pages, the discussion about Adwa occupies some 10 pages. Half of those 10 pages, however, are used for illustrations, some only tangentially related to the Battle of Adwa, but most are completely unrelated. For example, Figure 43 ‘Peasants winnowing corn’, and Figure 44, a drawing presumably of the patriots of Adwa, but with an appalling caption ‘Feudal warriors.’ I described it as ‘appalling’ because, in the context of those days, the word ‘feudal’ was not a positive attribute.

Major issues that seem to have attracted the attention of the writer/s of this textbook include; first, Article 17 of the Wuchale Treaty as used by Italians as a pretext to declare Italian protectorateship over Ethiopia. There also is a discussion, just a paragraph-long, on page 240 about the showdown at Adwa on March 2, 1896. Another theme of discussion is the aftermath of Adwa with a very glaring title ‘Anti-Imperialist Triumph of the Masses.’ Under those kinds of titles, one may expect an elaborate discussion about the international significance or global impact of the Adwa Victory. In fact there is heavy denunciation of Italian Imperialism punctuated by Leninist wordings and phraseology such as the repeated use of the ‘broad masses.’

How about “The Mega /Kuraz” history texts for grade 10 and 12? We are already familiar that these are history textbooks in use throughout the EPRDF period to date which embody contents dealing with Ethiopian history in general and contents that belong to the 19th century Ethiopian History. It is therefore automatic to anticipate discussions about Adwa in the textbooks of these grade levels. The grade 10 history textbook, in light of the above-mentioned overarching internal and external significance of Adwa, is under-utilized. The sub-unit (sub-unit 4) “Italian Colonialism in Africa,” as has been said before has only 15 pages of discussion largely focusing on the origins, the course and consequences of the Battle of Adwa. Other than the last two pages that deal with attempts to analyse the historical significance of Adwa, much of the stuff in the preceding pages is a simple narration of the story of Adwa from its origins to the last military showdown. Pedagogically this has an undeniable importance in order to transmit

basic information about Adwa. The last two pages of this sub-unit explain the historical significance of Adwa focusing on such important matters as the ramifications of the victory on the existing global order, colonialism and pan Africanism. For example, there are some three bullet points on page 75 and 76. The first explains the political crises that removed Crispi's government, Italy's unconditional recognition of the independence of Ethiopia and the Addis Ababa Treaty. The second bullet point reiterated Adwa as a symbol of pride and dignity of the black race. And the third is about the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 by which western Imperialists attempted to define their sphere of interest in Ethiopia. In the final analysis, although one might not expect a critical approach at this level, what is deplorable is that there is not even a single mention of the "internal significance" especially its unifying role. The sort of service that might be used for nation building from this part, which could be done through highlighting the point that the victory was the outcome of the collective efforts of all Ethiopians was underutilized. Important lessons could have also been drawn from the wisdom of those institutions and structures that helped Ethiopians -leaders and commoners alike- to operate the way they did and achieve such an astounding victory.

The next grade level of our focus is grade 11. If our primary purpose is to bring Adwa to the limelight and enquire how much representation did take place, then this particular textbook is less relevant and of little significance. The reason is that the contents in this text are organized and selected chronologically to cover only up to the closing years of the so called '*Zemene Mesafint*', which comes up to the 'Rise of Tewodros II to power' in 1855. It is equally clear that the same logic of organizing contents for grade 9 textbooks was used here. Therefore, the difference between grade 9 and grade 11 textbooks is not so much a matter of content than a matter of depth. So, let us move on to our exploration of what the grade 12 history textbook might hold for us.

The grade 12 History textbook is the last high school history textbook consisting of a sub-unit that treats the Battle of Adwa. It is therefore the only other high school history textbook (other than the grade 10 textbook) that devotes space for Adwa. Here also, out of the nine Units, only four (Units 1, 3, 5, and 8) are allotted to entertain Ethiopian History topics.⁹ Guided by the logic of the chronological order of arranging events, Adwa has become a fundamental focus in Unit Three, under sub-unit 3.3 'Italian Aggression against Ethiopia and the Battle

⁹I do not intend to analyse whether this is a fair share of the available space, and whether or not justice was done to Ethiopian history contents.

of Adwa.’ A total of 13 pages have been allotted for the discussion of issues pertaining to the origins of the Adwa debacle, its course and consequences, both to the Ethiopian state and colonialist Italy.

As part of our content analysis exercise, let us present our data from the textbook for grade 12, on the table below and attempt to enquire the frequency / repetition of Adwa and those historical figures whose names were in exorably linked with Adwa.

Table 2: Grade 12 (Unit Three- pp. 75-87)

	The Content	Frequency\Repetitions
	Battle of Adwa	23
	Menilik II	44
	<i>Etege</i> Taitu	7
	<i>Ras</i> Mekonene	2
	<i>Fit.</i> Gebeyeh	1
	<i>Ras</i> Alula Engeda	6
	<i>Ras</i> Mengesha	3
	Wuchale Treaty	6

Once again my conclusion about the frequency of occurrence of those major actors and influential figures on the discussion about Adwa is not sufficient. Admittedly, what is sufficient could not be explained in any discursive manner here. But one could get a clear impression that those names could have been mentioned more frequently and appear on the text more repeatedly had there been a purpose -oriented narration.

In terms of substance, the grade12 “Mega/Kuraz textbook” discussed Adwa under Unit Three, sub-unit 3.3 the title of which is ‘Italian Aggression against Ethiopia and the Battle of Adwa.’ Out of the 14 pages dedicated for this unit, 11 pages have taken up Adwa as their major issue of discussion. This time, our qualitative analysis is intended to measure the take home message of national significance. A brief overview of the anatomy of the unit would help to understand the content coverage. The early pages of the Unit are filled with discussions about developments that led to Adwa and the larger ambition of Italian colonialism in the Horn region. That was followed by a few pages of discussion about the military engagements between the invaders and the Ethiopian patriots that took place at

Ambalage and Adwa. At last, there comes a sub-unit entitled “The Consequences and Historical Significance of the Adwa Victory.” For two reasons I have to dwell much in this section. Firstly, this is my last chance to search if there is any substantive take-home message regarding national interest; unity, common heritages, patriotism, civic responsibilities and other moral values that this school leaver might peak. Secondly, there is a hyphenated entry in the text, unique to this section alone, with a statement that looks like more of a lesson objective. It reads “Explain the national significance of the Adwa victory.” I was excited and anxious hoping that the subsequent discussion is guided by a clearly defined objective: an objective, as it appears, that would bring out some of the desired values of national interest repeatedly mentioned in the previous pages.

Out of the eight paragraphs from which this section is constructed, I found **four** instances where those exemplary values are clearly articulated, and that succeeding generation of Ethiopians should learn from their forefathers, emulate their examples and take pride of their common past. The first statement that attracted my attention with the optimism of finding something relevant is the one found on page 82 that reads “Indeed Menilik led a united Ethiopia against Italy. An Italian writer who saw the prompt response of soldiers, peasants young and old men and women, for Menilik’s mobilization order wrote; ‘ It looks as if the whole population was moving for war’.” This could certainly be instrumental to teach that Ethiopians never failed to stand together when their independence and national sovereignty is at stake.

The other example found on p. 85 reads; “Therefore the Adwa victory has been a symbol of national pride. Indeed, it has made succeeding generations of Ethiopians more determined to guard the independence of the country at all costs.” This is important and useful, but on condition that the teacher heeds to the statement at the beginning of this lesson, and if he/she transmits that meaningful message to the students. In that case, mission successfully accomplished here. But the role of the teacher, who is supposed to be well aware of the stated objective of the lesson, is of paramount importance. The other relevant statement on page 86 reads: “Hence the readiness of the Ethiopian people to fight when the national mobilization call was made and the sacrifices paid at the battle of Adwa are the results of the strong patriotism of the Ethiopian people.” Again with the conscious intervention of the teacher, one may argue , such content might help to convey a key message that the independence of Ethiopia has been uphold by the immense sacrifices and patriotism of its people coming from different corners of the country. By this statement a conscious and purpose -minded teacher might also pass an important message that this generation owes a lot to the patriots of Adwa

that saved Ethiopia from the jaws of Italian colonialism. The third and last relevant point appears in the last paragraph of this sub-unit is about the “external significance” of the Adwa victory, especially to the black race, as inspirational for all those who intend to fight against domination and exploitation through the symbolic representation of Ethiopia as ‘torch bearer’ of defiance.

Overall, I would say, in relative terms, these are the few anecdotes in high school history textbooks where there are signs of appreciating patriotism, sacrifice and a collective common past that might inspire a school boy to contribute to nation building. At last, the grade 12 history textbook perhaps is the only textbook, not only dealing with Adwa at length but also attempted to use Adwa as a vehicle to communicate essential values for nation building such as patriotism and sacrifice.

Syllabus

The other relevant curricular material we are going to engage in this section is the high school history syllabus on the basis of which the text books under our review were prepared. The syllabus is very important and can be equated with the role of the preamble in a constitution in that one can get the first glimpse of the purpose/goal, intentions and aspirations of the document/project. It is made up of the learning objectives, properly sequenced contents, assessment techniques, to name just a few. Broadly speaking, the syllabus is a road map, or literally an outline of a given course, and determines what should be learned from that course/subject (Woolcock, 2006, p. 16, Abebe, 1992, pp. 26-30). If it is a pedagogical given that the syllabus guides the textbook writer in his journey to produce a learning material, textbook in our case, our investigation cannot afford to overlook an enquiry into the syllabus used for textbooks of the 1980s and the 1990s. With this in mind, here, an attempt will be made to analyse the syllabus for the textbooks of the 1980s and the syllabus for the \Mega- Kuraz textbooks. However, I am not able to get access to the syllabus for the 1980s textbooks if it at all there was one. I very much doubt that those textbooks were guided by a conscientiously prepared syllabus. In any case I am dictated to probe into the syllabus of the Mega-Kuraz history textbooks alone. The reason why I exclusively relied on the syllabus for the Mega/Kuraz textbooks is none other than the logic of availability. Even this syllabus itself lacks the epistemic coherence for both horizontal and vertical structuring of topics. Moreover, the mismatch and incongruity between the ordering of units and topics in the books on the one hand, and in the syllabi on the other, is a source of doubt whether the writers were really guided by a syllabus while writing. Although this syllabus has other more serious pedagogical

limitations, my principal focus would be on the degree of representation of Adwa and related themes in the material. I will also examine the contents and activities set to pursue the teaching- learning in terms of their relevance and worth for nation building and creating a sense of nationhood.

It sounds very ideal to begin our investigation with the objectives: both the general objectives for the textbook and the objectives for each and every lesson topic outlined in the syllabus which are supposed to be aligned with the goals set to achieve by teaching any particular unit or lesson topic. The broader objectives of the syllabus for grade 10 history textbook, as has been stated at the top of the very first page of the syllabi, under the rubric “Learning Outcome.” These objectives are not properly aligned in such a way that they correspond to one another. They are categorized into three broader groups of aspirations/ wishes such as; 1. “To develop understanding and acquire knowledge ...” 2. “To develop skills and abilities of ...” 3. “To develop the habit and attitude of...” followed by which ever domain the lesson will be able to affect. As a matter of pedagogical correctness the objectives are drawn from the famed Bloom’s Taxonomy which is largely about what lesson educators want to impart on their students. Accordingly, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues back in the 1950s devised what was later called the Blooms Taxonomy in which curriculum and the learning process should be organized from lower and less complex level of knowledge acquisition to higher order thinking (Bloom et al., 1956; Anderson & David, 2001). However, once again, I do not intend to examine the pedagogical accuracy and proper application of the Bloom’s guideline for developing a syllabus, and the defects of the syllabus when tested against the principles outlined by Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues.

It remains imperative, however, to engage the objectives as well as the corresponding classroom activities to expedite the teaching- learning which are directly related to Adwa. The following questions are used to probe into the objectives and the classroom activities. Firstly, which lesson/s, or lesson topic/s has/have objectives tailored to the subject of Adwa. Secondly, are those objectives mindfully crafted for conveying a message for students about the national and international significance of Adwa?

The concerned unit in grade 10 history textbook is Unit Two; ‘Peoples and States in Ethiopia and the Horn Between 1855-1908’ where 11 periods have been allotted (see the grade 10 syllabuses). The first egregious incongruity between the grade 10 history syllabus and the grade 10 history textbook is found in the sub-unit where Adwa occupies a pivotal space. The title in the textbook reads ‘2.4 Italian colonialism in the Horn of Africa,’ whereas the title in sub -unit 2.2 reads ‘Formation of Modern Ethiopian Empire.’ Among the long list of objectives for

this particular sub-unit where Adwa is a major topic, I found only two objectives clearly connected to Adwa. They are; ‘Interpret the Treaty of Wuchale as the main cause to the battle of Adwa’; and ‘Describe the battle of Adwa and its consequences’ (grade 10 syllabus). One can hardly see any take home message, directly or indirectly mentioned, geared towards nurturing values such as patriotism, national consciousness, other than imparting the very first level of knowledge, according to Blooms Taxonomy. It is interesting to bring one of the objectives crafted by the syllabus writers for the Battles of Gundet and Gura to the attention of the reader here. It reads; “Show appreciation to the sacrifices paid by Ethiopian people at the battles of Gundet and Gura.” I wish a similar value -loaded objective was crafted for Adwa. I found two issues of very striking relevance to us here from this statement. Firstly, the civic obligation to be learnt from the “sacrifices” underlined here, to my understanding, is a very important pillar for patriotism and nation building. Secondly, although currently “unconstitutional,” the oneness of the Ethiopian people was clearly reflected in the phrase ‘paid by the Ethiopian people,’ not the ‘Ethiopian peoples’ as is casually used in media and other official platforms in this country nowadays.

The next grade level in the high school history curriculum where Adwa is being discussed is grade 12. In a similar fashion with the grade 10 syllabus, the broader objectives of the syllabus for grade 12 history textbook, as mentioned at the top of the first page of the syllabi, has the title “Broad Learning Outcome of grade 12 History.” In short, there is no dispute that these are the objectives. Long list of objectives organized into three separate categories of knowledge level, drawn from Bloom’s taxonomy table, representing the early three knowledge levels: remember/recall, understand and apply. As casual as one might observe is that the three levels are represented by a phrase for example; “To develop understanding and acquire knowledge of...” to be followed by a copy pest of the specific objectives for each and every content to be covered. For example, the first category of broader/ general objectives that stands for the first level of the Bloom’s table (remember/recall) consists of 28 objectives. The other two levels consist of 12 and 9 objectives respectively. The outcome is not as such a well-designed pack of broader objectives to be farther sliced for every unit and sub-unit. The entire effort is, therefore, culminated with a syllabus objective unable to give a clear idea of what students must learn and what teachers must teach.

Conclusion

The central question this study intends to investigate is whether we have used school history and textbooks for the cause of nation building. I argued at the beginning of this paper that our glorious past had not been adequately exploited to promote community cohesion and national unity. My claim was that the victory of Adwa which could have been a very ideal instrument to achieve those goals has not been given the coverage it deserves in Ethiopia's secondary school syllabus and textbooks.

Texts and the syllabus evaluated for the purpose of this study do not show any substantive effort to connect the nation's glorious past, the patriotism and sacrifices of our forebears, and other social and cultural values with the ideals of nation building. Although available literature claim that curriculum and textbook writing are by nature ideological and political, with states having a bona fide stake, both textbooks of the 1980s and the Mega/Kuraz textbooks of the 1990s were not purposefully conceived, and later written towards achieving such lofty ends the nation aspires for.

In fact the grade 11 and the grade 12 texts of the *Derg* period are found to be extremely peripheral to the African context and irrelevant impositions on Ethiopian secondary school students. These books were filled with contents about the marvels of socialism/or Marxism-Leninism. Tekeste Negashe's observation might help to trace the rationale behind the disregard to Ethiopian and African history contents in the curriculum which is none other than the ideological shift of the regime in power to communism. He writes; "The Military regime (Dergue) that replaced the Imperial regime virtually scaped the writing of history as before and it virtually eliminated Ethiopian history from the curriculum. The inculcation of Marxist values and the creation of citizens who would enhance rapid economic development were the main elements of the curriculum of the period" (Tekeste, ND, p.2). One can hardly tell the worth and relevance of the reddish history of the then USSR, China, Poland, Bulgaria, Albania, GDR, Rumania, for an Ethiopian high school student.

Furthermore, with the benefit of hindsight, one may not expect the Mega/Kuraz textbooks to preach national unity and national consciousness. It was evident in later years that the EPRDF-led government was not at all enthusiastic about national unity and national consciousness. How can one imagine unity to be pontificated in textbooks while the FDRE constitution of 1995 itself lacks even a mention of it? Mohamed Salih expressed his remorse as follows; "One would be saddened to realize that the word 'unity' or 'national' does not appear even once in

the 1995 constitution. In a sense, this questions the drafters' commitment to unity" (Salih, 2018, p. 67).

The quantitative evidence drawn from our content analysis exercise makes it abundantly clear that too little has been said about Adwa in our high school textbooks. It also shows that mentions of military leaders that made the Adwa victory possible, and other symbolically significant spectacles do not shine out in the writing to attract the attention of students. The reason might be anything from negligence to lack of clearly set objectives with national interest in focus. The literature on the experience of other countries shows that when drafting a syllabus and write textbooks, very often, authors do it with purpose and conviction promoting national unity and survival of the state, and at most some of them even sound "patriotic historians," a reference made to an Italian text book writer of the modern period.¹⁰

¹⁰ The example of Italian textbook writer by the name Mr. Manaresi trying to sanctify the unsanctifiable Italian aggression in Ethiopia is illuminating. He has given a considerable space, a 21 pages chapter, for the Italian war (1935-41) against Ethiopia which he laboured much to valorize the "civilizing mission" of the conquerors with a blind eye to the atrocities the aggressors committed on Ethiopians such as the use of chemical weapons (Cajani, p. 75).

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