ATTEMPT TO INDIGENIZING CURRICULA IN ETHIOPIA

LEMMA TADESSE[1*]

[1]Arbaminch University College of Social Science and Humanities, Arbaminch, Ethiopia.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION
The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Review Article

ABSTRACT

The present study bring up citizen who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society. The educational sector in Ethiopia has been given powerful impetus after the overthrow of the military government in 1991. Since then education has been a development priority on the national agenda. The government developed Education Training Policy and Education Sector Strategy in 1994. And adopt the Education Sector Development Programme in 1997 together with the Education Training Policy. Furthermore, Ethiopia is working towards achieving the education for all goals as defined in the Dakar Framework in 2000. The educational policy goals, strategies and program are addressing the problems of access, equity, quality, and relevance in education.

Keywords: Curricula; education policy; enrollment; indigenization; learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current Education and Training Policy (ETP) of Ethiopia has focused on expanding access to educational opportunities [1,2]. The educational reforms are intended to achieve universal primary enrolment by 2015, with local language used as the language of instruction in the primary grades [3]. In addition to addressing the formal education system, the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP), adopted by the Government in 1997, included non-formal education (NFE) opportunities for dropouts and out-of-school children and young people. The concept of NFE provides a second chance for all, through distance education, functional literacy and continuing education.

2. OBJECTIVES OF CURRENT EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN ETHIOPIA

- Develop the physical and mental potential and the problem-solving capacity of individuals by expanding education and in particular by providing basic education for all.
- Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely, who are trained in various skills, by raising the private and social benefits of education.
- Bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline.
- Bring up citizen who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society.
- Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs.

Corresponding author: Email: tadesse_lemma@yahoo.com;

3. EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE OF CURRENT EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN ETHIOPIA

The structure of the Ethiopian education system encompasses formal and non-formal education. Non-formal education covers wide areas of training both for the primary school age children as well as adults who have either dropped out and/or beginners [4]. For this reason, it is viewed as open-ended in terms of training programme, and, to some extent, in terms of institutional arrangement [5]. Though the Ministry of Education is expected to play a leading role, other ministries also get involved depending on the field of training and target of trainees. To the New Education and training policy of1994, there will also be a system of technical vocational training which will be offered to the graduates of each cycle.

3.1 Enrolment at Pre-primary Level

To ensure the realization of Universal Primary Education (UPE), the Government will make every effort to provide financial, human and material resources to raising enrollment, improving equity and quality and reducing dropout and repetition rates. By the end of the program period (2009/10), GER will reach 109.7%, the pupil/section ratio will be reduced to 50 and pupil/teacher ratios will be 54 and 45 for first cycle and second cycle primary respectively. The program focuses on reaching not only children at the appropriate admission age (age 7) but also out-of-school children, those who didn't get the opportunity to enter schools at their appropriate age.

3.2 Enrolment at Secondary School Education

Secondary education is divided into two cycles each having different goals. The first cycle is a two years general secondary education (grades 9 –10). After completing the first cycle of general

Secondary education, students will be streamlined into academic (college preparatory, grades 11and 12) or TVET based on their academic merits and preferences. Those going for the academic fields are expected to sit for placement examination after two years of preparation to join their choice of field of study. The first cycle of secondary education is the source for producing trainable persons who would either join training for a mid-level labor force or university preparatory program.

Demand for secondary education is increased in Ethiopia too, as more pupils graduate from primary schools. In 2003/04, 685,976 students were enrolled in the general secondary education level (9-10 grades), among which 242,197 (35.3%) were girls. This makes the General Enrollment rate (GER) for the level 22.1. It was increased from 11.2% in 1999/00 to 22.1% in 2003/04. The GER of this cycle was increasing during the last five years by 13.8% and 4.7% for boys and girls respectively. It showed a total increase of 9.3%. However, the Net Enrollment Rate (NER) has increased only by 3% (from 6.8 in 1999/00 to 9.8 in 2003/04).

3.3 Enrolment at University and Tertiary Education

The overall strategy is to provide good quality higher education to a large number of students equitably but based on merit. This is mainly to meet the demand of the economy that is expected to grow steadily and requires large numbers of degree level graduates in different fields. During this program period a study to inform the sector on current and future expansions will be conducted. The total annual intake capacity of institutions under the sponsorship of the Ministry is reach 110 thousands. An affirmative admission policy to higher education shall be formulated to students from pastoralist and semi-agriculturalist communities.

3.4 Non Formal Education (NEF)

The Government attaches high importance to the development of Adult and Non-Formal Education, especially to combat the present high rate of illiteracy with a particular focus on women. The participation of NGOs in the delivery of Adult and Non-Formal Education program is important and their continuous and increasing participation is welcome. The Adult and NFE program includes a range of basic education and training components for out of- school children and adults. The program focuses on literacy, numeracy and the environment to enable learners to develop problem-solving abilities and change their mode of life.

The program will have three sub-components: a program for out-of-school children between the ages of 7-14, a functional adult literacy program for those youth and adults who are older than 15, and offering basic skill training to youth and adults in the Community Skills Training Centers.

4. THE CURRENT ETHIOPIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES, AIM, LEARNING AREA AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Kindergarten will focus on all round development of the child in preparation for formal schoo1ing.Primary education will be of eight years duration, offering

basic and general primary education to prepare students for further general education and training.

While Secondary education will be of four years duration, consisting of two years of general secondary education which will enable students identify their interests for further education, for specific training and for the world of work. General education will be completed at the first cycle (grade 10). The second cycle of secondary education and training will enable students to choose subjects or areas of training which will prepare them adequately for higher education and for the world of work.

Higher education at diploma, first degree and graduate levels, will be research oriented, enabling students become problem-solving professional leaders in their fields of study and in overall societal needs. Non-formal education will be provided beginning and integrated with basic education and at all levels of formal education. And Basic education will focus on literacy, numeracy, environment, agriculture, crafts, home science, health services and civics.

Non-formal education will be concrete in its content, focusing on enabling the learners develop problem-solving attitudes and abilities. Parallel to general education, diversified technical and vocational training will be provided for those who leave school from any level of education. Training will be provided in agriculture, crafts, construction, basic bookkeeping in the form of apprenticeship for those with the appropriate age and leaving primary school. Technical and vocational training in agriculture, industrial arts, construction, commerce and home science will be provided after primary education for those who may not continue general education. Technical training will be provided for those who complete grade ten for the development of middle level manpower. Special education and training will be provided for people with special needs.

5. ATTEMPTS AT INDIGENIZING THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN ETHIOPIA

Indigenization is the process of infusing Indigenous knowledge and perspective into the structural layers of an institution. The goal is to create a more inclusive environment through the presentation of a different world view, and to enhance and enrich the educational and cultural experience of the educational community. This does not mean the institution is Indigenous-centered, but it does mean that consideration of

Indigenous issues comes "naturally". Purposes of curriculum indigenization is to develop and implement practices that ensure that Indigenous students see themselves and their realities reflected in curriculum and service [6] portrays a cultural ethnic group as a group that shares a common set of values, experiences, behavioral characteristics, and linguistic traits, that differ substantially from those of other ethnic groups within a society. Membership in such a group is derived not by choice, but through birth and early socialization. The members of the cultural ethnic group are likely to take collective and organized action to support public policies that enhance the survival of the group's culture and ethnic institutions.

[7] argued that serious omissions of the culture and values of ethnic minorities in the curriculum has been the technique used by mainstream-centric curriculum development in order to systematically maintain the dominance of the major ethnic groups. Unless research in the culture of the ethnic group is carried out prior to the curriculum development process, the culture and heritage could not be incorporated into the curriculum.

In addition, Lawton [8], in his model for catering for culture in the curriculum, suggested a step prior to curriculum planning, known as cultural analysis. Cultural analysis is a systematic way of analyzing the culture of a given society before a selection from the culture is prescribed. Lawton"s main considerations in the process of cultural analysis are, namely viewing culture as a historical as well as a contemporary process, and viewing the cultural lag and curriculum inertia.

Indigenizing the curriculum provides hope for redressing the problem posed by the mainstream curriculum. The approach of indigenizing the curricula, which calls for anchoring the curriculum on traditions in order to develop locality specific paradigms [9].

5.1 Values and Beliefs Underlying Indigenous Educational Approaches

There are some of the foundational values and beliefs underlying Indigenous educational practices, these are:

- The primary purpose of education is to help the learner become solid in his/her identity to know his/her self deeply and to act with integrity. This applies to learners at all ages/stages of life;

- Each of us has gifts to offer to our community and it is the educator's role to facilitate and encourage the development of each learner's gifts;
- Establishment of strong relationships between teacher and students and amongst the learners is valued. Each teacher knows students well enough to support & challenge them effectively;
- It is recognized that we are all teachers and we are all learners;
- Service to others is a foundational component of education;
- Creative expression is a foundational component of education;
- Spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental balance is emphasized;
- Learners accept responsibility for their own learning, personal growth and the well-being of interpersonal relations through reflection on their thought patterns and behaviors', and through observation of how well they get along with others. They make adjustments as required

5.2 A Cultural-responsive Pedagogy

The theory of culturally-relevant pedagogy was first articulated by Gloria Ladson-Billings. This pedagogical approach calls for teachers to intentionally connect teaching to the lived experiences and knowledge frameworks of their students and the students" communities. It also views teaching as a process of contextualizing and embedding students in their community and culture [10]. Explicated that the validation and affirmation of the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically-diverse students as channel for effective teaching, is the root of culturally-relevant pedagogy. Academic knowledge and skills are more likely to be personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and learned more easily and thoroughly using this approach. This pedagogical approach has the power of making the teaching-learning process comprehensive. He forwarded five essential elements which pedagogues need to have in order to qualify as culturally-responsive teachers. These are,

- to develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity;
- to have the ability to design culturally-relevant curricula;
- to demonstrate caring and build learning communities;

- to have the confidence to communicate with ethnically diverse students across cultures; and, to have the ability to respond to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction

On the other hand according to [11], in order for pedagogy to be considered as culturally-relevant, it must meet three important criteria. These are:

- an ability to develop students" academic achievement;
- willingness to nurture and support cultural competence; and
- the development of a socio-political or critical consciousness that challenges the structural inequities maintained by schools and other institutions.

5.3 Indigenization from the National Perspective

The major aims of the indigenous education were instilling in children the attitudes and skills appropriate for their social roles, focusing on the duties and privileges derived from cultural values. The indigenous education responded to the concrete problems of the local communities and was impart by means of the local language. Indigenous education plays an important role in preparing the young generation for their future role in the rural areas, where there is little access to modern education .A significant step in the history of Ethiopian education was the introduction of modern western education which officially commenced in 1908 with the opening of Menelik II School in Addis, since its introduction modern western education has been given exceeding precedence over indigenous education neglecting invaluable experiences accumulated over a long period of time.

Since the inception of modern western education different attempts have been made by different regimes in the country to reform the educational system. Each of the reform endeavors criticized the preceding educational systems and formulated new policies which would strengthen the anticipated change to make the school curriculum relevant to the learners" cultures.

The first foreign researcher who alleged the irrelevance of the Ethiopian curriculum and who came up with a counteractive proposal was Ernest Work, an American who taught Ethiopian Studies in the United States, and who served as an expatriate advisor in the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts in Ethiopia. He made a study of the contemporary education system in Ethiopia during 1934-35, and made a radical proposal

that recommended a system suitable to the Ethiopian situation be developed. He called for Ethiopianising education in the country by using Amharic as the medium of instruction, and by preparing local textbooks in Amharic. Attempts were made to Ethiopianise the education system at primary school level by making curricular reforms in 1947 and the 1960s (from 1964 to 1974).

The reforms were focused on changing the medium of instruction and the textbook language, and the involvement of Ethiopian personnel in the process of curriculum development and implementation. In spite of these efforts towards the Ethiopianization/ indigenization of education at national level/, in practice it was impossible to indigenise knowledge and the curriculum because of the assumption that knowledge has a universal or global nature, and because of the continued foreign influence on Ethiopian experts).

Edward Janty, an American expert who served in the education sector in Ethiopia indicated, in the middle of 1949, the irrelevance of the curriculum to the realities of the country, as follows

Added to the above classroom situation is the fact that the pupils had to learn a foreign language (English) from foreign textbooks with illustration material alien to their own culture.

Despite the reforms which were aimed at Ethiopianising the education system in general and the curricula in particular at national level, the education system in the country remained irrelevant to the situation in the country. This deficiency was clearly identified by the Education Sector Review (ESR) in 1972.

The Education Sector Review was conducted due to the bold policy decision made by the Imperial Government of Ethiopia to conduct a comprehensive study on the education sector, with particular emphasis on the curriculum. In the end one of the problems identified in the Review mentions: The educational experience of Ethiopian youth is inadequately related to the Ethiopian realities and setting, as attested by undue reliance on foreign books, foreign languages, and foreign teachers. During the military period the use of a national language as medium of instruction was raised from primary school level to secondary school level. It proceeded to the extent of replacing English with Amharic, both in primary and secondary education. Unfortunately, the experiences accumulated during its reign were completely swept

away by the regime that succeeded it. . The federal government initiated a language policy which introduced more than fifteen languages instead of only Amharic as media of instruction at primary school level [12]. Therefore, the Ethiopianization or indigenization of education at national level can be considered as an affirmation of the assimilation policy which was publicly opposed by the subjugated ethnic groups.

5.4 Indigenizing from Ethnic Groups Prospective

The classification of people into various cultures signifies the differences among them. The fact that people live in one country and have one national identity does not make the cultural groups the same. In this sense, any commonalities become secondary; as they are not the major defining factors of each cultural [13]. This justifies indigenization from the ethnic groups‟ perspectives.

[6] Portrays *a cultural ethnic group* as a group who shares a common set of values, experiences, behavioral characteristics, and linguistic traits that differ substantially from other ethnic groups within the society. Membership of such a group is drawn, not by choice, but through birth and early socialization. Members of a cultural ethnic group are likely to take collective and organized actions to support public policies that enhance the survival of the group's culture and ethnic institutions. The members also pass on components of the group's cultural heritage, such as the symbols and language, to the next generation. [7] defines an *ethnic group* as a community of people within a larger society, and who is socially distinguished or set apart from others, and/or by itself, primarily on the basis of characteristics such as religion, language, or tradition.

Despite the complex nature of the cultural basis, however, both the monarchy and the military administration of the Derg regime had adopted to set the educational foundation on a narrow segment of the Ethiopian culture, which effectively served only a limited membership of the Ethiopian community, and as a consequence resulted in unsatisfactory and undesirable social, economic, political and cultural outcomes [14].

The policy and implementation strategy documents adopted and issued by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the Federal Government of Ethiopia, respectively, also clearly specified the deficiencies of the education systems of the country in general, and the curriculum in particular, during both the monarchy

and the military periods, with respect to relevance and quality. In stating the historical problems sustained by the education system of the country the policy document articulated that, To date, it is known that our country's education is entangled with complex problems of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity. The objectives of education do not take cognizance of the society's needs and do not adequately indicate future direction (TGE, 1994). The Implementation Strategy document also clearly sorted out the problems of the country's education system, among which relevance and quality are the prominent ones. It clearly stated that the curricula were directly copied from nations which are friends of the government, without taking the context of the country into consideration [15].

The Implementation Strategy Document also came up with the proposal of changing the existing curriculum in order to solve the problem in respect of educational quality and relevance. To this end, the content of the curriculum was supposed to be aligned to the context of the country. In order to materialize this proposal, primary education textbooks were prepared, taking the reality of the environment, the activities, the cultures, and the way of living of the local communities into consideration [15].

6. CONCLUSION

The current Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia has focused on expanding access to educational opportunities intending to achieve universal primary enrolment, with local language used as the language of instruction in the primary grades. Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs is among the major objectives of current educational policy.

Since its introduction modern western education has been given exceeding precedence over indigenous education neglecting invaluable experiences accumulated over a long period of time.

Thus, the reforms were focused on changing the medium of instruction and the textbook language, and the involvement of Ethiopian personnel in the process of curriculum development in order to Ethiopianization/indigenization of education at national level. Therefore, the Ethiopianization or indigenization of education at national level can be considered as an affirmation of the assimilation policy which was publicly opposed by the subjugated ethnic groups. The Implementation Strategy Document also

came up with the proposal of changing the existing curriculum in order to solve the problem in respect of educational quality and relevance.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERANCES

1. Shizha E. The indigenous knowledge systems and the curriculum. In African indigenous knowledge and the disciplines. Brill Sense. 2014;113-129.
2. Yishak DM, Gumbo MT. The Marginalisation of the Gamo ethnic group through curriculum planning and processes in Ethiopia. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. 2014;5(10):285.
3. Yeshk D. A model for indigenizing the basic education curricula for the Gamo ethnic group in Ethiopian primary schools, University of South Africa; 2013.
4. Tefera B, Hagos B. Indigenization of early childhood education (ECCE) in Ethiopia: "A goiteron mumps" in ECCE provisions. The Ethiopian Journal of Education. 2016;36(2):73-117.
5. Wondie Y, Abawa M. Westernization versus indigenization in the context of global mental health: Training and services in Ethiopia– University of Gondar in focus. International Journal of Mental Health. 2019;48(4):257-271.
6. Banks J. Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum and teaching (5th ed.). San Francisco: Pearson Education, Inc; 2006.
7. Bennett C. Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc; 2011.
8. Lawton D. Curriculum studies and educational planning. London: Hodder & Stoughton; 1984. Available:https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/174114328401200111
9. Dominelli L. News and views from IASSW: International social work: Themes and issues for the 21st century. International Social Work. 2005;48(4).
10. Gay G. Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice. New York: Teachers College Press; 2000
11. Ladson-Billings G. The dream keepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1994.

12. Tekeste N. Education in Ethiopia: From crisis to the brink of collapse. Stockholm: Nordiska Afrika institute; 2006.

13. Rankopo M, Osei-Hwedie K. Globalization and culturally relevant social work: African perspectives on Indigenization. International Social Work; 2011.

14. Teklehaimanot H. The cultural foundation of education in Ethiopia. IER Flambeau; 1999. Available:http://ejol.aau.edu.et/index.php/FLA MBEAU/article/view/430

15. MOE. Education and Training Policy and its Implementation. Addis Ababa: Mega Publishing Enterprise. Ministry of Education; 2002.

_____