THE QUEST FOR A SHIFT FROM USERS TO MAKERS AND SHAPERS OF POLICIES: A REVIEW OF POLICYMAKING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN ETHIOPIA, 1991-2004

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ABSTRACT:

Drawing from interviews, questionnaire responses, and information generated through documentary sources, this paper attempts to examine the part played by different actors in policymaking in the education sector in Ethiopia. It recognizes the prevalence of a range of constraints that accentuated the woes of the key stakeholders in the education system (teachers and students) that, in turn, militated against the effective education policy implementation. Wedged between inadequate managerial and institutional capacity, on the one hand, and hostile politico-administrative milieu on the other, the policy and the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) appeared to make very little headway. Due mainly to the opacity shrouding decision-making in the education system, the policy and the program ran the risk of being perceived illegitimate. The way forward is to engage the relevant public more fully in the decision-making process and institute mechanisms of genuine participation so much that the quality of educational services and the actual control of policy decisions by the relevant stakeholders would be ensured. In other words, this is a quest for a shift from users of policies, to a more active engagement of citizens in the making and shaping of policies that affect their lives.

Keywords: Education Policy; Implementation; Elitism vs. Participatory Model; Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the government establishments such as the Prime Minster Office (PMO), the Ministry of Education (MOE) and other actors (i.e., donor partners) who spearheaded policy formulation and implementation in the education sector in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2004. Apparently, the dissatisfaction with past education policies and the disappointing performance of the system of education prompted an introduction of the new education and training policy in 1994. The latter seemed to have articulated commendable objectives with mapped out strategies and instruments to be able to attain goals. Financed by both the government and a consortium of multilateral and bilateral donors, ESDP, was launched towards the end of the 1990s and aimed at translating the broad policy objectives into concrete outputs and educational services. However, neither the policy nor the program benefited from the critical inputs of the relevant public (namely, teachers, students, parents, and experts in the field as well as the general public) at each clearance point of the decision-making process (Tefera, 1996; Abebe, 2001). In other words, not only did key decision makers in the political leadership (policy elites) and their donor partners conceptualize and formulate both the education policy and its concomitant program, but they also determined the

modus operandi of the implementation process. *Modus Operandi* includes the Career Structure[1] that the Ministry of Education claimed to have employed in order to translate broad policy objectives into effect. The study, therefore, argues that opaque and/or exclusionary (elitist) policymaking severely jeopardized implementation that resulted in disappointing performance in the education sector.

THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ever since the recorded history of Ethiopia began, public policymaking has invariably been the prerogative of the emperors, kings and palace courts, the nobility, military dictators, and the civilian and bureaucratic elites (Abebe & Cloete, 2006). Due chiefly to the awesome power of the policy elites and their dominance, and partly because societal actors lacked the organization, the autonomy, the capacity, and the resources needed to counterbalance the government players, any attempt to limit the leviathan power of the state actors and their sphere of influence was unsuccessful. One of the recurring problems in the maze of public policymaking in Ethiopia has, therefore, been the imbalance between policymaking institutions and policy beneficiary societal actors (Abebe & Cloete, 2006).

There has seldom been any other policy space in Ethiopia other than education in which all the manifestations of elitism have conspicuously transpired. Chiefly because policymaking institutions had very narrow circles of policymakers that made participation limited, or because large sectors of the public were, for the most part, inactive and inarticulate, participation in the education policymaking process by the relevant citizenry appeared to be much less. Ironically, while there had been claims that public participation was encouraged, prior decisions and understanding had been concluded almost unanimously among the policy elites to mobilize support from 'the inert and apathetic masses', let alone eliciting critical inputs into the education policymaking process. Hence, empirical evidences confirm that the opaque or elite model of policy formulation bred incidences of apathy and lethargy among the relevant stakeholders in the course of making the education policy, for the latter were denied the opportunity to voice their concerns and influence policy decisions. Consequently, the disappointment with the manners in which the education policy was conceived, as well as formulated, appeared to have affected the outcome of implementation adversely. In other words, poor-quality education, dire shortage of facilities, not to mention the dissatisfied and dejected teachers with little or no motivation to support the Education and Training Policy and the implementation of the ESDP pointed to the absence of the solid and genuine ownership over the policy from its ultimate beneficiaries.

METHOD AND INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

This study uses a descriptive method and analysis leading to explanatory and exploratory approaches to the understanding of policymaking for the education system in Ethiopia. The nature of the study necessitates shedding light on qualitative information, a small amount of quantitative data in a tabular form, as well as percentages being used.

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the author relied on in-depth interviews (with most of the interviewing taking an hour and half to two hours), of open-ended questionnaires for primary data/information collection, upon which information

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[1] Launched by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2001, the Career Structure was intended to offer teachers with monetary rewards commensurate to their teaching performances.

and facts were narrated and inferences were made. Both primary and secondary (mostly documentary data) sources were collected from December 2003 to April 2004.

The study employs purposive sampling with a cross section of society (involving government and school officials, academics, teachers, and civil society leaders) participating in providing information. The use of cases and survey methods are of paramount importance in this study as well. Questionnaire responses were obtained from some civil society leaders, Ethiopian academics, teachers, and government officials directly involved in administering policy implementation in the education sector. Likewise, interviews were also conducted with key informants, who were selected either for having closely studied education policymaking system and/or for getting involved with the system in one form or another. Fortunately, almost all of the interviewees provided incisive information. Interviews and questionnaire responses were collected in Amharic, the lingua franca of central government institutions and the bulk of Ethiopian populace, translated into English and processed. Since almost all of the interviews were tape-recorded, not only did this provide the author with the opportunity to go through the tapes quite frequently and carefully transcribe them handwritten on papers, but it also simplified the translation of the Amharic versions of the interviews into English.

It should also be noted that primary data/information gathering focused on three core regions in Ethiopia, namely Amhara; South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPs); and Tigray national regional states (NRSs), and the capital city-Addis Ababa. These regions embody almost all the major policymaking establishments that were active in the decision-making process. Equally important, given that the critiques and the protagonists of the education policy were stationed in these regions gave sufficient ground to capture the imagination of the author to undertake data gathering there.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1. *Public policy* can be defined as the combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold sate positions (government leaders) and those who make demands to influence policy decisions (citizens) (Gerston, 1997; Anderson, 1997). The contemporary view of public policy thus underscores the linkage between policymakers and policy receivers as vital to understanding the meaning of public policy.

2. *Policymaking* involves a series of interrelated phases in the process of making vital policy decisions involving identifying policy problems, setting agenda for decision making, formulating policy proposals, legitimating policies by the action of a lawmaking body (legislature), implementing policies and evaluating them (Dunn, 1994).

3. *Policy implementation* is translating broad policy objectives into concrete goods and services. However, broad policy objectives should be disaggregated into programs and projects to be able to administer the implementation process as effectively as possible.

4. *Policy elites* are individuals and groups who occupy positions of high political power so much so that they are able to make policy decisions with far-reaching consequences (Mills, 1995).

5. *Participatory policymaking* is premised on the principles of public empowerment and democracy that called for citizen involvement in policymaking and greater public input in policy decisions (Steelman & Ascher, 1997).

Thus, participatory policymaking can create opportunities for informed policy decisions and effective implementation.

CONCEPTUAL PREMISE

Two broad schools of thought have influenced how we view the role of the public in policymaking, namely, participatory and elite models (Steelman, 2001). While the advocates of participatory model see the role for the public as one that is active with the locus of decision-making power vested in the public, elite theorists believe in a more limited, passive even more exclusionary role for the public with policymaking power left to key political leaders and experts in the bureaucracy (Steelman, 2001).

In the literature, the definition of elite refers to people with influence other than those who hold formal political power. Among others, members of government and of high administration, military leaders, leaders of powerful economic enterprises, leaders of political parties, trade union leaders, businessmen and politically active intellectuals coalesce into forming elites (Ham & Hill, 1993). Arguably, however, in developing countries where wielding political positions (more particularly, party and executive leadership) becomes the primary source of decision-making power, policy elites should embrace individuals and groups who seize the mantle of high political responsibilities. Of course, bureaucratic positions associated with political offices have increasingly buttressed the policymaking leverage of policy elites, and so are integrated into the corps of the elites group. Policy elites are, therefore, groups composed of persons whose positions enable them to make policy decisions having far-reaching consequences (Grindle & Thomas, 1991). Hence, they are in command of major hierarchies of policymaking structures; they run the apparatus of government and claim its prerogatives; they direct the military institutions; they are well placed to maneuver power and economic wealth; and they occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure (Mills, 1995).

Premised on the ascendant ideological values, policy elites could make decisions that might have paramount impact on the lives of the public, with far-reaching consequences. In other words, from this vantage point policies are hardly based on the demands and interests of the people. The starkest reality is that elites appear to see the societal forces as passive, apathetic and ill informed; *ipso facto* public sentiments are more often manipulated by elites, rather than the public influencing elite values (Dye, 1995; Anderson, 1997). In other words, policy questions are not decided by the people whose interests would be affected by that decision. Not only are the elites making critical policy decisions, but also the flow of communication is for the most part top-down. At the same time, political institutions such as the executive, bureaucratic agencies and parties in power employ strong statutes such as constitutional provisions to force the masses to observe the rules of the game of the elite system and values in developing countries. Elites do not just shape consensus about the continuation of the social system and the basic rules of the game, but the survival and stability of the system also depends on the elites' consensus to preserve the fundamental values of the system (Dye, 1995). Therefore, policies that can only comply with the shared consensus and values of policy/ruling elites will be given much more attention than it would be otherwise. The circumstances in most of the developing countries point to the fact that 'people are generally ill informed about policy issues and, hence, apathetic, both the political and bureaucratic elites fashion mass opinion than masses shape the leadership's views' (Saasa, 1985).

Furthermore, interest and civil society groups are fragmented and lack the capacity to articulate their interests. Nor has there been a climate conducive for promoting involvement in a vibrant civil movement. In fact, in some instances when these forces are active, the mechanisms of wielding influence through formally constituted policymaking institutions or channel of communications are absent. In some other cases, not only have the executive, ruling parties and bureaucratic institutions developed clientele organizations that pre-empt autonomous initiatives, but also they use their power prerogatives to induce and guide corporatist participation, whereby groups designated by policy elites are escorted into controlled participation (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002). For the most part, policy elites encourage public participation to ensure support for themselves and their policy initiatives (Huntington, 1976). For public demand to have any effect on the public policymaking process would therefore be less likely.

The aforesaid discussion will then bring us in touch with one of the most critical issue of the congenital link between public policymaking and governance. In fact, in the context of developing countries it prompts the question of instituting a governance system so that public policymaking becomes technically efficient and effective, while at the same time policies are responsive to the needs of large sections of the citizenry and the decision-making processes are participatory (Steelman, 2001; Olowu, 2002). Over the last two and half decades, competing governance approaches have increasingly been gaining currency among academic and multilateral circles. Despite the varying perspectives in approaches, the differences appear to crystallize into two schools, namely, between those who view governance as the conduct of public affairs, and those who see it as steering and controlling public affairs (Hyden & Court, 2002; Olowu, 2002).

The latter approach has been promoted since the 1980s by powerful multilateral organizations and United Nations institutions. To all intents and purposes, governance, as conceived by these multi-lateral organs, emphasizes leadership - the manner in which political (state) leaders manage, use, or misuse power - to promote social and economic development or to pursue agendas that undermine such goals (Olowu, 2002). Hence, good or better governance is conceived from a process perspective with an emphasis on the rule of law, accountability, participation, transparency, and human and civil rights (World Bank, 1992). These elements appear to be comparable to those governance elements that are ascendant in the Western liberal democracies. Considered chiefly as a partnership approach, the second approach focuses on sharing of authority for public management between state and non-state institutions with greater emphasis on the framework in which public policy decisions are made (Weaver, Rock & Kusterer, 1997; Hyden and Court, 2002; Olowu, 2002). The second school therefore extends the issue of governance beyond the confines of an exclusive state domain and action, and sees it as a domain of multi-actors and multi-organizations. A further element that sets this school apart from the first one is that governance is judged as good or bad by both processes as well as outcomes: the use of state and non-state institutional resources to solve social and political problems (Hyden & Court, 2002). In view of the fact that participatory and transparent policymaking process in Ethiopia and the bulk of the developing world is in its infancy, and considering the problems and issues raised earlier, the author argues that the second school is very much pertinent in accommodating legitimate public demands and dealing with the elitism of policymaking in the realm of education in Ethiopia.

More generally, recent years have witnessed a move towards participatory approaches in policymaking that can be seen as the tide turning against technocratic, elitist, and top down models of decision-making. This is thus the underlying reason why scholars and major decision-makers in government leadership have called for more public involvement and for more public involvement and input into the policymaking process (Steelman & Asher, 1997; Adams, 2004, Tefera, 1996).

THE PLAYERS IN THE MAKING OF THE EDUCATION POLICY AND THE PROGRAM (I.E., ESDP): DID ELITISM OR PARTICIPATORY MODEL DOMINATE THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS?

The disappointment with past education policies and the poor performances of the education system seemed to have precipitated the drawing up of a new education and training policy. Not only were schools in the pre-1991 education system badly managed, poorly equipped, and overcrowded, but the curriculum also fell far short of addressing the socio-economic woes of the country (Tefera, 1996; Transitional Government of Ethiopia [TGE], 1994A). The poor performance of the education system in the past was partly attributed to the deteriorating working conditions and badly organized teaching career system, although teachers' social and material statuses have not shown any significant change for more than a decade after the new education policy was put into effect (TGE, 1994A; Abebe, 2001). The organization and administration of the education system were not adequately decentralized in ways to render the utilization of local initiative and reassure the realization of the potential of local administrative endeavor. The flaws embedded in the past education system is described as follows:

> …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. The absence of interrelated contents and mode of presentation that can develop student's knowledge, cognitive abilities and behavioral change by level, to adequately enrich problem-solving ability and attitude, are some of the major problems of educational system. Inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teachers, overcrowded classes, shortage of books, and other teaching materials, all indicate the low quality of education (TGE, 1994A).

It was to redress the cynicism with past policies and programs that the new education and training policy was launched in April 1994, although two years earlier the Council of Representatives (CoR, the transition period legislature) authorized the execution of a significant part of the policy's component, namely the teaching of subjects in ethnic languages (CoR, 1992). The policy pledged to pay more attention to the acquisition of scientific knowledge and instilling problem-solving capacities as well as a culture that would engender the realization of the full potential of the educated youth (TGE, 1994A). It also touched on the importance of establishing a relationship between education, training, research and development, on the one hand, and the institution of a decentralized administrative system to enhance a coordinated and efficient management in the education system, on the other (TGE, 1994A). The school structure has been transformed from 6-2-4 (six years of primary, two years of junior secondary and four years of high schooling) into 8-4 (eight years of primary and four years of secondary schooling). The primary and secondary schooling phases have each been divided into two cycles, with the primary education offering basic education in the first cycle (1-4), and are followed by general education in the second cycle (5-8). Despite

almost unanimous objections from the teaching establishment, a self-contained system of a teaching-learning process in which a single teacher undertaking the teaching of all the subjects in the first cycle (1-4) of primary education was introduced. Likewise, secondary education introduced two cycles of a general secondary education in the first cycle (9-10) accompanied by preparatory senior secondary schooling in the second cycle (11-12). In the past, the maximum duration of undergraduate degree programs at tertiary level was 4 to 6 years, but the new policy abridged that from 3 to 5 years.

The new policy stipulated several commendable objectives and laid down broad strategies to reach the goals. Revitalizing the education system with a measure of emphasis on democracy, respect for human rights, culture and the environment are, among others, lofty objectives boldly stated in the new policy (TGE, 1994A). Bringing education into line with the development requirements of the economy, broadening education at the primary level and eventually universalizing it, imparting relevance into the curricula, introducing a more equitable system of education, improving the quality as well as the professional competence of teachers and ensuring the linkages between education, research and development again were distinctly valuable objectives (TGE, 1994B). Substantial measures to execute the policy, however, were not taken till the policy was disaggregated into a program of action under the name of the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP I) in 1997-1998. Under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, financed largely by the government and supported by donors, the program (ESDP I) covered a period of five years from 1997-1998 to 2001-2002. Not only did it target expanding chiefly primary education and a more equitable distribution of educational services, but it also proposed strategies such as the decentralization of educational administration, curriculum reform and school buildings professed to rectify the severe problems that had been lingering for many years in the past (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE], 1998).

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that there are resemblances in the conventions in which three regimes organized teams to draft education policies. The manner in which a group of expatriate and Ethiopian educators who drafted the Education Sector Review were assembled in 1972 (under Haileselaasie's Imperial regime) is as much the same as the one organized to draft the Evaluative Research of the General Education System in Ethiopia (ERGESE) in 1983 (*Dergue* government) and the Education and Training Policy in 1993 (the current government). Unfortunately, the former was pre-empted by an outbreak of a revolution in the country and did not see the light that its successors did. Put differently, the Imperial Government's Education Sector Review's obituary had been written long before its benefactor's demise in 1974 (Tefera, 1996). It should also be noted that in less than a generation the Ethiopian public saw three different educational policies under three different governments.

In any case, the TGE's Prime Minister Office (PMO) commissioned a group of persons largely drawn from the Ministry of Education and Addis Ababa University to draft a new education policy in 1993 (Tefera, 1996; Martin, Oksanen and Takala, 2000). Led and appointed by the PMO, a core task force that was comprised of eleven members, including the leaders of six sub-task forces, was set up to spearhead the formulation of the education policy. The six sub-task forces in which the 42-member team was re-organized to include: curriculum and research; teacher training, training methods, including professional development and working conditions of teachers; educational measurement and evaluation; language in education; educational organization, management and finance; educational materials and support inputs (Martin *et al*., 2000).

An additional seven committees, mainly meant to support the work of the 42 Ethiopian scholars, were also drawn from 22 different line ministries and other government organizations.

To begin with, in the wake of 1991 the pre-commitments of the benefactors of Ethiopian public policies set both the precedents and the context in which all policies, including education policy, were to be formulated. First, the supreme law of the land during the transition, namely the Charter, underscored the self-determination of ethnic communities and up to and including secession, and, second, a year earlier the Council of Representatives, which acted as the legislature during the transition period, approved a policy proposed by Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that half a dozen ethnic languages should be the medium of instruction in the primary schools and in the respective ethnic communities. It was against this background that the new education policy was introduced in 1994. In this regard, government white papers issued in 1994 and 1996 on New Education and Training Policy and ESDP respectively stated:

> Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and *the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages*, primary education will be given in nationality language.

> Making the necessary preparation, *nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language* or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution (TGE, 1994B).

> Any sound educational policy should be conceived in the context of the country's overall development objectives and strategies. The relevance of education to *the emphasis now being placed on agriculture and rural development* should be clearly established and the new strategy of economic development should, in turn, contribute towards the transformation of the educational system. Students at various stages of education must acquire skills and training that contribute in various ways to the new economic objectives. *With the current policy of channeling more resources for the development of rural areas*, the system of education, as it has been perceived in the past, is distinctly irrelevant. …*Emphasis has thus been placed on increased enrolment in primary education which provides the essential link with the country's major resource base-agriculture and the masses of the peasantry*. The focus on the primary education is in order to link up the spread of education with *the objectives of economic growth which is based on the strategy of prioritizing agriculture* in which the country possesses definite comparative advantages at present. The essential requirement, therefore, is *a fundamental restructuring of the present system of education so as to create conditions for a rapid growth of basic education and to make it more relevant to the needs of the vast majority of Ethiopia's population and the requirements of an agrarian economy* (FDRE, 1998).

Towards the end of the 1970s, a series of literacy campaigns had been conducted in local vernacular languages. This policy nevertheless accorded bold recognition of local or ethnic languages as medium of instruction at the primary level. The most important element that distinguishes the new policy from its predecessors is that not only is there a close association between the recognition of the political rights of ethnic communities and the subsequent right of such entities to use their languages as

a medium of instruction for the entire period of primary education (Negash, 1993), but also there is a remarkable emphasis on reorienting education towards rural and agriculture development strategies, as the preceding section indicated. Hence, the new policy elites' commitments to the nations, nationalities and peoples (NNPs) and the peasantry figure much more prominently in education policy and programs than in other socio-economic policies (Martin *et al*., 2000).

In much the same way as its predecessors, nevertheless, the formulation as well as the implementation of both the new education policy and the ESDP benefited little and were nurtured with few inputs from the relevant stakeholders and the general public (Tefera, 1996; Abebe, 2001). The officials in the Ministry of Education (MOE) attempted to create consensus on the policy pronouncements with some of the teachers, the public in Addis Ababa and in limited number of NRSs, which distinctly set the benefactors apart from their predecessors, *albeit* government authorities aggressively campaigned for their constituencies to give a seal of approval to the policy wherever such meetings occurred (Abebe, 2001). Not only were alternative ideas that aimed at changing or modifying the fundamental stipulations of the policy pronouncements discouraged, but audiences for the policy dialogue were also reluctantly arranged as public relations exercise, nor was the selection of participants representative (Interview responses from school principals in Amhara and Tigray States in December 2003 and February 2004, respectively).

The few educators who participated in the workshops on the policy contended that the discussions on the draft education policy by and large were of an informative nature and permitted no opportunity for alternative views to be deliberated, nor were they meant to (Interviews held with two educational administrators at Mekele Special Zone Education Office in Tigray NRS, February 2004). Even the ideas, views and comments that proved to be fruitful and constructive were not incorporated into the policy. Representation of grassroots interests and the genuine constituencies of the policy left a lot to be desired, aside from the failure to incorporate their commentary (Interview held with two principals of secondary schools who participated in the workshops on education policy dialogues in South Wollo, Amhara States, December 2003). By default or by design, the haphazard manner in which the workshops and discussions on the policy had been organized would give one the impression that the sessions were probably meant to recruit support for the policy, but not to capitalize on the creative initiatives as well as critical inputs of the educators**.**

Although he resigned from the team in the early phase of the process, a senior Ethiopian academic and educator who was appointed as a member of the team which drafted the policy characterized the making of the new Education and Training Policy as a top-down exercise, apparently with little input from the public and relevant stakeholders. Civil society organizations such as teachers' associations contributed very little mainly because of the split within the association at about the same time as the campaign in favor of the new policy was launched (Tefera, 1996). It is interesting to note that the TGE President told the transitional legislature, the CoR, in April 1993 that a group of scholars had been grappling with the study and drafting of a new education policy, and pledged that the draft policy document was to be presented for approval as soon as the drafting work was over. The policy document, however, was officially published exactly a year later without the seal of approval of the parliamentarians; and neither was it discussed in any of its regular nor special sessions (CoR, 1993).

In effect, the making of the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) was far more exclusive than the policy. ESDP was perceived and formulated by the highest government actors and a cluster of funding or multi-donor agencies (Martin et al, 2000). The lower-level echelons in the education structure, and the ultimate beneficiaries of the program such as teachers, students and parents were distinctly excluded from the formulations as well as the laying down the modalities of its implementation. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of Education (MOE), representatives of some selected government institutions, representatives of NRSs' educational bureaus, the World Bank and the team members of international technical assistance missions and donors were among the major actors actively involved in the making of the program and mapped out action plans for its implementation (Joint Review Mission [JRM], 2003; Mid-term Review Mission [MRM], 2001; Martin *et al.,* 2000). It is interesting to note the bizarre circumstances that transpired due in part to the conflict that arose between the World Bank representatives and the multi-donor mission in Ethiopia, who competed for the control of the preparation of the ESDP and the mechanisms of its execution (JRM, 2003) Not only did the World Bank receive the backing of the PMO and MOE to commission several of its employees as active members of the various technical teams, but also it had greater role both in influencing the content of the ESDP and exercising leadership in its implementation (Martin *et al.,* 2000). This became the major source of resentment among the multi-donor missions, who would clearly like to be included as partners in influencing and shaping ESDP.

While the PMO and the MOE claimed the political and organizational leadership, the World Bank together with the multi-donor mission (though accorded less profile compared to World Bank), played leading roles in the technical aspects of the ESDP. In fact, not only were the Prime Minister Office (PMO) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) responsible for the coordination and organization of ESDP preparation, but the PMO also became the linchpin in setting the regional budget ceiling after consultation with the regional presidents and communicating the ceilings of the educational budget to the NRSs (Martin *et al.,* 2000). Any lower-level participation below the NRSs, if it existed at all, entailed communicating information, soliciting support and endorsement, but not for consultation and contributing to the ESDP planning process. Involving the lower levels and the relevant public in shaping the ESDP aside, information about the ESDP had not even been disseminated below the top NRSs' party and government officials, nor were there any significant attempts to rectify this. In fact, in its own admission, an unpublished government policy document described ESDP as an outcome of a consultative process between central government, NRS governments and the donor community (FDRE, 2002: 12-13).

Tefera (1996: 12-13) argued:

> It is strongly held that for educational reform to be effective, it is not only necessary but also essential that the target population, which is to be affected directly or indirectly by the reform, be involved in the reform process. This is in line with the idea of participatory decision-making, an essential element in a democratic process. It advocates that such involvement helps develop in the people the sense that they are not mere pawns to be manipulated as objects of reform, but are rather subjects of reform who have a voice and stake in the reform process. This is no doubt contrary to the age-old thinking that government alone knows what is good for people. As such, it rejects the paternalistic and parochial attitude of those in power towards the people. Thus, it subscribes to a bottom-up approach of reform that

strongly advocates participation at grass roots level, a principle that ideas for reform could emanate from the bottom to the top. This in complete contrast to the top-down approach that maintains a principle that what is good for the people should be handed down from those in power to the ones below.

In brief, not only did policy elites and their donor partners conceptualize and formulate both the education policy and its concomitant program, but they also determined the *modus operandi* of the implementation process. Neither the educators, on whom the bulk of the implementation of the policy rested, nor did the public, play any significant role in influencing the policy. Ironically, implementing agencies, below the top NRSs bosses, who would have had vital role in the execution both of the policy and the program, were peripheral actors for much of the conceptualization and formulation processes of the ESDP. Hence, the elites involving the bureaucracy, key political leadership and technocratic experts (both expatriate and domestic) seemed to have dominated the entire decision-making process in the education sector in this country. The adverse consequences of this imbalance, as we shall soon see, were manifested in the shape of a series of negative downward effects that affected the outcome of education policy implementation.

EDUCATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND THE DOWNWARD EFFECTS

The effective implementation of the education policy and the ESDP would have depended as much on winning the constituency of the education policy (teachers, students, parents and the general public), as on a carefully planned preparation and program to implement it. The Ethiopian government had neither the policy constituency, which could back up sustainable implementation, nor the preparation to do it (Interview held with a leader Ethiopian Teachers Association, March 2004). Hence, nearly eight years after the ESDP had been in full swing, Ethiopian policymakers have been locked in a situation that was much like fighting fire to cope with the pressures of lack of facilities, a dire absence of qualified and untrained teachers in the upper-primary and secondary schools, overcrowded classrooms at all levels of the education system, unprepared as well as over-loaded teachers (Abebe, 2001) with the challenges that the policy set to institutions and actors. Rampant frustration and loss of interest in teaching and/or a widespread declining morale as well as motivation to teach, the influx of teachers to well-paying private schools, and even many of them increasingly leaving their teaching jobs in favor of other job opportunities augured well for an education system that would probably courting another crisis. In SNNP NRS, in one zone alone 44% of teachers in the primary schools did not for some reason report for teaching duties at the beginning of the school year in 2000/01 (MRV, 2003). Educators (teachers) in three major NRSs have attributed the poor performance of the education system over the previous ten years chiefly to the low importance accorded to the role of teachers and ordinary citizens in the making of the education policy (Questionnaire responses, April, 2004). In other words, the insufficient effort exerted on widely and broadly involving the major stakes in the formulation process of the education policy as well as the program set in motion a chain of reaction that severely jeopardized the process of implementation. Urging educators, usually under duress, to execute the pronouncements of the policy and the program, even when they did not participate in its formulation, backfired in several ways.

The primary school gross enrolment both in absolute figures and proportionally, as the table below shows, has by far exceeded the target set for 2001-2002. A considerable number of educators saw this as the most remarkable achievements of the education system over the previous ten years. Thus the total primary school enrolment expanded from 3.7 million in 1996-1997, to 8.1 million in 2001-2002, well over a million pupils higher than the target established for the program period. Furthermore, the qualification of teachers for lower primary school also improved a little over the target; although most of the educators with whom this author had talks felt that the figures seldom represented the true situation of the primary schools (Author's interview notes, 2004). In 2001-2002 primary schools constituted the largest portion of the system with 12,087 schools servicing an all-time high student population of a little over 8.1 million. The education system, however, performed far worse than expected when measured in terms of the most critical ingredients, which implies that the system was faulty. The primary and secondary schools, as the table depicts, were plagued with overcrowded classrooms, under-qualified teachers for both primary and secondary schools, and inadequate textbooks. The dire shortages of resources in the face of highly expanding enrolment and declining teachers' qualifications were even compounded the problem of program implementation. While the share of education in the national budget has been set at 19%, it plunged to 10.5% in the year 2001-2002, nearly 5% below the base year of 1996-1997.

Table 1. Targets, achievements and performance indicators of the ESDP (1996/97-2001/02).

Indicators	Target for 2001/02	Base Year (1996/97)	Achievement in 2001/02
Total number of Primary Schools	12, 597	9670	12, 087
Total Primary School Enrolment (1-8)	7, 000, 000	3, 788, 000	8, 144, 000
Gross Primary Enrolment Ratio (1-8)	50 %	34. 7 %	61.6 %
Percentage of Qualified Teachers (1-4)	95.0 %	85.0 %	95.6 %
Percentage of Qualified Teachers (5-8)	54.4 %	20.9 %	25.5 %
Percentage of Qualified Teachers (9-12)	61.6 %	40.4 %	33. 7 %
Pupil/Section Ratio at Primary (1-8)	50	57	73
Student/Section Ratio at Secondary (9-12)	50	65	80
Dropout Rate at Grade 1	14.2 %	29.0 %	27.5 %
Repetition Rates (4-8)	6.4 %	10.5 %	10.4 %
Textbook/Pupil Ratio*	1:1	1:5	1:1.5
Girls Share of Primary School Enrolment	45.0 %	38.0 %	41.4 %
Education's Share of the National Budget	19.0 %	14.6 %	10.5 %

Source: Joint Review Mission. (March 2003). *Education Sector Development Program*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

* There is a huge variation between national regional states (NRSs) varying from 1:1 to 1:5

The national consolidated figures might not adequately indicate, probably even would distort the true picture and/or the worst performances of the education system in the NRSs. As a multi-donor review mission reported, while pupil/textbooks ratios in Amhara and SNNP NRSs varied from 1:5 to none, pupil/teacher ratios rather varied from 75:1 to 120:1 in Amhara and from 30:1 to 330:1 in SNNP NRSs (JRM, 2003). This attested to the fact that the hallmarks of the new education policy, continuous assessment of the pupils performance and a pupil-centered education system, have hardly been achieved, for educators seldom have had any opportunity to give individual attention to different students, and interactive and communicative teaching-learning process were also impossible to implement.

At the primary and secondary levels, the steadily declining morale among the educators (teachers) and a disappointingly low implementation capacity aggravated the deteriorating quality of the education system. Over the study period, the latter was manifested in terms of inadequate textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, many unqualified teachers and insufficient funding. Although the Career Structure, which became operational towards the end of the 1990s, which was also received positively by many educators, (in principle, as a means of rewarding good teaching performance and professional competence), appeared to have been abandoned in favor of *gimgema*. In other words, the so-called evaluation (*gigema*), in which teachers had hardly any say and on which they were consulted very little, tended to replace the Career Structure. As a result, the policy contributed only marginally to the promotion of the teaching profession and good teaching-learning environment. In fact, a study carried out in Oromia NRS confirmed that MOE's Career Structure did not bring about improvements in teachers' social and economic lives (Abajire, 2005). Hence, the Career Structure failed to ward off the turn-over of teachers (who were leaving schools for other jobs with better career opportunities), nor had there been salary increment to withstand the spiraling cost of living (Abajire, 2005).

It would probably be possible to redress some of the problems as the implementation progressed, had there been qualified and professionally capable implementers. Unfortunately, the administrators appointed by government to oversee the implementation process merely served as transmission belts of channeling information and instructions from the higher to the lower levels, or were simply mediums through which instructions flow from the higher to lower levels (JRM, 2003). Poignantly, the very officials whom government assigned to guide the implementation process did not even have a good grasp either of the policy or the program (JRM, 2003). How would one therefore expect effective policy implementation to take place while the personnel spearheading the implementation process did not possess a sound understanding of the policy and program objectives? How would one imagine effective implementation to take place when the technical and managerial capacity of program (ESDP) administers at different levels in the educational structures to provide with guidance and support was left much to be desired[2]?

In fact, educational administration and management have over the past ten years been a dumping ground of unqualified persons, who after having served a considerable number of years in teaching, were rewarded with overseeing the implementation of the policy. They were persons who found their positions safe havens rather than a place to discharge their

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[2] A senior professor at Addis Ababa University expressing his grave concern about the implementation capacity of program administrators, April 2004

duties responsibly, persons with little knowledge of the policy as well as the program, little competence and experience of educational administration and with little capability to be able to reckon with the challenges of implementation (MRM, 2001). Putting it differently, the leadership at every level in the hierarchy of educational structure seemed to be filled with political zealots who possessed hardly any capability to lead educational institutions and with little knowledge or the means to rectify the complex problems of education policy implementation. As a result, they became part of the problem, rather than resolving the many problems of education policy as well as program implementation.

An expatriate review mission (2003) reported an all-round lack of implementation capacity to execute the ESDP. Another multi-donor review mission (Mid Term Review Mission) reported:

> In almost every region, zone and Ministerial departments visited, the lack of adequate capacity was raised as the number one problem hindering implementation of ESDP, and the achievements of the educational quality improvements planned. In schools there are both insufficient numbers of teachers, and amongst those that there are, many do not have the required qualifications. At the *Woreda* (district) there are insufficient supervision visits to schools to support the teachers there. At the Zone there are too few civil works technicians and qualified accountants to manage the school construction activities needed, and account payments made. Those who are employed at this level do not have the necessary tools and transport to support their work. At the region, curriculum development, educational planning, budgeting, and accounting manpower are in short supplies leading to delays in the launching of annual programs. At the federal level, the professional personnel needed to provide technical support to the decentralized units have been decreasing as the program expands and the need for such personnel grows. The ESDP secretariat in the Ministry of Education (MOE) has fewer staff than at the beginning of the program and the engineering panel fewer architects. All procurement specialists have left the PPD (Planning and Programming Department), and the higher education department staff have not been increasing despite the creation of four new universities and a large increase in enrolments. Currently, there are 53 vacancies in the MOE, almost all of which are at the higher levels… (MRM, 2001).

Suffice it to say that there has rarely been continuous monitoring and evaluations carried out to keep track of implementation activities. Even if foreign missions conducted continual assessments, government and party officials paid little heed to them, despite the reports revealed that the process of education policy implementation was at the mercy of persons lacking competence. It should, however, be boldly stressed that most of the problems that prevailed in the education system could be averted had there been astute leadership, careful planning of educational programs and broad consultation with the educators, independent civil society organizations and the public. The empirical evidences made abundantly clear that the dismal performance of the education system, and the disillusionment with the implementation process, chiefly emanated from the inadequate attention accorded to the consultation process as well as to the participation of the constituencies of the policy (i.e. teachers, students and other relevant stakeholders) at the formulation phase both of the policy and the ESDP. In other words, the absence of genuine ownership of the policy from its ultimate beneficiaries resulted in the poor performance in the education system that has over the years been manifesting itself in the form of poor-quality education, dire shortage of

facilities and dissatisfied teachers with little or no motivation to support the Education and Training Policy and the implementation of the ESDP.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The insufficient attention alluded to the aspirations and demands of the major constituencies during the formulation of the education policy as well as the attendant program (i.e., ESDP) appeared to have severely jeopardized implementation outcomes. In fact, the empirical evidences confirmed that well over ten years after the education policy was put into effect the education system still plagued with a dire shortage of qualified and trained teachers in the upper-primary and secondary schools, overcrowded classrooms at all levels of the education system, widespread lack of motivation and dwindling morale among teachers. The influx of teachers to better-paying private schools, and even many of them increasingly leaving teaching jobs for other more attractive job opportunities probably seemed to have bided well for an education system risking another crisis. At the heart of the disappointing performance of the education system, the imperiled process of education policy implementation, as the empirical evidences clearly attested, was due chiefly to negligible attempt to garner as well as win the support of the major constituencies of the policy during the process of both formulation and implementation of the policy and the program (ESDP). Empirical evidences have proven that opaque policy process and/or elite model of policy formulation bred incidences of apathy and lethargy among the relevant stakeholders, for they were denied the opportunity to voice their concerns and influence policy decisions.

The foregoing discussions point to the fact that formulating and implementing sound policies and engaging citizens more fully in the policymaking process obviously calls for forging a balance between government and relevant stakeholders in the education system in this country. It would therefore be sagacious to put in place genuine public participation in the policymaking process, which would result in as much representative policy-making as enhancing the quality of educational services, while at the same time ensuring actual control of decisions by the relevant stakeholders and citizens. Putting it differently, this is a quest for a shift from users of policies to a more active engagement of citizens in the making and shaping of policies that affect their lives.

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