The Political Economy of Educational Reform and Learning in Ethiopia (1941-2021)

PE 09

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Abstract

This report analyzes the trajectory of reforms to improve learning outcomes in Ethiopia across three regimes (HSI, Derg, and EPRDF) since 1941. It employs a political settlements approach to trace the motivations, interests, and actions that led to certain policy choices, and draws on primary and secondary data sources to assess impacts on the education sector. The analysis focuses on three themes in particular: the politics of educational (learning) policymaking; national (regional) examinations and teacher career paths. Ultimately, the report argues that improving learning outcomes would require professionalization of education policy-making along with an impetus to improve policy continuity.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
ABE	Alternative Basic Education
CA	Continuous assessment
CoR	Council of Representatives
CTE	Colleges of Teacher Education
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EGSECE	Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Unit
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ERGESE	Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plans
ESLCE	Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination
ESM	Ethiopian Student Movement
ESR	Education Sector Review
ETP	Education and Training Policy
EUEE	Ethiopian University Entrance Examination
GEQIP	General Education Quality Improvement Program
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
GSLE	General School Leaving Certificate Examination
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plans
HSI	Haile Selassie I
HSIU	Haile Selassie I University
IQPEP	Improving Quality of Primary Education Program
Meison	All Ethiopian Socialist Party
ML	Marxism-Leninism
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoSHE	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
NCA	Normative Continuous Assessments
NEAEA	National Educational Assessment and Examination Agency
NLA	National Learning Assessment
NOE	National Organization for Examinations
PDRE	People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
PGDT	Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching
PNDR	Programme for National Democratic Revolution
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
TDP	Teacher Development Program
TESO	Teacher Education System Overhaul
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
TTI	Teachers' Training Institutions
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WPE	Workers Party of Ethiopia

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

This study examines the dynamic relationships between political settlements and learning in Ethiopia. Over the last 25 years, Ethiopia has massively expanded access to education (Oxfam, 2010). The education sector, like other sectors, has been affected by the ongoing conflict. In addition to the disruption of education services in conflict zones, schools have also been damaged. In this report, we, however, do not delve into the impacts of the war on education. The report takes a comparative look at the political economy of learning in Ethiopia across three regimes (HSI, Derg, and EPRDF) through a political settlements approach by focusing on three themes: education policy making, teacher career paths and motivation, and examinations.

As mentioned above, Ethiopia saw a phenomenal expansion of access to education since the beginning of the 2000s. Government financing of education has been generous, with the sector accounting for roughly 25% of total government spending (MOE, 2018). In addition to expanding access, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has adopted a series of measures to improve the quality of education such as the World Bank-supported General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP I and II, 2008-2012 and 2013-2018, respectively), and the USAID-supported Improving Quality of Primary Education Program (IQPEP, 2014). The latter supported primary education and the former supported both primary and secondary education (MoE, 2009).

Through these and other interventions over the last 15 years, teacher qualifications have improved, the supply and distribution of books have substantially upgraded, and new methods of curriculum delivery have been introduced. There was a particular emphasis on shifting from a teacher-centered method of teaching to student-centered approaches where the students, through continuous activities, play roles in the delivery of lessons (Ayele et al, 2007). Moreover, Normative Continuous Assessments (NCA) have been introduced. However, despite such efforts, learning outcomes remain dismal. The national mean scores of Grade 4 and Grade 8 in the National Learning Assessment (NLA) show poor results, below 40% in 2010, with little improvement by 2015 (MoE, 2016).

This report examines the political economy of education policy in Ethiopia in the post-1941 period by discussing the prevailing political settlement during each regime and the education policies adopted. It uses a political economy approach to examine the challenges that Ethiopia

has faced in the education sector. Studies on learning typically associate problems of learning with inadequate funding, human resource deficits, poor curricular development, perverse incentive structures, and weak management (Rosser 2018 cited in Gershberg 2021). A political economy approach goes beyond these factors to consider the politics of education reforms, the interests of state elites, the nature of contestations among stakeholders, and structural and institutional drivers of reform. All these factors provide the context for better or poor performance regarding learning. There is an increasing recognition that educational outcomes are heavily influenced by political processes, hence the emergence of a political economy approach to the study of education.

Political settlement refers to 'the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based' (Khan, 1995, 2000, cited in di John and Putzel 2009: 4). A political settlement approach focuses on contention and bargaining within the elites, between elites and non-elites, and between those who occupy state and society more widely (Di John and Putzel, 2009:4). The approach operates with 'an assumption that power is rooted in history' (Buharia and Gray, 2017:512). It allows investigation into the ideas that bind elites together and secure their commitment to a set of institutions, as well as 'being deployed more instrumentally by elites to help secure loyalty amongst followers' (Hicky and Hossain, 2019: 32).

Thus, the political settlement of a given political system can be analyzed by investigating the broad configuration of power within society and the institutional arrangement it produces, the character of the ruling group and the level of cohesion within it, its systems of control and mobilization, the basis (sources) of actual and potential opposition to the ruling group, as well as the role of ideology within the political system, sources of legitimacy, and how the settlement finances itself.

While a political settlement at any given point in time is fluid and complex with multiple actors and institutional arrangements, we examine the different political settlements that emerged in Ethiopia in the period since the 1940s using Levy's 2x2 categorical matrices (cited in Pritchett, 2019). The first matrix, titled 'classification of ideal types of political settlement', presents four ideal types of political settlements – (1) 'personalized regimes' with a dominant system of decision-making; (2) 'personalized regimes' with a competitive system of decision making. And a political settlement characterized by (3) 'rule-of-law' with a dominant system of decision

making and (4) 'rule-of-law' with a competitive system of decision-making systems (Table 1 below)

Table 1: Levy (2014) – classification of four ideal types of political settlement

	Dominant	**Competitive**
Personalized	Elite cohesion is high, power exercised top-down by leadership, limited constraints on political actors.	Elite cohesion is low, settlement demands power change hands on electoral competitive basis, but "rules of the game" are personalised (this is also called "competitive clientelist")
Rule of Law	Elite cohesion is high, power is top-down, but actions are anchored in rules which institutionalise how power is to be exercised.	Politics is competitive, impersonal rules govern the exercise of power.

Source: (Pritchett, 2019)

The second matrix in its part presents four ideal kinds of public governance. These comprise – (1) personalized regimes with hierarchical decision-making features (2) personalized regimes with negotiated decision-making features. And (3) impersonal power structure with hierarchal features and (4) impersonal system with negotiated decision-making system. A combination of the two.

Table 2: Levy (2015) - classification of four ideal types of public governance

	Hierarchical	**Negotiated**
Personalized	Implementation is hierarchical, a principle-agent structure, but agent compliance is based on personalised authority of the leadership, not a system of rules.	Neither formal rules nor well-defined hierarchy of authority are in place. Such agreements to cooperate as may emerge (and they may not) depend on the specific people involved.
Rule of law	Classical "Weberian" bureaucracy of top-down enforcement of impersonal rules and standard operating procedures.	Multiple stakeholders, each with significant independent authority, agreed on how to work together, and codify these agreements in formal, enforceable rules.

Source: (Pritchett, 2019)

By employing the above matrix to understand the prevailing political settlement across different regimes in Ethiopia and using a political economy approach to learning, this report identifies the social and political actors that played a role in choosing the policies of learning,

and what informed their decisions. The study outlines the major actors (stakeholders) involved in learning and considers how the political settlement impacted learning, both in terms of policy choices and implementation practices. In particular, this study examines three issues that have a strong impact on learning - stakeholder engagement in the making of educational policies, the politics behind the development of national (regional) exams as instruments of measuring learning outcomes, and the politics of teacher career paths.

1.2. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the political economy of learning outcomes in Ethiopia since 1941. Using political settlement as a backdrop, the study reviews the political obstacles to improved learning outcomes by examining three interrelated issues (problems) – the politics of educational (learning) policymaking; national (regional) examinations and teacher career paths. The research questions that guide the study include:

- What is the nature of political settlement in Ethiopia in the three study periods – from 1941-1974, 1974-1991 and the post-1991 period?
- Who are the major stakeholders in making educational and learning policies and what are their interests?
- Why do political actors (governments and other stakeholders) make certain choices concerning learning policies?
- How do political considerations such as regime ideologies, federal (decentralized) state structures, systems of mobilization and control, cliental relationships influence the making and implementation of learning with respect to educational policies national examinations and teacher career paths?

1.3. Methods

This study employed primary and secondary data collection tools. Primary data collection was undertaken through in-depth interviews with key informants, involving key informant interviews with 18 former and current federal and regional education officials and experts, education researchers, a school principal, an expert in a bilateral donor agency, as well as a representative of teachers' association. Data collection was done in two rounds. The first round of data collection was held for two weeks starting from mid-July 2021 to the beginning of August 2021. The second round of data collection took place in November 2021. The plan for data collection was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability in Ethiopia. To overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19 and political instability, we arranged several

phone interviews. We have also used three interviews that were collected for RISE Ethiopia research in 2018.[1]

Secondary data collection involved a review of existing relevant documents, national plans, reports, publications, and related archives.

1.4. Ethical considerations

The research was undertaken in accordance with established ethical procedures. All respondents were adults and were fully informed about the purpose of the study. Respondents were reassured that information collected from the interview would be carefully handled and that anonymity of the identity of interviewees would be respected when reporting and storing data. All participants in this study gave verbal consent to participate in the interviews.

1.5. Organization of the report

In addition to this introductory section, the report comprises four sections. The second, third and fourth sections examine the politics of learning in the Imperial, Derg, and EPRDF regimes with a focus on a political settlement, educational policymaking, national examinations, and teacher career paths. The last section provides brief conclusions.

2. The Imperial Regime (1941-1974)

2.1. Political settlement

The political settlement of this period was characterized by 'Imperial centralization and modernization.' Following five years of Italian occupation (1936-41), Emperor Haile Selassie returned to power with strong local support and help from Great Britain. Upon assuming power, the emperor was occupied with the centralization of power and modernizing government institutions (Markakis, 1974). The restored government of Haile Selassie followed a policy of assimilating the diverse ethnic groups to the culture, language, and religion of the dominant Amhara rulers (Clapham 1988: 195).

Formally, the emperor had absolute and unchallenged power on all matters (Fisseha, 2007). The 1931 Constitution declared 'supreme power rests in the hands of the emperor', while the revised Constitution of 1955 proclaims the powers of the emperor are 'indisputable.' The autonomy enjoyed by the traditional nobility in the pre-occupation period started to erode following the coronation of Haile Selassie as emperor in 1930. As the emperor embarked on a

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[1] The three interviews were collected in 2018 from Oromia regional educational officials for RISE Ethiopia research on Educational system diagnostic. We have indicated in the methodology paper for this research that we will use relevant RISE interview data for this study.

process of centralization in the post-1941 period, the power of the nobility was progressively weakened, eventually losing all influence on political and policy matters. By recruiting educated and loyal retainers of low origin, the emperor ensured that the entire political and bureaucratic machinery was under his control (Markakis, 1974).

As the bureaucracy of the country progressively expanded and institutionalization took place, influential individuals heading different departments of government slowly emerged and were promoted based on loyalty to the emperor. Adept at Machiavellian statecraft, the emperor ensured that no individual challenged his power, utilizing instruments of demotion and promotion, and ensuring no one stayed in one position or province long enough to develop a power base. Because of the highly personalized management of the emperor, the ruling group was highly cohesive.

The adoption of western-style laws and institutions, designed to modernize and centralize the Ethiopian state impacted the nature of political authority. The expansion of the bureaucracy and institutionalization of government functions brought with it an impersonal and hierarchical system of administration. However, this did not constrain the power of the emperor in any meaningful way as the bureaucracy remained under his tight control. A few individuals managed to exert power by serving as intermediaries between the emperor and the ever-expanding bureaucracy – notably Ministers of Pen[2] and Prime Ministers (Markakis, 1974).

Civil society was almost non-existent and had no meaningful role as a countervailing force within the political settlement. Political parties were absent. From 1941 to the early 1960s, there was no serious threat to the emperor's authority. Legitimacy was ensured through an appeal to traditional authority through the myth of Solomonic descent, coupled with the emperor's modernizing credentials.

As the traditional nobility progressively lost its power, and in the absence of any mobilized and organized social forces, there was no source of opposition to the Imperial regime. While the traditional nobility remained an important class in the administration of the provinces, they had little or no influence in terms of policy and decision-making at the center.

There was, however, a strong influence of foreign powers throughout this period. Britain had a strong role in all aspects of policy in the first decade (1942-52), illustrated through agreements signed with the Imperial regime in 1942 and 1944, as well as British involvement in policy and

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[2] Under Haile Selassie's government, the Ministry of Pen was responsible for (writing) issuing government declarations and decisions.

administration – including education, finance, policing, and the military (Spencer, 1984). From the early 1950s, the Imperial regime increasingly turned to the USA as its dominant patron, with the USA playing an important role in aviation, infrastructure, defense forces, and education (Zewde, 2002). The primary means of financing the political settlement under a near-absolute emperor was through an alliance with global power. Despite this, however, the emperor managed to retain political and policy autonomy.

Due to its inability to bring political and economic reforms, particularly to the hugely inequitable land tenure system which dispossessed a majority of Ethiopian farmers, the Imperial government began to face serious opposition to its rule from the 1960s. In addition, a secessionist war started in Eritrea after the revocation of the federal status of the province by the Imperial government in 1962. The 1960s also saw not only an attempted *coup d' etat* in December 1960 but also the emergence of militant opposition from university students against the Imperial government (Zewde 1991: 220).

At the initial stage of their activism, the concerns of students were parochial and largely focused on campus issues (Tadesse, 1993: 35). However, starting from the 1960s, they began to be more assertive and raise political issues. For instance, they demonstrated in support of the aborted *coup d' etat* against the Emperor in December 1960. Soon afterwards, they challenged the inequitable distribution of land, and in 1965 demonstrated under the slogan of 'land to the tiller', positioning the end of tenancy as one of their key objectives (Tadesse, 1993: 39). The end of the 1960s signaled the radicalization of the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) and the emergence of leftist ideologies of Marxism-Leninism (ML) and Maoism. The inability of the Imperial government to introduce political, economic, and social reforms and the rise of multifaceted opposition culminated in the 1974 revolution, which heralded the dissolution of the post-1941 political settlement and the emergence of a new settlement dominated by the military.

In what follows, we examine how the post-1941 political settlement influenced learning from three interrelated perspectives – education policymaking, teacher career paths, and examinations.

2.2 Education Policy Making

The policy intent of the regime in power is a constitutive element of a given political settlement. The education system received great attention in the post-1941 period, with education understood as a 'vehicle for progress' (Negash, 2006:12). The emperor strongly believed

education to be the key for his project of modernization, arguing that 'the salvation of our country, Ethiopia… lies primarily in education (Haile Selassie, 1967, quoted in Woldeyes, 2017:120-121). There was a painful realization, within the Ethiopian government, that the country's defeat at the hands of Fascist Italy was partly an outcome of its backwardness' (Tefera, 1996:4).

Negash (2006) argues that the education sector was principally influenced by two ideas. First, strong belief by the emperor that modern education is indispensable to 'educate and train citizens who respected their king, country and religion' (Negash, 2006:13). A practical aspect of this conviction was that the modernization process itself needed a large number of educated young people 'to staff the growing sector of the state apparatus' (Negash, 2006:13). In addition to staffing the state apparatus, education provided 'training of technicians for service sectors like transport and commerce', as well as officers for the police and armed forces (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012:58). The second idea that influenced the education sector was the prevailing international consensus regarding education, principally represented by UNESCO, that education is the most important component that contributes to economic development, with the argument that there is a direct link between investment in human capital and development of a society' (Negash, 2006: 13-14).

The early period following liberation from fascist Italy involved efforts at reconstruction and rehabilitation of the education sector which had atrophied during five years of Italian rule. The Ministry of Education and Fine Arts was established in 1942, along with efforts to modernize the education system (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 57).

The first high school, the Haile Selassie I Secondary School, was opened in Addis Ababa in July 1943 (Kiros, 1990). Subsequently, modern education revived across the country and schools started to emerge in urban areas (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012).

To promote education taking center stage in the government's policy, 'schools started mushrooming in some urban centres of the country' (Tefera, 1996:4). Additionally, despite formal education being at an early stage, the government also made efforts to introduce non-formal education, for instance by introducing experimental stations that provided instruction in child care, language, and agricultural demonstrations (Kiros, 1990). Accordingly, adults in the capital (Addis Ababa) and some other towns started attending evening classes.

Early efforts to develop the education system faced significant difficulties. There was a severe shortage of teachers following the Italian occupation, and resources and funding for education

were limited. In 1943/44, there were only 80 government schools (Kiros, 1990:11). Educational supplies, from teaching aids to maps and textbooks, were virtually non-existent at the time of liberation (Milkias, 1982:155)

This period involved strong influence by Britain, which had played a role in the liberation of the country. British advisors to the Ethiopian government influenced the structure of education, the medium of instruction, and the evaluation system (Zewde, 2000, quoted in Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 57). English became the medium of instruction, and the curriculum was adapted to that used in the British colonies (Teffera, 2005: 21). The educational structure followed a British three-tier system - four years of primary school, four years of intermediate schooling, and four years of secondary schooling (Teffera, 1996:4). The education system did not reflect the cultural, social or economic context of Ethiopia (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 57), and was described as having 'nothing Ethiopian in the classroom except the children' (Teffera, 1996:4).

The 1950s brought greater influence from America as British involvement waned. The government established a Long-Term Planning Committee to focus on 'the speedy promotion of universal fundamental education, as well as the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the society' (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 59). An important American influence was the introduction of a new grade structure involving six years of primary schooling followed by two years of junior and four years of senior high school education (6+2+4) (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 59). Another important influence was the introduction of Amharic as the medium of instruction in primary school - a change described by Negash (1990:8) as 'the most significant reform of the decade' (cited in Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 59). Americans provided teachers and headmasters and participated in policy-making through the Education Advisory Group[3] (Zewdie 2000:107, quoted in Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 59).

Despite the change of foreign influence and several half-hearted efforts at reform, the education system was a cause for dissatisfaction and received wide criticism. Teffera (1996:5-6) outlines several failings of the education system including its elitist character and highly academic curriculum giving rise to the educated unemployed. He also noted that the educational system was wasteful and did not provide equal access to all. Moreover, there was little Ethiopian in

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[3] The U.S. Education Advisory Group came to Ethiopia in 1953 following the signing of an Educational and Technical Assistance Agreement between the two countries. It played an important role in collaboration with the Ministry of Education through the Long-Term Planning Committee to review the educational system and make recommendations for its reorganization as well as future development (Kiros, 1990: 18)

the curriculum, and the system was characterized by a bloated bureaucracy that stifled local initiative and efficiency.

The government acknowledged the need for change in the 1950s, following the second phase of education expansion in the late 1940s (Kiros, 1990). The Education Advisory Group recommended a policy shift in favor of controlled expansion to improve the quality of education. As a result, in 1953, a committee was established to prepare a Ten-Year Plan for the Controlled Expansion of Education. This long-term plan was prepared in 1955 (Kiros, 1990; Bishaw and Lasser, 2012). Kiros (1990) describes the Ten-Year Long Term Plan as a progressive step in Ethiopian education policy, and probably the best educational plan at that time among Sub-Saharan African nations. By 1961, however, little had improved. Ethiopia had low educational accomplishment compared to other African countries that were just emerging as independent (Kiros, 1990:35). For instance, the UNESCO Conference of African States on the Development of Education held in Addis Ababa found that the enrolment rate in the first tier (grade 1-6) in Ethiopia was second from the bottom in the continent at 3.8% for the 5 to 14 age cohort, only slightly above Niger which had 3.3% participation (Kiros, 1990:36) This happened due to little systemic effort to translate the plan into action.

Kiros (1990) explains that the First Five-Year Education Sector Plan was prepared in 1957 based on the Ten-Year Long-Term Plan. Three consecutive five-year Education Sector Development Plans, from 1957-1973, demonstrated a significant change in education policymaking and planning by the Haile Selassie government. Both the second and the third education sector plans were developed between 1963 and 1968. Yet, much of the education development was not a result of systematic policy formation and practice. Many of the education policies in this period were not elaborated in operational terms. It is difficult to determine which policies were in force at a particular time, and policies were rarely documented (Kiros, 1990).

In 1972, the Imperial regime undertook an 'Education Sector Review' (ESR) (Melesse, 2019). The ESR was one of the boldest education reform attempts by the Imperial regime. The review assessed the education system in terms of its capacity to promote economic development that was relevant to society and promote national integration (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012:62). The ESR involved a large core group of about 160 individuals drawn from HSIU, different government departments and international organizations of which about 50 were academics from HSIU with the remainder international consultants and representatives of international

organizations such as UNESCO, IBRD, and ILO (Tefera, 1996:15). It included some participation from school principals and representatives of teachers' associations (Tefera, 1996:15). However, there is no indication of genuine and proper participation by teachers, parents, and the general public, and the whole process was shrouded in secrecy (Tefera, 1996:15-16). The review concluded that the education system was elitist and rigid and did not provide students with relevant skills. It presented recommendations to reform and revise the system (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012:62). The review aspired to 'control entry into secondary education' because of the realization that the crisis of graduate unemployment was a source of social upheaval and additionally attempted to give priority in expanding access to education in the rural areas of the country where the majority of the people live (Negash, 2006:16-17).

The review received criticism and opposition from its core constituency. The fact that it was made public during the famine crisis weakened its acceptability (Negash, 2006:17). It faced fierce resistance from teachers and students, with both groups feeling they 'had nothing to gain from a policy that favored the countryside over the urban landscape' (Negash, 2006:17). Ultimately, the review had little impact. Opposition to the review was one of the factors that contributed to the outbreak of the revolution which deposed the emperor in 1974 (Kiros, 1990).

2.3 Teachers' Career Path

According to Gemechu *et al*. (2017), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had provided a source of traditional teachers since the 4th century. High achievers who specialized in a particular church education programme often became teachers. These teachers along with Koranic education teachers formed the bulk of the profession until the introduction of the modern education system (Habte, 2020). Before the opening of the first teacher education center in 1944 at Menelik II School, teachers were mainly French or Egyptian (Bishaw & Lasser, 2012; Shishigu et al., 2017).

During the Italian occupation of the country from 1935-1941, there was a systematic extermination of educated Ethiopians, as many of them led the resistance against the Italians. As a result, in the post-liberation period, there was a shortage of trained teachers (Semela, 2014). Producing qualified teachers was, therefore, one of the major objectives of the government. The tertiary education system in particular was given the task of producing teachers (Ahmad, 2013). Haile Selassie's regime improved teacher selection, recruitment, and payment. As a result, applicants joining teacher training institutes and colleges were top

scorers[4] and paid relatively higher when they start working (Semela, 2014; Gemechu et al., 2017).

There were concerted efforts to improve the skills of teachers. Teacher training institutions (TTI) and colleges of teacher education (CTE) were established (Tefera, 1996). However, teacher educational qualifications during the Imperial period remained low. Only about one-third of elementary school teachers had attended beyond elementary school themselves, and 10% of teachers had not received any form of teacher training. Habte poses the question 'what value can a teacher training course have for students who have received so little formal education themselves?' About 9% of the elementary school teachers in 1964 were priest school teachers whose qualification Habte estimated was below grade 4 (Habte (1967:29).

During the 1950s and much of the 1960s, the teaching profession was attractive in terms of payment and social prestige. In this period, even if there was no career path, teachers were better satisfied with their pay and social status compared to subsequent regimes.[5] The attractiveness of the teaching profession and the high social prestige that was attached to it began to decline to start from the mid of the 1960s. According to Habte (1967), teachers were leaving the teaching profession due to a host of factors including grievances related to economic factors, administrative inefficiencies, incompetent and corrupt administrators, unfavorable working conditions, lack of opportunity for educational improvement, difficult living conditions, isolation, lack of careful selection of teachers and administrators, and low social prestige of teachers within the community. Among these, Habte believed of the opinion that the economic-related factors such as low starting salary, absence of regular increment of salaries, absence of merit-based salary increment, and lack of career path contributed to the dissatisfaction of teachers.

2.4. Examinations

After defeating the Italian invasion with British assistance in 1941, the Ethiopian government sought to rebuild the education system. Ethiopia adopted the British educational structure and curriculum, together with a national examination. Curriculum materials and teachers were brought from Britain to prepare Ethiopian students for the General Certificate Examination of the University of London (Nuru, 2000). The first national examination in Ethiopia was introduced for grade six students in 1946.

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[4] Interview, education researcher 2_July 30,2021
[5] Interview, education researcher 2_July 30,2021

During the Imperial regime, the educational structure, curriculum and grade levels of national examinations were revised four times between 1947 and 1963. The first official state curriculum was introduced in 1947 with a 6-6 educational structure model (six years of primary education and six years of secondary education). The second curriculum was then introduced in 1949 and continued until 1963, with an 8-4 structure (eight years of primary education and four years of secondary education).

From the mid-1950s, the USA had been cooperating with Ethiopia through its Advisory Group. This cooperation continued until 1974. The Advisory Group initiated a process of experimenting with a new curriculum, leading to the introduction of the fourth curriculum in 1963, which continued until 1974. The new structure was 6-2-4 (six years of primary education, two years of junior secondary and four years of senior secondary education) (Asayehegn,1979).

Students were required to take the British General School Leaving Certificate Examination (GSLE) from the mid-1940s until the beginning of the 1950s (Negash, 1990). With the establishment of a three-tier educational structure (6-2-4) as mentioned above, national examinations were put to assess the performance of students in Grades 6 and 8. Moreover, the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE) was introduced in 1954 under the HSIU (Zewde, 2000; NOE, 2001), but Ethiopian students were required to take both the ESLCE and GSLCE to join HSIU up until the mid of the 1960s (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012; NOE, 2000; NOE, 2001).

3. The Derg Regime (1974-1991)

3.1.Political Settlement

The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 led to the overthrow of the Imperial regime of Haile Selassie and brought the military regime of the Derg to power, which ruled the country until 1991. The country witnessed political upheavals and civil wars for most of the 17 years of the Derg regime (Clapham, 1988; Bahru, 2003). The political and economic systems of this period can be characterized as '*military and socialist'* (Clapham, 1989; Bahru 2003, Keller 1991). The period saw remarkable changes in the political system of the country. Major changes that emerged during this period included the 1975 land proclamation which ended tenancy. This destroyed the landlord class and removed the primary means of surplus extraction from the peasantry (Clapham, 1988). The new regime adopted the Marxist-Leninist (ML) ideology.

In terms of political settlement, the period 1974-1991 had two major phases. During the first phase, from 1974-1977, there was an intense power struggle within the Derg. Although most

political forces in the post-1974 period proclaimed the Marxist-Leninist (ML) ideology, they bitterly opposed each other. This rivalry led to the creation of two movements –the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All Ethiopian Socialist Party (Meison),[6] which resulted in violent conflict and ultimately undermined both organizations and consolidated the power of the military government (Hagos, 1980).

Within the military government, power during the first phase of the revolution was diffused and decisions were made collectively. The military government co-opted the civilian political party, the Meison, during this period. The establishment of mass organizations such as peasant, urban dwellers, youth, and women associations paved the way for the participation of people at the grassroots level in the politics of the country.

The second phase of the revolution commenced in 1977 and lasted until 1991. In early 1977, after eliminating potential rivals, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Chairman of the Derg became the uncontested leader of the military government. After consolidating its power, the military government started the process of building the organs of a socialist state. In 1984, it established the vanguard Marxist-Leninist party, the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) under the chairmanship of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. In 1987, the party adopted a new constitution – the Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE). The Constitution followed the model of government practiced by the then communist countries. The system of rule during this period was personalized with a strong elite cohesion within the Derg. However, Derg rule was opposed by armed political movements which had no choice other than armed struggle.

Similar to the Imperial regime, public governance under the Derg was hierarchical, with a mix of personal and impersonal systems of decision-making. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam and his associates exercised absolute power, but the bureaucracy continued to have a role in public governance.

3.2. Education Policy

The ideological and political realignment that took place following the revolution necessitated changes in the educational system as the 'educational policy was to be overhauled with a socialist overtone' (Tefera, 1996:7). In terms of policy intent, the major policy objective of education under the Derg was entrenching the Marxist- Leninist ideology of the regime and thereby the creation of a new socialist citizen (Yigezu, 2010). Students starting from the

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[6] Popularly known in its Amharic acronym – MEISON.

elementary level were taught Marxist-Leninist ideology as the political economy of Marxism became a subject at all levels of the education system (Negash, 2006:18). The socialist ideological orientation of the regime led to a greater emphasis on education as a tool for development, with the inculcation of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the value of production becoming the main pillars of education (Negash, 2006:18).

Just as foreign influence on education had shifted from Britain to the USA in line with the preferences of the Imperial regime as discussed above, there was again a shift as American influence in the country faded in favor of countries of the former socialist bloc. This shift was articulated through the Programme for National Democratic Revolution (PNDR) of 1976, which proclaimed that free education will be provided to the 'broad masses' with the aim of 'intensifying the struggle against feudalism, Imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism'. The PNDR vowed to take 'all necessary measures to eliminate illiteracy, encourage 'the development of science, technology, the arts and literature, and strive to 'free the diversified cultures of Ethiopia from Imperialist cultural domination' (PMAC, 1977:4, quoted in Tefera, 1996:8). This was later condensed into 'education for production; education for scientific inquiry, and education for socialist consciousness' (Tefera, 1996:8).

Political imperatives were just as important in the policy and approach of the Derg towards education. Education was geared towards building political support to establish the Derg as a legitimate government and extending its power through 'ideological control of the young generation' (Semela, 2014:125).

The curriculum for elementary and secondary education was influenced by the curricula of former socialist countries (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012). A new Transitional Curriculum was developed that was aligned with the new objectives of education (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 64). It incorporated five new subjects – agriculture, production technology, political education, home economics, and introduction to business – which increased the number of subjects for secondary students from five to twelve (Negash, 2006:18).

In line with the goal of free education for all, the Derg regime issued a policy directive in December 1974 proclaiming that 'under the banner of education for all, citizens shall have the right to free fundamental education' (PMAC, 1974, cited in Tefera, 1996:7). Thus, the expansion of access to education to achieve the goal of universal primary education became an immediate priority of the government. Additionally, the government aspired to expand general

polytechnic education to produce 'middle-level trained manpower' to reduce unemployment among secondary school graduates (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 63)

In line with socialist ideology, the government ensured that schools remained under public ownership. Accordingly, Proclamation 54/1975 was issued to nationalize private schools while Proclamation 103/1976 passed the 'administration and control of schools to the people' (Tefera, 1996:8). However, some schools enrolling children of politicians and the wealthy remained free from government control (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 65).

The government also made efforts to improve higher education. In addition to the establishment of the Commission for Higher Education, a 'quota system' was introduced to increase enrolment from disadvantaged and remote parts of the country, expand opportunities for study abroad in socialist countries, and to 'Ethiopianize higher education' by increasing the number of Ethiopian lecturers in higher education institutions (Teshome, 2008:5)

The efforts of the Derg towards 'education for all' had some success in terms of expanding access to education. The number of primary schools in the country substantially increased from 2,054 when the regime came to power in 1973/1974 to 8,260 by 1986/87 (Tefera, 1996: 9), more than a four-fold increase in a little over a decade. Enrolment grew at a rate of 12% between 1975 and 1989 resulting in coverage of 35% for 7- to 16-year-olds (Negash, 2006:19). 'The number of children attending primary schools increased from under a million in 1974/75 to over 2.4 million in 1985/86' (Teshome, 2008: 49).

The regime also implemented a literacy campaign to reduce the high level of adult illiteracy, especially in rural areas. The national literacy campaign launched in 1979 reduced the national illiteracy rate from 95% in 1979 to 24.7% by 1990 (Seyoum, 1996 as cited by Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 65). Despite criticisms, this campaign was recognized by UNESCO and received the UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Prize in 1980 (Teshome, 2008: 50)

However, expansion of education was coupled with a decline in quality, caused by under-resourcing. The introduction of new subjects and expansion of schools were done without proper planning, sufficient qualified teachers and adequate infrastructure resulting in the deterioration of pedagogical conditions (Negash, 2006:18-19, 21).

Despite the expansion of education, the education budget as a percentage of the national budget declined from 17% in 1974 to 10% in the 1980s, leading to a significant drop in expenditure per student (Tefera, 1996:9-10). Most of this budget went to salaries, the teacher-pupil ratio

soared, classrooms became overcrowded, and materials became ever scarcer (Negash, 2006). Insurgency in the north of the country, coupled with minor ethnonational insurgencies elsewhere, meant the regime had to allocate a substantial amount of its budget to defense, reducing the resources available to other sectors, including education.

The shortage of qualified teachers led to untrained teachers being hired, especially in primary schools, called 'Digoma' teachers[7] (Tefera, 1996:10). This practice not only impacted quality but also 'the professional integrity and social acceptance of teaching as a profession' (Tekleselassie, 2005, cited in Semela, 2014:124). This practice was the genesis of the decline of the profession as 'tenth graders' became teachers, but without the knowledge, ethics or training required of the profession.[8]

The hiring of unqualified teachers, coupled with overcrowding of classrooms led to a decline in the English language proficiency of both teachers and students (Negash, 2006, 21). In the words of an expatriate expert, 'English language has become a language of obstruction rather than of instruction' (cited in Tefera, 1996:10). This problem plagues the education system of the country to this day. Finally, the Derg also contributed to the decline of quality by overemphasizing ideology over core subjects, and the construction of schools that did not meet minimum standards and (Teshome, 2008:50).

As with the previous Imperial regime, the Derg recognized the crisis and in 1983 launched a review of the education sector - the Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE). The Derg was in a better position compared with the Haile Selassie regime as it launched the study from a position of political strength (Teshome, 2008:51). The review was also partially participatory, with efforts to involve stakeholders including teachers, students, and parents (Tefera, 1996:20). This, however, does not imply any credible national debate on education, or that stakeholders expressed their views freely (Teshome, 2008; Tefera, 1996). An interesting aspect of the initiative was that it was largely locally owned, with most members of the core study group drawn from the Addis Ababa University, and all members of the task force were Ethiopians (Tefera, 1996:20). The study, completed in 1986, provided recommendations ranging from measures to improve the teaching profession to counselling services for students (Tefera, 1996:21-22). However, despite the relevance of the

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[7] The Amharic word, 'digoma' literally means 'support' teachers – who were high school drop outs and joined the teaching profession without teacher training. They were provided with a meagre salary coupled with the provision of basic goods by the local community in which they work.
[8] Interview, education researcher 1_ July 29,2021

recommendations, the regime did not benefit from it as it was never implemented (Nesgash, 2006:20). While Tefera (1996) speculates the regime never intended to implement the recommendations as the study was perhaps meant for public consumption, Negash (2006:21) argues it is highly probable that the committee 'failed to attempt to answer the shortcomings of the sector as perceived by the government'. The regime decided to go in a different direction and launched a Ten-Year National Perspective Plan for the 1984-1994 period- the ERGESE was quietly shelved (Tefera, 1996:10).

Concerning the international aspects of Derg's education policy, a few points can be made. As discussed above, American advisors were replaced by advisors from Eastern European countries such as East Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary (Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 63). As with the Imperial regime, the Derg was dependent on external financing making it a recipient of 'ideological guidance and technical assistance' from its patrons (Samala, 2014:125). Advisors from East Germany became principal partners on education policy and dominated the curriculum department (Negash, 2006:18/21). East Germany and the USSR oversaw 'the strict adherence of teacher education to Marxist/Leninist philosophy and educational theory through their nationals disguised as technical advisors, curriculum experts, teacher trainers, and university professors.' (Semela, 2014:125).

However, engagement with western donors and institutions did not completely disappear. The ERGESE was financed by UNICEF, the World Bank, and SIDA (Negash, 2006:20), and Sweden remained the largest donor to the sector throughout the Derg period (Negash, 2006:22). This is partially explained by the fact that Western donors did not resort to punitive measures despite Ethiopia's explicit shift of alliance to the Soviet camp (Clapham, 1988). Accordingly, western donors, especially European countries, remained important development partners providing support towards education, health, and humanitarian assistance. Additionally, the language of instruction from junior high school onwards remained English and as a result most education materials remained dependent on the English-speaking world. Despite its official shift of alliance, the Derg regime was open to receive assistance from wherever it could find because of the resource constraints of a war economy.

3.3. Teachers' Career Path

Teaching as a profession started to decline during the Derg regime. This was due to the disruption brought about by the revolution, and the decision by the Derg to expand access to education despite a reduction of funds available to the sector.

During the early years of the revolution, the Derg launched the *Idget Be Hibret* campaign ('Development Through Cooperation and Work). This involved tens of thousands of high school and university students and teachers being sent to rural areas to support the implementation of reforms introduced by the Derg, including the nationalization of land. As a result, teaching at all levels was disrupted and when schools reopened in 1975 there was a critical shortage of teachers. The MoE recruited high school students to overcome the shortage. However, this resulted in the recruitment of untrained *Digoma* teachers (see above). This problem continued for much of the Derg period. A report by the Ministry of Education in 1985 revealed how the recruitment of poorly trained teachers affected the quality of education (cited in Kiros, 1990). Teaching quality deteriorated, and teachers were disrespected within society. This de-professionalization of the sector has continued to date (Habte, 2020).

The quality of education deteriorated as the teaching profession and teachers were disregarded (Teferra, 1996). Teachers were increasingly spending their time away from teaching and were undertaking administrative tasks for local government structures, particularly to *kebele* (lowest level of government administration).[9] Instruction in the elementary level was only in Amharic, limiting access in areas where that language was not spoken.[10] The teachers' association was not strong enough to defend the profession, nor was there strong leadership within the school and educational administrative structure.[11] Bishaw and Lasser (2012) observed how the teaching profession deteriorated during the military regime. Some refer to this period as a curse for the teaching profession.[12]

3.4. Examinations

Despite its socialist ideology, the Derg administration retained the Imperial schooling structure. National examinations continued to be taken at the end of Grades 6 and 8, and ESLCE at the end of Grade 12. The National Examination Board under the Ministry of Education was responsible for managing Grade 6 and 8 national examinations, while the Addis Ababa University was responsible for developing and administering ESLCE for Grade 12 (NOE, 2001; Zewde, 2000).

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[9] Interview, education researcher 2_July 30,2021
[10] Interview, regional education expert 3_ July 29,2021
[11] Interview, education researcher 2_July 30,2021
[12] Interview, education researcher 1_ July 29,2021

Table 3. Timeline of major milestones in education policy in Ethiopia

Imperial Regime (1941-1974)	
1942	Establishment of Ministry of Education and Fine Arts
1943	Opening of the first high school - Haile Selassie I Secondary School
1944	Establishment of Teacher Training School (TTS)
1946	First national examination in Ethiopia – for grade six students
1947	The first official state curriculum with a 6-6 educational structure
1949	The second curriculum - with an 8-4 structure
1951	Establishment of the first university - Haile Selassie University
1954	Introduction of the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE)
1955	The Ten-Year Long-Term Plan
1957	First/Second/Third Five-Year Education Sector Plans (1957/1963/1968)
1963	The fourth curriculum – 6-2-4 structure
1972	Education Sector Review – first comprehensive and critical review of the education sector
Derg Regime (1974-1991)	
1974	A policy directive introducing the right to free fundamental free education
1975	Proclamation 54/1975 - introducing the public ownership of private schools
1976	Proclamation 103/1976 –public administration and control of schools
1976	Proclamation of the Program for National Democratic Revolution (PNDR) – education for all was proclaimed along with a socialist orientation
1979	Launch of a national literacy campaign
1983	The Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE) – a second major effort to reform the education sector
EPRDF Regime and beyond (1991-present)	
1994	Introduction of the Education and Training Policy (ETP)
1995	Introduction of the first teacher career policy – with six levels within the career ladder
1997/98	Launch of the first Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) to operationalize the ETP (followed by four more in 2002, 2006, 2011, and 2016)
1997	Teacher Development Program I (TDP I)
1997	Establishment of the National Organization for Examinations (NOE) under the MoE
1999	Revision of the teacher career ladder – adding two more levels
2000	Introduction of National Learning Assessment (NLA) at the end of each cycle.
2003	Introduction of Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO)
2009	Introduction of Post-graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT)
2010	Introduction of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)
2012	Reestablishment of the NOE as the National Educational Assessment and Examination Agency (NEAEA).

| 2014 | Introduction of Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) |
| 2017 | Draft Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap, 2018-30 |

Source: Compiled by the   authors

4. The EPRDF period and beyond (1991- 2021)

4.1. The political settlement

The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of ethno-nationalist armed movements formed in the late 1980s, came to power in 1991 having defeated the military regime through an armed struggle. The political settlement in the post-1991-period passed through different phases, with some major ruptures along the way resulting in a shift in the configuration of power within the EPRDF itself and broader society. The first phase was a period of transition lasting from 1991 to 1995. As part of the post-1991 political reforms, the EPRDF-led government recognized multiparty democracy and freedom of association and speech. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia, which ruled the country from 1991 to 1995, comprised over 20 political parties.   The EPRDF was the dominant power within the Transitional Government holding the majority of seats in the interim legislative assembly called the Council of Representatives (CoR). The political settlement allowed the participation of opposition parties in the transitional government. Within the EPRDF there was no dominant single leader, but a system of collective decision-making by the top echelon of the EPRDF. This was followed by a transition to a nominal multiparty democracy in 1995, with the EPRDF winning all of the parliamentary elections in that year and subsequent elections. There was little room for opposition politics, with limited tolerance of media and civil society activism.

The major rupture which resulted in a reconfiguration of power within the ruling party was the split within the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant party within the EPRDF, in 2001. This split resulted from the division of the top leadership over the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war. It became a major turning point, with far-reaching consequences for the configuration of power within the ruling coalition. The late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, not only subdued his opponents by using his executive powers and purging his opponents from the TPLF and EPRDF but also later consolidated his personal rule.

As a result, the EPRDF moved from a culture of collective leadership to a party under the uncontested control of the prime minister, with no institutional checks on his power. Having purged his opponents, Meles started to exercise authority unchallenged, and his decision-making powers increasingly became independent from party control (Tadesse and Young,

2003). This had the effect of 'centralization of power around Meles and, due to the expulsion of the dissidents, greater consistency in paradigmatic ideas that underpinned subsequent strategies' (Lavers, 2019:650)

Another rupture that had a lasting impact was the election of 2005. This was the most competitive and contested election in the country, where the opposition made gains but was followed by post-election violence (Abbink, 2006). Expecting to win easily, the EPRDF was surprised by the level of organization and cohesiveness of the opposition as well as the popular support they managed to galvanize. After the elections, the EPRDF took a series of measures to limit political participation. Laws were adopted to limit the activities of civil society and the media. An important consequence of the limitation of democratic rights in the post-2005 period was the need to introduce a new means of legitimizing EPRDF's rule. The EPRDF identified *performance legitimacy* as an element of its political settlement, to be delivered through economic growth and development. Since 2010/11 Ethiopia has adopted two Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP). The GTP emphasizes the structural transformation of the economy, food security, and achieving middle-income status by 2025. A major outcome of this political settlement was the massive expansion of social services, including education and health.

In terms of political settlement, the period from 2005 to 2015 had both personalized and competitive elements. From 2005 to 2012, the political system was dominated by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his party, the EPRDF, which 'won' the 2010 general election by 98 per cent. Within the EPRDF elite cohesion was high and decisions were made top-down.

Following the death of Meles Zenawi, there was a radical shift. Although the transition of power to the new Prime Minister, Haile Mariam Desalegn, was smooth, he did not have the leverage within the party nor support base like Meles. While Meles was from the dominant TPLF, Haile Mariam was from the southern party which was internally divided in terms of ethnicity. This is demonstrated by the appointment by Haile Mariam of three deputy prime ministers, representing the party coalition partners (despite the Constitution providing for only one deputy prime minister). As a result, the configuration of power within the EPRDF during this period was internally competitive, even if the way the party ran the politics of the country remained authoritarian.

The period from 2015 till 2018 was characterized by protests against the EPRDF. Growing discontent about the dictatorial rule of the EPRDF came to the open in 2015, following the

fourth general elections held in May 2015, which the EPRDF and its allies won by 100%. Three years of youth protests, particularly in the Oromia and Amhara regions, forced the ERPDF to launch political reform and bring in new leadership. Causes of the unrest included a combination of economic and political factors. The economic factors related to real or imagined inequity in the distribution of the dividends of the much-acclaimed economic growth of the country, and massive youth unemployment in urban areas. Political factors included corruption, ethno-nationalist mobilization, land disputes, authoritarianism, and brutal suppression of dissent. The convergence of internal division and external protests culminated in Abiy Ahmed becoming the new leader of the EPRDF in April 2018, and the political reforms that he initiated and eventually ended in the rebranding of the EPRDF to the Prosperity Party in December 2019.

With the political changes that brought Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018, a new period of political transition commenced. The post-2018 transition evolved without ousting the ruling party, the former EPRDF (now Prosperity Party) and brought relative openness and enhanced participation. Despite these progressive achievements, elite disagreement, inter-ethnic violence, and displacement became key challenges to the transition. In November 2020, the intense disagreement between the TPLF and the Prosperity Party over a range of issues, including the postponement of the 2020 elections due to the covid-19 pandemic, culminated in a devastating civil war. The war that continues to ravage the country initially commenced in Tigray Region but subsequently expanded to the Amhara and Afar Regions where several hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes and a large number were subjected to serious human rights violations. One of the sectors which has suffered most in the ongoing civil war is education.

4.2.Education policy and reforms

4.2.1. Education Policy and Framework

Historical moments at which political settlements unravel or are re-established are considered as a 'kind of rupture' that create the conditions for a major shift in policy (Hickey & Hossain, 2019: 25). In the case of Ethiopia, the defeat of the military regime of the Derg and its replacement with a coalition of ethno-nationalist parties, which went on to restructure the state along an ethno-federal dispensation, created the conditions for embarking on a major reform of education policy. The EPRDF adopted a new educational policy known as the Education

and Training Policy (ETP), in 1994 at a time when the country was still under a transitional government and before the adoption of the new Constitution in 1995.

The preparation of the ETP started immediately. The transitional government established a committee to develop a new educational policy. The committee was composed of 'forty-four people drawn from the Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa University (AAU) and some twenty-two government offices', culminating in the adoption of the new policy in 1994 (Tefera, 2005:27). In addition to MoE and AAU, experts were also drawn from 'sectoral offices such as agriculture, industry, health, culture, science and technology and institute of agricultural research' (Teshome, 2008:51). Policy development was driven by local experts, with donors not part of the process[13] - a unique development, as donors have a significant impact on education policy in many developing countries.

Some argue the making of the ETP was participatory involving the major stakeholders of the sector at all levels. For example, a former official argues the policy involved experts from the AAU and the Alemaya University of Agriculture, and other colleges. The draft policy was also presented for discussion and comments to teachers in Addis Ababa representing eighty schools.[14] Moreover, even if the newly established regional governments were new and not well organized at the time, they provided feedback on the draft policy.[15]

Others, however, argue that the process was not participatory. Tefera (2005:25-28), for instance, contends that even though some teachers in Addis Ababa and some regions had the opportunity to participate in discussing the draft policy, these discussions (forums) were organized by the government to generate public support to its new policy directions rather than to enrich the policy through public consultation. There is no evidence of the participation of other major stakeholders in the education system, such as parents, for instance (Tefera, 2005:28). The public consultation that was organized by the government on the draft policy was more of a ritual than a genuine attempt to encourage the flow of meaningful inputs that could lead to any significant changes to the draft policy. Put in other words, the policy was made in a top-down fashion like the previous educational policies (Teshome, 2008).

Ideas are constitutive elements of any political settlement. In the case of the ETP, the ideas and convictions of the new political elite determined its focus and direction. The belief of the

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[13] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021
[14] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021
[15] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

EPRDF that previous regimes did not respect and protect the rights of subnational groups within Ethiopia impacted the focus of the policy about decentralization and mediums of instruction. This is illustrated by political objectives taking greater precedence than education goals, focusing on 'such democratic values as equality, liberty, justice, truth and respect for human rights' (Teshome, 2008:51). Additionally, the developmental orientation of the new leadership, with its focus on socio-economic transformation through agricultural-led industrialization, affected the policy's focus on a significant expansion to create educated labour for the rural and industrial sectors.

The ETP places a huge premium on what education is expected to do, defining education in a manner one writer termed 'biblical' (Teshome, 2008:52). The ETP thus proclaims:

> *Education is a process by which man transmits his experience, new findings, and values accumulated over the years, in his struggle for survival and development, through generations. Education enables individuals and society to make all rounded participation in the development process by acquiring knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes (TGE 2004:1).*

The ETP is comprehensive in its coverage, encompassing both formal and non-formal education, as well as addressing the whole system from kindergarten to higher education and special education (Teshome, 2008:52). It covers curriculum, educational structure, educational measurement and evaluation, teacher training and development, educational support and inputs, educational organization and management, and finance. It has a broad aspiration to create 'citizens endowed with humane outlook, countrywide responsibility and democratic values having developed the necessary productive, creative and appreciative capacity to participate fruitfully in development' (Teshome, 2008: 52).

The ETP conceptualizes education in terms of its potential to advance livelihoods. It argues that education 'enables individuals and society to make all-rounded participation in the development process by acquiring knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes. It further recognizes that education 'helps man to improve, change, as well as develop and conserve his environment for an all-rounded development by diffusing science and technology into the society' (TGE, 1994:1). The policy recognizes that the country's education system has been plagued by 'complex problems of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity', lamenting that the system is characterized by 'inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teachers, overcrowded classes, shortage of books and other teaching materials' (TGE, 1994: 3-4).

The ETP set out significant changes in direction. For example:

- It declared that 'educational management will be decentralized to create the necessary condition to expand, enrich and improve the relevance, quality, accessibility and equity of education and training' (TGE, 1994:29-30).

- It proposed to tackle persistent regional disparities in education provision, stipulating that special assistance will be given to raise the educational participation of deprived regions (TGE, 1994: 32).

- It focused on language, recognizing the rights of communities to use their languages (ETP, 1994:10). This response to the demands of ethno-nationalist elements who become dominant in the post-Derg period. It was a precursor of the 1995 Constitution which adopted an ethnic-based federal structure that allowed newly established regions to adopt their working languages and mediums of instruction for primary schools.[16]

- It allowed private investors 'to open schools and establish various educational and training institutions' (ETP, 1994:32). This policy direction proved consequential, as private institutions of learning became important players, especially in urban areas.

- It introduced a new structure of education – with kindergarten focusing on the development of the child in preparing for formal schooling, followed by eight years of primary education in two cycles (4+4), in turn, followed by two years of general secondary education, and two years of preparatory[17] education (2+2) (ETP, 1994: 14-15)

Implementation of the ETP has been guided by medium-term Education Sector Development Plans (ESDP). ESDPs provide specific time-based objectives for the sector, detailing goals of improving access, relevance, quality, and equity in education. Five education programs have been designed and implemented so far (ESDP I-V), with the first one launched in 1997/98. The ESDP VI is currently in development. Most interviewees commented that the first three ESDPs were largely concerned with expanding access over improvement in education quality. It was only in ESDP IV and ESDP V that quality came to feature more prominently.

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[16] Interview, current education official 2_ July 30,2021
[17] Preparatory education under the ETP refers to grades 11 and 12 which follow ten years of general education. It is envisioned as a stage of preparation for university level education and constitutes the second cycle of secondary education, i.e., upper secondary education. Students can pursue either a natural or social science track at this level.

- ESDP I (1997-2001), developed through consultation between the federal and regional governments and international donors (but without input from teachers, students and parents) – gave priority to expanding access to primary education (Teshome, 2008: 56).

- ESDP II (2002-2005) was developed similarly, but added innovations such as 'adoption of low-cost formal schools, alternative basic education (ABE) and improving not only the professional capacity of teachers but also their ethical values' (Teshome, 2008: 59). By this time, there was a growing recognition that quality was starting to become a problem. ESDP II also gained impetus from UNESCO's education for all policy and the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- ESDP III (2006-2010) highlighted the 'inter-sectoral integration between rural development and education', emphasizing 'enhancing access to primary education for all school-age children and thereby producing educated farmers and other workers who utilize new agricultural technologies' (Teshome, 2008:62). ESDP III was also seen as the final push to realize the goal of universal primary education (ibid, 2008:63).

- ESDP IV (2011-2015) coincides with the first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I). It made a more conscious move to prioritize the quality of education, identifying as one of its primary objectives 'a strong improvement in student achievement through a consistent focus on the enhancement of the teaching/learning process' (MoE, 2010:6) Quality, equity and improved management became its priority themes (MoE, 2010:6).

- ESDP V (2016-2020) recommitted to the improvement of quality while also maintaining the expansion of access. Two of its six priority areas are committed to general education, with one focusing on enhancing quality, while the others emphasize access, equity and internal efficiency (MoE, 2015:10).

The most ambitious (but also controversial) ongoing reform effort in education has been the draft Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap, 2018-30, issued in December 2017 and implemented from 2018 with the new political leadership. Initiated by the MoE's Education Strategy Centre, the roadmap was prepared by a team of experts, mainly from Addis Ababa University, involving political leaders at all levels, professionals in universities, schoolteachers, students and parents (MoE, 2017:4). Close to 2.5 million participated in consultations over a one-and-a-half-year period, with close to 10 million people consulted

indirectly.[18] A presentation by the former Minister of Science and Higher education puts these numbers at 4.1 million, with 600 thousand educators and 3.5 million civil society actors consulted.[19]

The roadmap proposes some significant shifts, some of which have become highly politicized and controversial. The most important aspect of the draft roadmap, which has progressed in terms of implementation, is a change in the curriculum, with both the regional governments and the federal government currently developing new textbooks. Another aspect is administration. The roadmap recommended splitting the ministry of education into three separate ministries – dealing with general education, higher education, and human resource management. However, the government decided to split it into two – one for general education (MoE) and another for higher education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE).[20]

Two recommendations that were included in the roadmap proved difficult to implement: (i) students to study one national language as early as Grade 3, in addition to English and their mother tongue, and (ii) to move regional examinations for Grade 8 to the national level. Critics have challenged these as a contravention of the constitutionally established rights of regional states, as well as being cumbersome for students (discussed below).

4.2.2. The tension between access and quality

From the beginning, the EPRDF regime has put expanding access as its priority objective in education. This reflects the conviction that the education system under previous regimes was not only inefficient but inequitable. Hence, the EPRDF committed to increasing access to education particularly in the rural areas. Later on, expansion of education, at all levels including a massive expansion in higher education, became an important aspect of the regime's aspiration for performance legitimacy, especially after 2005 when the ruling party faced stiff competition from the opposition. The commitment to access has been widely successful, with the gross enrolment rate in primary education rising to 95% by 2012/13 (NEAEA, 2014).

However, this expansion came at the expense of quality. The decline in quality is observable in many respects. Since 2000, the National Educational Assessment and Examination Agency

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[18] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27, 2021.
[19] Hirut W/Mariam (2020). Strategy for transforming training and education in Ethiopia: Ethiopia Education and Training Roadmap. Education World Forum, London, Jan 2020. Presentation PPT.
[20] On the basis of this recommendation, in 2019, a new ministry – Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) was established. MoSHE was, however, merged with Ministry of Education (MoE) in October 2021, when a new cabinet was formed after the July 2021 elections.

(NEAEA) has been conducting various assessments including National Learning Assessments (NAL) every four years that revealed the extent of the problem with respect to quality of education. In 2000, over 52% of students in Grade 4 had 'below basic' proficiencies in reading English and mathematics, while about 59% of Grade 8 students had an average proficiency level of 'below basic' in English, Math, Biology, Chemistry and Physics (JICA and IDCJ, 2012: 24). The performance of students in NAL in subsequent years instead of improving was declining. In 2007, the average performance of grade 4 students declined to 39.7%, while the performance of grade 8 students declined to 35.5%. A similar trend was observed in 2010 in which the performance of grade 4 students stood at 40.1%, while grade 8 students' average perforce was 35.3% (JICA and IDCJ, 2012: 24)

The performance of students in early grades was also low. In 2010, MoE in collaboration with the USAID undertook the first Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), conducted at Grades 2 and 3. The assessment revealed that a large number of grade 2 students were not able to read. In this respect, students with zero scores (non-readers), ranged from 69.2 % in Sidaama to above 25% in the largest regions of the country, SNNP, Oromia, Tigray, and Amhara (RTI International, 2010: Es 3). As the assessments carried out between 2014 and 2018 among grade 2 and 3 students also show (see Table 4), about two-thirds of them were either non-readers or limited reading comprehension levels. As one of our key informants noted, in spite of a lot of investment and measures to improve quality, a significant number of students remain illiterate after completing the first four years of primary schooling.[21]

Table 4: Grade 2 and 3 Students' Reading Levels by Assessment Year

Reading Proficiency	Year, Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA[22]) Results (%)		
	2014[23]	2016[24]	2018[25]
Non-readers	42.2	32.1	37.2
Limited reading comprehension	26.7	33.7	30.4
Moderate reading comprehension	25.3	27.4	26.3
High reading comprehension	6.1	6.8	6.2

Source: Compiled by the authors from different sources

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[21] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021

[23] See (RTI, 2014).
[24] See (American Institute for Research, 2016)
[25] See (American Institute for Research 2018).

UNICEF's assessment of the overall performance of students in the 2000 to 2007 period also shows a decline in the quality of education - 'a decrease from 41.1% in 2000 to 39.7% in 2004 with a continued decrease of 35.6% in 2007 in different subjects offered' (Kassa, 2012).

The accelerated expansion has resulted in the hiring of unqualified and under-qualified teachers, large and unmanageable class sizes, as well as under-resourced schools, leading to a decline in learning outcomes. There has thus been a compromise in quality as access expanded at an accelerated pace.
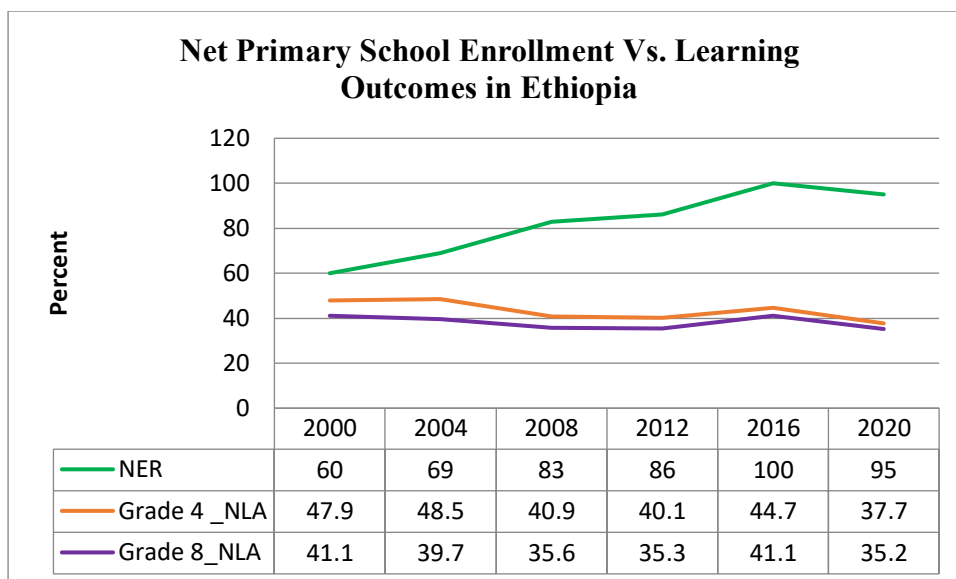
As shown in the figure below (figure 1), the student net enrolment ratio in primary schools in Ethiopia increased from 60% to 95% in two decades (2000-2020), although assessment of learning for primary school students was low with a decreasing trend in those years (see Figure 1). Similarly, the average learning assessment results (2010-2017) for grades 10 and 12 was 37% and 45% respectively, which was much lower than the Ministry of Education set benchmark of 50% (NEAEA, 2017). The net enrolment ratio of secondary school students was also very low although showing improvement from 13% in 2005 to 29% in 2017 (NEAEA 2017). From these observations, one can deduce that the average learning assessment results are generally lower than expected.

There has been growing realization within the government that action is needed to address the problem of declining learning outcomes. This has resulted in several quality-focused initiatives. For example, the General Education Quality Improvement Project (GEQIP), now in its second phase, is funded by the World Bank, pooling resources from multiple donors. GEQIP aims to improve 'internal efficiency, equitable access, and quality in general education from O-Class to Grade 12', in line with ESDP goals.

Figure 1: Net Enrolment Ratio, NAL Results[26] for Grades 4 and 8 from 2000 -2020

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[26] See (Belay, H. 2021).

**Net Primary School Enrollment Vs. Learning
Outcomes in Ethiopia**

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
NER	60	69	83	86	100	95
Grade 4 _NLA	47.9	48.5	40.9	40.1	44.7	37.7
Grade 8_NLA	41.1	39.7	35.6	35.3	41.1	35.2

Source: Belay, H. (2021).

GEQIP-I (2008-2012) was designed to improve (i) curriculum, textbook assessment and inspection, (ii) teacher development including English language quality, (iii) management and administration with an Education Management Information System sub-component, (iv) school improvement programme, and v) programme coordination, monitoring and evaluation' (World Bank 2008, quoted in Kassa, 2012:59).

GEQIP II (2013-2018) has a similar focus, adding elements on information and communication technology, and teacher and school leader development – to increase 'the supply and deployment of qualified teachers; provide teacher training, textbooks, and learning materials; and disburse school grants' (World Bank, 2017). Even though GEQIP has a positive contribution on students' learning outcomes the changes are not significant.[27]

In addition to GEQIP, other quality focused initiatives include the Education Results Based Financing Project, and General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (Molla, 2019: 332). Equitable learning is still a major agenda not yet addressed especially for girls, children with disabilities, children from poor families and pastoralist communities.[28]

4.2.3. Actors within the Education Domain
Like most policy domains, it is possible to identify several actors within the education sector in Ethiopia who shape and influence the direction of policy. While some stakeholders have a strong level of influence on the policies and strategies adopted, others have little, or even

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[27] RISE Project Interviewee1 _ February 15, 2018
[28] RISE Project Interviewee14_February , 2018

virtually nonexistent influence on policy processes. As discussed below, federal government institutions such as the Ministry of Education, and the National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency as well as regional and local governments have an important role in policy making and implementation. Donors were also important players (Yizengaw, 2006). Meanwhile, actors such as parents, teachers' associations, and political parties have had limited influence.

At the national level, the federal government, and principally the ruling party until 2018, the EPRDF, have been the most important players. The EPRDF leadership has been effective in developing a clear and coherent set of policy and strategy documents. As described earlier, the EPRDF, especially its top leadership, view education as the primary instrument for structural transformation and establishing government's performance legitimacy. The provision of social services, especially education, is a core element of state legitimacy which the EPRDF uses 'to consolidate power and its support base by emphasizing and fulfilling its image as a revolutionary, pro-poor movement and as the representative of the rural masses' (Wales, Magee & Nicolai, 2016: 21).

At the federal level, several government institutions influence the education system. These include the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE), and the Ethiopia National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency (NEAEA). Until recently, the Ministry of Education oversaw all subsectors of education from the pre-primary level to higher education. In 2019, the ministry was split in two in line with the recommendations of the draft education Roadmap, with the MoE responsible for education from pre-primary to high school, and MoSHE responsible for higher education. MoSHE was, however, dissolved in October 2021, when a new cabinet was formed after PP won the July 2021 elections. MoSHE's functions have been transferred back to the MoE.

The MoE designs curriculum for Grades 9-12, and the curriculum framework for the regions to follow in the development of their textbooks for primary education (Grades 1-8). The NEAEA (formerly the National Examinations Agency) administers national examinations at Grade 12, prepares specifications for regional examinations for Grade 8, and conducts national learning assessment (NLA) every four years.[29]

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[29] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021; Interview, regional education expert 1_ July 28,2021

In addition to the federal government, regional state governments and local governments are important players within the education domain. Regional governments are responsible for primary education (Grades 1-8). They choose languages of instruction, develop textbooks based on the national curriculum framework, prepare and administer regional examinations at the end of the second primary cycle, as well as administer manpower (teachers). They have a significant impact on education, especially at the level of primary education.

This has resulted in inconsistency in the curriculum as different regions take different paths, for instance on issues such as the grade level at which English becomes a medium of instruction.[30] There is also growing competition and pressure on regions to get as many students as possible into the ever-expanding universities, which has resulted in compromising the delivery of the university entrance examinations. The relationship between the federal government and the regions is prescriptive rather than innovative.[31] For instance, decisions on teacher salary scales are made centrally with little participation of the regions. As a result, there is no variation in the payment structure even if the cost of living varies from region to region. Moreover, there is limited unity of action between the federal government and regions to enhance learning. This is vividly expressed in addressing the growing problems of malpractices in national examinations. In this respect, when the NEAEA takes measures on students and schools who were involved in exam malpractices some regions complain of unfair treatment.

Local governments (*Woredas*) are important as it is at this level that recruitment of teachers takes place, which has had a significant impact on quality. Because of budgetary constraints and difficulty in attracting qualified teachers, some *Woredas* have resorted to hiring school dropouts and those who have completed Grade 10, with little or no training.[32] This is especially the case in rural areas where qualified teachers are sometimes not willing to work.

Woredas administer and oversee all schools within their domain. The primary motivation of political leaders at the *Woreda* level is to increase access and student pass rates, rather than actual learning outcomes.[33] As a result, they put pressure on schools to inflate results. According to one interviewee from the Amhara region, political leaders interfere to 'evaluate' results collected from schools within the Woreda, which is a code word for tampering with the results to inflate them, before the results are transferred to zones and regional level.[34]

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[30] Interview, regional education expert 2_ July 28,2021
[31] Interview, former education official 1_ July 29,2021
[32] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[33] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[34] Interview, regional education expert 1_ July 28,2021

Manipulation of data at the level of local government while reporting to the region to avoid criticism has thus become commonplace.

Donors are also significant players in education policy. The role of donors in Ethiopia has largely been limited to funding and technical support, with only occasional policy influence, such as the World Bank whose ideas occasionally influence policy directions (Amare, et al., 2019). The government claims it has maintained autonomy when it comes to setting education policies, objectives, and strategies, despite substantial dependence on donors for funding[35].

The Ethiopian government is significantly dependent on foreign donor funds. According to OECD data, for instance, the Ethiopian government received 3.5 billion dollars on average in the period from 2007 to 2011 (The Oakland Institute, 2013). Foreign aid constitutes as much as a third of the government budget (Feyissa, 2011:288). However, the Ethiopian government has been strong in maintaining its policy autonomy, demonstrating readiness to forgo aid rather than change policy, as demonstrated by confrontations with the World Bank and IMF in the late 1990s (Lavers, 2019: 654). This arises from the EPRDF's commitment to a clear strategy of its own and 'a conviction that donor priorities shift and, as Meles argued, are frequently wrong' (Lavers, 2019: 654).

Perhaps the most important donor with the capacity to influence education policy is the World Bank. This is not only because of its financial leverage but also its redefinition as a 'knowledge bank' – thus employing knowledge-based policy regulatory instruments including 'sector reviews, advisory activities, analytical reports and learning events' (Molla, 2019: 331). These instruments have enabled the Bank's instruments of policy influence to 'become softer, subtler and (possibly) more effective' (Molla, 2019:332). The World Bank provides significant financing for education in Ethiopia, having financed 27 education projects amounting to $2.1 billion by 2018, the largest in sub-Saharan Africa (Molla, 2019: 332). The World Bank participated in the process of developing key policies and in all the five ESDPs (Molla, 2019: 336).

Despite this, much of the support was technical and advisory, instead of outright interventions, and the Ethiopian government managed to resist when recommendations did not align with its priorities. For instance, the government resisted World Bank recommendations to restrict primary education to four years as eight years of primary education deemed costly. The

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[35] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

government resisted by arguing that at least eight years of primary schooling is required to achieve its goal of producing educated and informed farmers who are capable of adopting and using agricultural technologies.[36] However, this does not mean the World Bank has had no influence. For example, Molla (2019) shows how ideas on cost-sharing in higher education were advocated by the World Bank before becoming part of government policy. In addition, commitments to initiatives such as Universal Primary Education (UPS) by UNESCO and the MDGs have influenced thinking within the government, illustrating that the government, despite its commitment to policy autonomy, is not impervious to influence by external actors. Foreign actors have, however, increasingly focused on providing financial and technical assistance which are designed to tackle resource and capacity barriers in the system rather than embarking on separate programs/ projects.[37]

Historically, the role of societal actors such as political parties, teacher associations, and parents in education policymaking and management has been minimal. With the EPRDF strongly entrenched, opposition parties have been too weak and fragmented to challenge the policy framework. Whenever there was room for participation, criticism has focused on the more politicized and polarized aspects of education policy, such as the medium of instruction (language).[38]

Following the anti-government protests that started in 2015 and the ensuing weakening of central state authority, some opposition political actors have become more prominent in influencing the direction of policy. Recommendation to standardize examinations at the end of primary education (Grade 8) received criticism from activists and opposition political leaders. For example, Jawar Mohammed[39] challenged the proposal arguing it violated regional self-governance and the use of local language for education.[40] Opposition came not only from prominent opposition activists but also the regions themselves, who saw it as an encroachment on their constitutionally guaranteed mandates. This is particularly the case with the Tigray region, which rejected the proposals partly due to the deterioration of relations with the federal

[36] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021
[37] Interview, development partner expert 1_November 5, 2021
[38] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021
[39] Jawar Mohammed is a prominent activist and opposition politician who played a leading role in the mobilization of youth for anti-government protests since 2014/15 which eventually brought about a change of leadership in the country. He particularly garnered infamy for leaking the national university entrance examination in 2016, leading to its cancellation.
[40] Jawar Mohammed Interview: Talk w/ Jawar Mohammed on New Education Roadmap – EthioTube – Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCj_ehUIZ5I. Accessed: 14 November 2021

government,[41] and Oromia which expressed concerns that the roadmap was against self-determination and self-administration. The growing assertiveness of the regional states in challenging the federal government partially emanates from the weakening of central state institutions. As Yusuf (2019) argues, ethno national mobilization in recent years has weakened state structures by fracturing the chain of command and control, upsetting the balance between federal and regional governments as regions flexed their muscles against the center.

While a decline in the hegemony of the EPRDF in the post-2015 period created the possibility for political actors – opposition leaders and even regional governments to exert influence in the making of education policy, societal actors, principally teachers and parents continue to have little influence. This is partly due to the lack of a strong teachers' union with a capacity of influencing policy. The literature suggests that teachers in other countries, as a highly mobilized group and a powerful voting bloc with an interest in education policy, have been successful in influencing policy decisions, at times blocking quality-focused reforms if they threaten their interests (Paige, 2009). In the Ethiopian case, however, teachers have had a weak political representation with little to no lobbying capacity and influence in policymaking. Additionally, given the authoritarian nature of the regime, they have had little impact in influencing elections. The EPRDF regime made successful inroads in recruiting a large number of teachers as party members in the post-2005 push to expand its membership. Teachers have been at best consulted about policies and strategies, including the ETP, but with minimal impact on its outcome.

Parents have been virtually absent from the policy domain, even though they are primary stakeholders as education policy affects the livelihoods of each child. Parents were not involved in ETP preparation, subsequent plans and strategies. However, the draft Roadmap currently under implementation has indicated that parents were consulted in its development, which is a welcome change from the established tradition.

Overall, the ruling party has been the dominant player in education policy, determining policy objectives and instruments. Donors have provided significant financing of the sector and have had some influence on policy and strategy through their consultancy and advisory roles. Regional state elites, as well as some activists, have grown bolder in recent years as the center is weakened amid a turbulent political transition. Finally, teachers and parents remain on the sideline, despite being the most affected groups of education policy.

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[41] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021

4.3. Teachers' Career Path

The 2007 Teachers Development Blueprint, despite its pitfalls, provides the framework for teacher policy reform, including career development. This reform aimed to make education an attractive career choice and improve the quality of teachers.[42] The blueprint tried to set merit-based and attractive career, moral, financial, and material benefits for teachers nominated as competent and committed to their teaching profession– for example, deserving teachers being honored by commemorative schools in their names, housing opportunities, banking loans, accelerated career structure (i.e., skipping career ladder), further education opportunities, free education trips, top-up payments for extra duties. (Habte, 2020). Nonetheless, the promises of the blueprint by and large were not implemented.

ESDP V, without evaluation of the 2007 blueprint, planned to transform teaching into a profession of choice. The policy document stated that applicants would have access to motivating career development opportunities from the time of their application (MoE, 2015). Nonetheless, neither implementation strategies nor action plans were introduced to transform the teaching profession (Habte, 2020).

The 1994 Education and Training Policy underlined the need for qualified teachers at all levels of education. It envisaged able, diligent, motivated, and physically and mentally fit teachers to meet the expansion of education across the country (Geberew, 2017). Despite the introduction of some reforms such as the Teacher Development Program, Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) in 2003 by the Ministry of Education and the subsequent implementation of the Post-Graduate Diploma Program in Teaching (PGDT), the quality of teacher education was not significantly improved (Shishigu et al., 2017).

TESO was introduced in 2003 following the recommendations of the studies commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 2002 (Geberew, 2017). It was a national, government-initiated and donor-supported programme to strengthen teacher training (Mekonnen, 2008; Ahmad, 2013). The reform largely focused on teacher education modalities where student teachers spend more time on practicum attachments and interact with students using active learning methodologies (Geberew, 2017). Specifically, the first phase of TDP was designed to include training programs that enhance the capacity of teachers, educators, and educational leaders (Gemechu et al., 2017). In 2009, the TESO initiative was abandoned without any formal evaluation and the Ministry of Education announced a new initiative called Post-Graduate

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[42] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

Diploma Training (PGDT) Program (Shishigu, et al., 2017; Geberew, 2017). The Ministry of Education decided that any university graduate with a first degree but with no pedagogical training may apply for a post-graduate diploma program in teaching. Such a new initiative was not welcomed by most educators and faced serious resistance even by the students (Shishigu, et al., 2017). When the Ethiopian education roadmap research team reviewed the rationale of the PGDT reform and its implementation they found it less effective in enhancing teacher education program in Ethiopia. The PGDT program was found to increase the number of less passionate, demotivated first-degree holders who were unemployed in their respective specialization and found teaching as a bridge until they get a 'better' job (MOE, 2018). As a result, the education roadmap study team recommended revitalizing the principles and practices of teachers' development starting from undergraduate education. Accordingly, students who join teacher training programs are offered pedagogical courses in addition to courses in their areas of specialization.

Aside from this, it has to be noted that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a sub-sector was marginalized from the intended teacher reforms (Habte, 2020). In other words, pre-primary school teachers' training was largely neglected in the PGDT reforms. Moreover, the PGDT policy is ambitious in providing education opportunities for teachers including upgrading their qualification through PGDT, but it is rarely linked with improving student learning outcomes.[43]

The objective of attracting competent teachers into the profession (Ministry of Education, 1999a, b) was not achieved (Teklesselasie, 2005). Teachers continue to be dissatisfied with their income, which is lower in comparison to other professions.[44] The teacher career policy has been updated twice since its establishment in 1995 (Yimam, 2019). Instead of a single salary scheme, the policy proposed a differential salary for teachers according to six levels, except for pre-primary school teachers which had five levels. In each stage, the policy identified professional standards, responsibilities and monetary rewards (Ministry of Education, 1999).

The six successive levels within the career ladder introduced in 1995 were: novice teacher, junior teacher, teacher, senior teacher, associate lead teacher, and lead teacher. Later in 1999, it was updated to 7 levels, but the addition of 'senior lead teacher'. This was further updated

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[43] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[44] Interview, regional education expert 1_ July 28,2021

adding two more stages: senior lead teacher II and senior lead teacher III, in 2016. However, the top two tiers (senior lead teacher II and senior lead teacher III) were subsequently dropped in 2019, although the reason for this is not mentioned (Civil Service Commission, 2020:7).

The teachers' career ladder applies to teachers within the pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools. At each stage of the ladder the policy identifies specific criteria which teachers need to fulfil. Table 1 lists the different stages teachers pass in the career structure and the respective criteria required.

Table 5: Seven tiers of teachers' career path

Novice teacher	Teachers have no specific responsibilities except the basic roles and functions of classroom instruction.
Junior teacher	In addition to the basic roles and functions of classroom instruction, teachers should participate in committees or clubs at school.
Teacher	In addition to the basic roles and functions of classroom instruction, teachers should: • Provide mentoring and supervisory services to at least two junior teachers • Serve as unit leader/pedagogical center representative/department head, etc. for a year, OR • Produce one research paper/creative work approved by the district education office, OR • Provide special support to students with special needs, female students, etc.
Senior teacher	Teachers at this level should: • Serve as unit leader/pedagogical center representative/department head, etc. for three years, OR • Produce teaching material or a research work, OR • Evaluate research works and training materials • Provide training or produce a training manual to improve the quality of the teaching learning process, OR • Produce teaching aids from local materials
Associate lead teacher	Teachers at this level should: • Provide effective service as unit leader/pedagogical center representative/department head, etc. for four years, OR • Produce three research works, OR • Produce one research work approved by the district education office Prepare at least three teaching materials suitable to the locality, OR • Produce training manuals accepted by the district education office, OR • Provide technical assistance to a career structure committee at all levels for at least two years
lead teacher	In addition to fulfilling the requirements set for the associate lead teacher level, lead teachers should evaluate curricular materials at school level and adapt them to local needs.
Senior lead teacher I	In addition to performing the activities designated for lead teacher levels, senior lead teachers should conduct a series of research projects that helps identify learning needs and design effective learning assessment strategies; prepare need-based training manuals and train fellow teachers; and provide additional professional support and follow-up services to the school community.

Source: Civil Service Commission, 2020; Yimam 2019.

People have been questioning the relevance and application of the teacher career ladder since its inception (Tekleslassie, 2005; Wole, 2002; Yimam, 2019). For example, Tekleslassie (2005) strongly argues that the teacher career ladder has done more harm than benefit. In an empirical study using qualitative methods, Tekleslassie noted that the policy had both structural and implementation problems. In terms of structural problems, some of the criteria used for promotion were beyond the teachers' reach, such as requiring them to conduct research. As a result, teachers were not being promoted. One of his key informant's comments illustrates this point:

> *Unfortunately, this is the case in some schools where some of my colleagues lost their promotions. Because of this situation, I often hear that some teachers inflate students' grades, focus more on easy assignments, and stop from being demanding so that they can be positively rated. Indeed, this has never been the case in the past but is becoming common in some schools today in spite of all its negative effects on academic standards and the erosion of teachers' professional integrity (Tekleslassie, 2005, p.627)*

Some of these issues were reflected in the revised guidelines. In the 2016 guidelines as cited in Yimam (2019), parents' and students' role in the evaluation process was removed leaving only principals and colleagues as actors in the teacher evaluation.

These structural problems are compounded by the bureaucratic oversight structure. Teachers complain that performance evaluation by schools is often reviewed at the district level or above, with teachers suffering delays and even reversal of promotion decisions. There is also political interference in promotion decisions.[45] The system is applied unevenly across regions, and teachers don't have the strong collective bargaining power to voice their concerns.[46] The very introduction of the career structure is criticized as top-down with little to no involvement from the main stakeholders including the teacher's association.[47]

Teachers' satisfaction in their career has decreased since the introduction of the teacher career ladder policy. One of the sources of stress for teachers was found to be the unjust implementation process of the career structure where competence as a criterion was mixed with other less important criteria (Wole, 2002). Besides, even if teachers' salaries were increased several times under the EPRDF, they remain dissatisfied with their teaching profession partly due to the declining purchasing power of Ethiopian birr. Although the size of the pay teachers used to receive during the Imperial Regime was much lower than what they are paid today,

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[45] Interview, education researcher 1_ July 29,2021
[46] Interview, education researcher 1_ July 29,2021
[47] Interview, education researcher 5_October 24, 2021

they were more satisfied and motivated in their profession (Wole, 2002). The design in teacher career development should have included the establishment of strong and relevant institutions that could enhance the capacity and motivation of the workforce in the education sector. [48] The problem is not only the dissatisfaction of teachers due to the absence of a nominal kind of promotion in the career structure, but also the selection and mobilization of candidates who have no interest in teaching as a mechanism of creating jobs to address the huge national unemployment backlog.[49]

The current career structure thus does not provide attractive incentives for teachers. The financial incentives from the career ladder are not substantial considering the cost of living, especially in urban areas. While the financial incentive of the career ladder is thus not significant, it is nonetheless one motivating factor since it confers status on the teachers. There are some efforts to motivate teachers, although not uniform across all regions. The Addis Ababa city administration, for instance, provides housing like low-cost condominium houses for some of its teachers. It also introduced a net monthly housing allowance of 3000 Ethiopian birr (which in December 2021 is equivalent to 60 USD). Other regions, like Oromia, meanwhile try to motivate teachers by providing them with land to build houses. In rural areas, because there are no houses to rent, sometimes regions build houses for teachers near the schools.

Another incentive for teachers includes opportunities for training and upgrading, for instance, in the form of summer school whereby teachers join universities to upgrade their academic qualifications. Job security is also another incentive that motivates teachers which is a valued incentive in a precarious job market.

4.4. Examinations and Assessments

4.4.1. National and regional examinations

The Education and Training Policy (ETP) introduced in 1994 has a 4-4-2-2 structure (4 years of lower primary, 4 years of upper primary, 2 years of lower secondary, and 2 years of senior secondary). Due to the decentralization of education policy (MOE, 1994), the 9 regional states and two city administrations were mandated to administer and manage the primary school leaving certificate examination (PSLCE) for Grade 8 students. Except for 'civics' and local language study, 8 subjects have been common across the evolution of education policy in

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[48] Interview, education researcher 3_ July 29,2021
[49] Interview, education researcher 1_ July 29,2021

Ethiopia: Amharic, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, and History. Currently, 26 mother tongue languages are taught nationally, for Grade 8 PSLCE.[50]

Grades 10 and 12 national examinations are administered by the federal government. When students complete the lower secondary education at Grade 10, they sit for the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE), which includes 9 common subjects (Amharic, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History, Civics) and one of the 18 mother tongue languages, Ge'ez and French. If students pass this examination, they enter the preparatory program for university education in the upper secondary school (grades 11 and 12).[51] If they don't pass, they pursue technical and vocational education and training (TVET) or a diploma program. After Grade 12, students must sit for the Ethiopian University Entrance Examination (EUEE) to be admitted to higher educational institutions. The two streams of the EUEE are Natural Science that includes English, Mathematics for natural Science, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Civics and Aptitude, and the Social Science examination encompasses English, Mathematics for Social Science, Economics, Geography, History, Civics, and Aptitude.

According to the Council of Ministers Regulation No 260/2012, the Ethiopian National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency (NEAEA) is responsible for developing and administering national examinations. It is also responsible for issuing certificates of exam results to examinees and conducting educational assessments to assist regional offices to build their capacities. The NEAEA prepares and administers national examinations for 1.5 million examinees by deploying and mobilizing about 100,000 examination supervisors and invigilators every year (NEAEA, 2018b).

All the three regimes shared similar purposes of national examinations. The main and common purposes of the examination systems are to certify completion of the level and select or place students who qualify for the next level.[52] Moreover, all the primary and/or secondary school leaving national examinations of the three eras are entirely academic and stem from the pertinent curriculum. The Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE) at grade 10 and Ethiopian University Entrance Examination (EUEE) at grade 12

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[50] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[51] The preparatory programme (grades 11 and 12) after completion of secondary school were meant to prepare students for college/university education. Courses which in the past were given for college first year students were given in the preparatory program.
[52] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021

had been in place since 2000 and 2002 respectively. For the primary school leaving certificate examination, the raw scores are transformed into a percentile rank derived from the distribution of aggregate scores for all candidates. On the other hand, the Ethiopian School Leaving Certification Examinations (ESLCE) in the Imperial and the Socialist Derg regimes and the EGSECE in the present ETP use the A to F letter grading scale. However, the EUEE is graded on a numerical 0–100 point scale with a total possible score of 700 in the seven test subjects combined.

All the national examinations, primary and secondary or university admission examinations, are delivered in paper-pencil methods and presented in the form of multiple choices (NOE, 2000). The overall performance of students in the national examinations was quite unsatisfactory during the period under consideration. For example, the aggregate mean scores of grade 10 in EGSECE in all subjects was found below 50% for the past consecutive eight years. The national examination development and administration system have been mainly focused on paper-paper testing for the last 74 years. The printing, distributing, storing and administering processes demand to mobilize a large amount of human and financial resources and follow strict security precautions. Many of the challenges emanate from these traditional and static procedures that cannot fit for the 21st century. Examination malpractices and irregularities such as leakage, impersonation, external assistance, using cell phone technology, copying, collision, theft, and mass cheating[53] pose a threat for the education sector in general and the agency in particular.

Above all, the national examination administration has been highly challenged by the existing political instability of the country since 2016. The current political instability seemed to have aggravated examination malpractices. Some politicians and their supporters caused/participated in leakage of the exam papers for seeking public attention using social media outlets (Ethiopian Press Agency, 2016). Systemic cheating has become more prevalent as powerful leaders, politicians, local officials and even some parents exert pressure on exam administrators to make their students score better grades. Such influences inevitably encourage mass cheating.[54] A case in point here is the 2016 EUEE. Some politically active groups leaked some exams on social media during the 2016 EUEE administration. That led to the cancellation of the examination (Ethiopian Press Agency, 2016). As a result of all these, cheating has emerged a major problem threatening the educational system in Ethiopia. Some studies show

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[53] Interview, education researcher 4_August 7, 2021
[54] Interview, former official of NEAEA3_November 7,2021

a high-level prevalence of cheating. Accordingly, academic cheating admitted by student respondents in universities ranged from 19.8% (Desalegn & Berhanu, 2014, p. 3) to 53.75% (Anagaw, 2019). Similarly, the prevalence of academic cheating admitted by student respondents in secondary schools ranged from 49.8% (Dinka, 2015) to 80.5% (Wondifraw, 2021). Some of the major reasons for such a high level of cheating include poor academic preparations, desire for obtaining good grades and high desire for academic certificates (Badasa, et al, 2019. P. 21). Besides, academic cheating was not considered a serious offense by students (Wondifraw, 2021, p. 10). The majority of the students do not want to disclose or report to invigilators when they witness others cheating on exams (Desalegn & Berhanu, 2014).

To curb such kinds of exam malpractices and irregularities, the government had been forced to block internet access during national examinations for the last four years. Moreover, suspicion of mass cheating in some examination centers that scored abnormal and inflated grades caused for partial cancellation of a few exam types in 2019. Administering examinations in multiple languages is also a challenge that opens room for inefficiency. For example, in Amhara region grade 8 exam is prepared in four languages and they are preparing for the fifth one.[55]

Political interference in the education system as a whole and in the conduct of national examinations, in particular, has impeded the quality of education. Teachers are severely criticized by *woreda* education office if students get less than 50%; to avoid such embarrassment teachers tend to add marks.[56] Similarly, there were university instructors who admitted that they engaged in academic malpractice such as writing papers for their students who happened to be government officials at the zone level.[57] In addition, exam malpractices are becoming common even with the knowledge of the regional bureau of education.[58] All these malpractices erode the education system.

4.4.2. Continuous Assessment and National Learning Assessments

Continuous assessment (CA), sometimes the term is used as classroom assessment interchangeably, is an ongoing and real-time information for teaching and learning that help students learn and how to learn, teachers improve instruction, administrators decide how to allocate resources, and policymakers evaluate the efficacy of education programs by

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[55] Interview, regional education expert 1_ July 28,2021
[56] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[57] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

[58] Interview, regional education expert 3_ July 29,2021

monitoring student progress and skill mastery (Nitko, 2004). This win-win situation for students and teachers can boost positive motivation for better learning and teaching.

Realizing the role of continuous assessment for better learning, Ethiopia has paid special attention to the implementation of classroom assessment for day-to-day learning and teaching routines (MoE, 1994). The Ministry of Education has currently used the Classroom Assessment Manual for primary and secondary school teachers which were developed by NEAEA, READ (Russian Education Aid for Development) and World Bank in 2014 as a general and comprehensive guideline. Additionally, it has used the UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) continuous assessment manuals as subject-specific references. Based on these manuals, the MOoE has developed three context-specific continuous assessment manuals: CA for Mother Tongue, CA for Mathematics, CA for English teaching and CA for supervisors for coaching and training purposes.

Even though much is said about continuous assessment in several studies and official documents, including the Education and Training Policy (MoE, 1994), there are many problems associated with the implementation of continuous assessment in Ethiopia. The main challenges identified by various studies are misunderstanding and misconceptions about continuous assessment, limited teacher training on assessment techniques, failure of teachers to align learning outcomes with the assessment strategies, focusing only on factual facts or recalling, failure to address all three domains of educational objectives (cognitive, psychomotor and affective), lack of supplementary materials and appropriate training, failure to provide pertinent feedback to students' works for improving learning teaching process (Arega, 2014). Continuous assessment was one of the areas where the education and training policy of 1994 faced fierce opposition from teachers and parents.[59] Although it was designed to enhance learning,[60] the implementation on the ground was counterproductive. Teachers gave marks to activities that rarely represent learning such as attendance, exercise books and as a result students pass from one grade to the next without having the required learning.[61]

National Learning Assessment (NLA) which was introduced in 2000 is a sample-based large scale assessment that is designed to describe the level of achievements, not of individual students, but the whole of the education system. It is conducted at the end of each cycle (grade

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[59] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

[60] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

[61] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021

4- grade 8- grade 10 and grade 12). The major objectives of the national learning assessment are to: raise educational standards, provide information that can be used to serve for decisions about the allocation of resources and obtain information that can be used to assign accountability for student performance (NOE, 2008; Kellaghan & Greaney 2004; NEAEA, 2018b).

The main issues addressed in national assessments are:

- How well are students learning in core subjects (English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology for grade 8, 10 and 12, and English, Mathematics, Environmental Science and Reading of Mother Tongue for grade 4 students)?
- Is there evidence of particular strengths or weaknesses in their knowledge and skills?
- Do the achievements of subgroups in the population differ?
- To what extent is achievement associated with characteristics of the learning environment?
- Do the achievements of students change over time?

Test questions are supplemented by background questionnaires for completion by school principals, teachers, parents and students covering issues such as students' motivation, support measures, and school environment.

To assess Grades 2 & 3 literacy and numeracy skills, Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) have been conducted since 2010 and 2014 respectively, every four years, except EGMA which was not frequently administered. EGMA has specific mathematical subdomains on number identification, number discrimination, number pattern identification, and addition and subtraction which serve as foundational skills for later mathematical abilities. The aggregate mean score of students' performance in these assessments has been below 50%, which is the benchmark set in the Education and Training Policy. EGRA scores have been highly unsatisfactory too as a significant number of students cannot read and comprehend despite four years of schooling – the assessment in 2018 revealed zero scorers (non-readers) ranged from 11% in Amharic speaking areas to 60% in Haddiyia (USAID, 2019:ix). In all respects, the performance of students in the four emerging regions (Afar, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella) that lag behind the other regions in social services has been weak. Common factors associated with poor academic achievement include home environment, learning facilities, time of instruction, students' motivation, teachers' perceptions and their education level, relationship behavior and teaching approach.

The findings of the NLAs and early grade skill assessments, especially the achievement levels of students, have been used as indicators of learning outcomes. They have informed the design of Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP) IV and V, implemented starting from 2008 to 2019. The findings and recommendations of the first three NLAs, conducted from 2000 to 2008, prompted the launch of the General Education Quality Improvement Package I (GEQIP I), in place since 2008 (NOE, 2008).

One of the factors that contributed to students' low performance in early grades is the free (automatic) promotion policy for students in 1-4 grades, which entails advancing students to the next grade at the end of the year irrespective of their educational attainment. Although the self-contained education, whereby one teacher is responsible for all subjects to a given group of students, and the associated continuous assessment are appropriate for the lower primary school students, it is dependent on the assumption that teachers are appropriately trained and are competent. The reality is that many teachers are untrained and have failed Grade 10.[62] The problem is compounded by the free promotion, with negative consequences for student learning.[63] This is demonstrated by assessments at the end of Grade 4 which indicate that many students lack the required minimum competence of reading and writing in their language.[64] However, recent change shows that there is no more free promotion of a student to the next grade level unless they demonstrate the required competencies.[65]

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[62] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[63] Interview, current education official 1_ July 27,2021
[64] Interview, former education official 2_July 30,2021

[65] RISE Project Interviewee11, February 16, 2018

5. Conclusion

By examining the three political regimes in Ethiopia since 1941 – the Imperial regime, Derg and EPRDF – this report examined how learning has been intrinsically related to political settlement. While the political settlements that underpinned the three regimes were ideologically different, there was strong continuity in their hierarchical and exclusionary nature. A comparative overview of education policy across the three regimes shows that the political settlement has had a significant impact on policymaking and implementation, teacher quality, socio-economic status and motivation, as well as curriculum and examinations.

5.1.The political settlement and goals of education

Since 1942, political settlements in Ethiopia went through major reconfigurations across the three regimes. The dominant ideas of the ruling elite determined the primary goals and direction of education policy. During the Imperial regime, the political settlement was characterized by an absolute rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, while modernization and centralization were its primary objectives. Accordingly, the purpose of education in this period was the preparation of personnel to staff modern bureaucratic institutions. Education in this period was elitist and excluded the majority of the people of the country, particularly those in rural areas. The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 brought to power a military regime (Derg) that was committed to a Marxist-Leninist ideology. While the goal of preparing young people for government careers continued from the Imperial period, the Derg nonetheless reoriented education to entrench its Marxist-Leninist ideology. It even professed its desire to use education to realize its goal of creating a new socialist citizen. The restructuring of the Ethiopian state into ethnic-linguistic federalism under the EPRDF in 1991 engendered a formally democratic but repressive semi-authoritarian political dispensation. Education was decentralized in line with the federal arrangement and the EPRDF embarked on a massive expansion of education in line with its developmentalist orientation.

Despite the differences in orientation and focus, education policy across the three regimes has some major continuities - enhancing the socio-economic development of the country and the legitimacy of the ruling elite. The political settlement that was introduced by the EPRDF in 1992 has been unravelling since 2018. Disagreements about political reforms and the future direction of the country's politics culminated in a civil war that severely impacted the education

sector. At present (early 2022), it is difficult to speculate how a new political settlement is going to be forged and how that will inform education sector reform.

The three regimes differed in terms of the extent to which they utilized curricula and examinations to achieve national policy objectives and align teaching with the national and local context of the country. The curriculum and exam structure went through multiple revisions throughout the Imperial period and lacked coherence, as it was subjected to an assortment of British, and later American influences, with little relevance to the needs of the country. The Derg regime made an effort to revise the curriculum in line with its socialist orientation, for instance by introducing new subjects such as production technology and political education, while maintaining the school structure and evaluation systems of the Imperial period. The EPRDF made a conscious effort to adapt the education system to its development policy by changing the structure of education with a focus on eight years of primary schooling with its stated goal of creating well-educated farmers who could be capable of utilizing agricultural technologies. Examinations remain similar, as they are entirely academic to certify completion of a given level and placement to the next. Overall, while examinations have remained similar in their objectives, curricula have been revised in line with the national policy goals of the regimes in power.

5.2.Access vs Quality

In terms of the tension between the goals of expanding access and improving the quality of education, continuity is observed across the three regimes, as they wanted to expand access in a society that is largely illiterate. Accordingly, the Imperial regime started the process of expanding access to education following its restoration to power in 1941, which was pursued more vigorously under the subsequent Derg and EPRDF regimes. However, there are marked differences in the extent to which access was an overriding goal. While the Imperial regime attempted to expand access in line with its goal of modernization, it attempted to control expansion to maintain pace with the absorptive capacity of the economy. The Derg regime, meanwhile, prioritized access in the countryside. Moreover, it launched a campaign to expand basic literacy among the adult population. The EPRDF, on the other hand, recognized the elitist and urban nature of education and made it its explicit objective to expand access to education to the rural masses as a matter of right and in line with its rural-focused development policy.

5.3. The Medium of Instruction

The medium of instruction is another core element of education policy that was influenced heavily by the prevailing political settlement of the period. In the early days of the Imperial regime, there was a visible failure to use local languages. Before the 1950s English language served as the medium of instruction. From the beginning of the 1950s, this shifted to Amharic as the medium of instruction for primary schooling, with English serving as a medium for secondary and higher education. The use of other local languages as a medium of instruction was not allowed. While the Derg regime recognized the diversity of the country, it followed a similar policy in that only the Amharic language was used as a medium of instruction. It, however, used fifteen languages for the adult literacy campaign (National Literacy Campaign Coordinating Committee 1986). The EPRDF, on the other hand, in line with its commitment to the goal of ethnolinguistic autonomy and self-rule, made an explicit decision to allow regional and sub-regional administrations to choose the language of a medium of instruction at the level of primary schools. Accordingly, more than twenty languages are used in the education system as media of instruction at the primary level.

The political economy across the three regimes substantially impacted the quality, motivation, and socio-economic status of teachers in the country. During the Imperial period, particularly after the establishment of teachers' colleges, teachers had better qualifications as well as socio-economic status as they were relatively better paid. This is partly a result of the fact that expansion of education was limited and hence the number of teachers employed by the government was small. As a result, the teaching profession was highly sought and competitive and teachers were accorded better social status. There was, however, no teacher career path, nor uniform teacher payment and promotion system. During the Derg regime, efforts at the expansion of education without commensurate resources resulted in a significant increase in the number of teachers, with untrained and unqualified teachers joining the profession. This resulted in a significant decline in the quality of educators in this period.

Due to scarcity of teachers and limited budget, the government was obliged to hire the so-called *digoma* teachers to teach in elementary schools. These teachers were by and large high school dropouts who joined the profession without teacher training. Teachers were used by the government to support the implementation of its political and economic development programs. Teachers were co-opted to work in local *(kebele)* administrations and community organizations. The decline in quality of education was accompanied by a decline in the socio-

economic status and thus motivation of teachers. There was continuity in the absence of a career path for teachers.

The EPRDF period is characterized by a paradox. On the one hand, the regime for the first time in the history of education in the country introduced a career path for teachers which aimed to provide them with an opportunity to develop professionally within the sector along with salary increments for each rank. Nonetheless, there is a decline in the quality, motivation and socio-economic status of teachers. The career path was designed to improve teacher motivation and social status as well as gradually improve their incomes. In addition, there are several incentives for teachers such as opportunities to upgrade their educational levels through evening and summer education, low-cost houses for some teachers (Addis Ababa), urban land for constructing houses in some regions and payment of housing allowances. Teachers are also paid relatively higher in comparison to employees in other government departments. However, this has largely failed to enhance the motivation and capacity of teachers. The failure to motivate teachers could be attributed to growing inflation in the economy, which diminished the impact of improved pay, and also to the low social status accorded to teachers. The massive expansion under EPRDF means teaching is no longer a highly competitive profession with low achievers being recruited, which eroded its social standing.

5.4. The Role of Stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement in education policy has been uniform across the three regimes in that education policymaking has been largely the business of the governing elite. During the Haile Selassie regime, the role of stakeholders including teachers, students, professionals, parents, and civil society was largely absent. However, teachers displayed some agency in resisting reform in the last years of the regime, for instance in their ability to resist the ESR which aspired to overhaul the education sector. During the Derg period too, policymaking was highly centralized. This is illustrated in the reform effort through the ERGESE which involved a core study group of professionals from AAU, but was shelved by the regime. The EPRDF regime made better efforts at stakeholder consultation in education policymaking as evidenced by the large consultations in the development of the ETP as well as the recent Education Roadmap. However, the process of policymaking under the EPRDF was criticized as it was top-down and feedback gathered from consultative forums by and large did not impact changes in the contents of the policy preference of the government. The consultations were used as tools of legitimizing policies by galvanizing support rather than soliciting meaningful input.

Donors and external partners constitute an exception among stakeholders about influencing education policy across the three regimes. During the Imperial period, there was heavy influence by foreign countries such as Britain and the USA in the educational curriculum. The influence was such that the education that was given had little relevance to context or needs in Ethiopia. As there was no well-developed local capacity, the regime was highly dependent on foreign consultants as well as educators who had an outsized impact on policy direction and implementation. Until the mid-1950s, students were principally prepared to sit for the British General School Leaving Certificate Examination. During the Derg regime too, there was a substantial influence on education policy and implementation from socialist countries the regime was aligned with. Accordingly, advisors from socialist countries such as the former Soviet Union and East Germany played important roles in the development of curricula.

The EPRDF regime was also highly dependent on donors like the World Bank and USAID, as discussed in this paper, who have had some impact on education policy. This is illustrated by the regime's commitment to the goal of universal primary education which has its origins in the advocacy of UNESCO and the MDGs, as well as the adoption of cost-sharing in higher education in line with World Bank thinking on cost recovery. However, the EPRDF regime has made a conscious effort to maintain policy autonomy by resisting recommendations that do not align with its priorities. For instance, the government successfully resisted pressure from the World Bank to restrict primary education to four years by insisting that eight years of primary education are essential for its economic policy objectives. This is partly a result of the regime's relatively coherent ideological and policy framework that allowed it to argue its case whenever pressures from donors arise.

Despite the relatively more coherent and comprehensive policy framework in place and the level of policy autonomy demonstrated by the EPRDF regime, learning outcomes have continued to deteriorate. While the government showed political commitment and allocated resources, learning outcomes remained low. The major factor that contributed to this is the regime's political commitment to expand access in line with the goal of universal primary education at the expense of quality. While the government with support from donors put in place programmes to improve the quality of education at least from 2009, including efforts at improving teacher quality through different teacher development programmes, it has been largely unfruitful. The commitment to the goal of access has been exacerbated by the lack of earnest participation and engagement of different stakeholders (teachers, parents, civil society)

in developing education policies and their implementation. This is compounded by the lack of accountability for performance within the system, which adversely affected the quality of education.

5.5.Lessons Learned

The report has provided a comparative overview of the political economy of education across the three regimes by focusing on education policy-making, teacher career paths, and motivation, as well as national examinations. The following can be taken as the main lessons:

> **Education policy and implementation cannot be disentangled from the prevailing political settlement**. The Ethiopian experience demonstrates that the political configuration deeply affects the goals and direction of education policy as well as learning outcomes.

> **The political settlement in Ethiopia has been in a state of flux.** As the political configuration changes, so have education policy goals, and outcomes. Education policy has in fact been the utmost priority for the past three regimes which they attempted to tackle immediately upon coming to power. The EPRDF regime, for instance, developed its Education and Training Policy (ETP) even before drafting and adopting a constitution for the country. Meanwhile, the current ruling party, the Prosperity Party, started implementing the reform agenda of the Education Development Roadmap before it officially transformed itself from a coalition of parties (the former EPRDF) to a unified party (Prosperity Party). Both highlight education is high on the agenda of ruling regimes in Ethiopia.

> **Education policy making in Ethiopia across the three regimes has been narrow-based with little to no genuine consultation with major stakeholders.** Donors who hold an important leverage in the form of financing are an exception to this rule as they were able to have a modest impact on the policies of the three regimes. Other national stakeholders such as parents, teachers' unions, civil societies and opposition political parties have had limited impact. However, it is important to note that such stakeholders have had more influence in times of political crisis. Accordingly, teachers were able to resist the ESR during the imperial regime because the regime was already weakened by protests and economic crisis. Similarly, some opposition parties have challenged the Education Development Roadmap due to the multifaceted political crisis that hit the country in the post-2015 period.

- ➢ **While examinations have largely remained similar with the goal of certifying completion and guiding placement, curricula have been utilized by the regimes, especially the EPRDF, to achieve national policy objectives**. The introduction of mother tongue education at the primary level is one example of a policy that was designed to serve the goal of self-rule and autonomy of ethno-national groups.

- ➢ **The quality of teachers as well as their socio-economic status has continued to decline rapidly across the three regimes.** Despite the introduction of a career path with modest financial incentives in the post-1991 period, the social-economic status of teachers has not improved, partly as a result of inflationary pressures on salaries. Meanwhile, teacher quality has declined as a result of recruitment of unqualified and under-qualified candidates to the profession as the demand for teachers rises with the expansion of access to education.

Overall, efforts to improve learning have faltered despite the massive resources poured into the sector since at least 1991. Education has been highly politicized as the goals and policies have fluctuated along with the coming of new regimes in line with the needs and ambitions of the new political elite. As a result, policy continuity is non-existent. Improving learning outcomes would require professionalization of education policy-making along with a degree of depoliticization to improve continuity. A stable political settlement that allows the sector to progressively improve instead of starting anew every time the political leadership changes is required.

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