

# Ambitious Plans—Poor Outcomes: The Politics of Education Reform in Ethiopia

### Table of Contents

<b>About this summary</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Political settlements</b> .....	2
The Derg regime (1974–91) .....	3
The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front period (after 1991).....	4
<b>Major shifts in education policy</b> .....	4
<b>Access at the expense of quality</b> .....	7
<b>Education governance</b> .....	8
<b>De-professionalized teaching profession</b> .....	9
<b>Societal engagement</b> .....	10
<b>So...</b> .....	11

### Acknowledgements

This Political Economy Country Brief was produced by a team at Communications Development Incorporated, led by Bruce Ross-Larson and including Joe Caponio and Mike Crumplar. The [original research paper](#) was authored by Asnake Kefale, Belay Hagos Hailu and Alec Gershberg, the RISE Political Economy Team—Adoption (PET-A) research lead.

## About this country brief

The RISE Programme is a seven-year research effort that seeks to understand what features make education systems coherent and effective in their context and how the complex dynamics within a system allow policies to be successful. RISE had research teams in seven countries: Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Vietnam. It also commissioned research by education specialists in Chile, Egypt, Kenya, Peru, and South Africa.

Those researchers tested ideas about how the determinants of learning lie more in the realm of politics and particularly in the interests of elites. They focused on how the political conditions have (or have not) put learning at the center of education systems while understanding the challenges of doing so.

Each country team produced a detailed study pursuing answers to two central research questions:

- Did the country prioritise learning over access, and if so, during what periods?
- What role did politics play in the key decisions and how?

The full studies detail their analytical frameworks, their data, and sources (generally interviews, government internal documents and reports, and other local and international publications), and the power of their assessments, given their caveats and limitations. Country briefs extract from the full studies how leadership, governance, teaching, and societal engagement are pertinent to student outcomes.

## **Introduction**

This report looks at the politics of education reform—briefly in the Imperial regime (through 1974) but mostly in the Derg regime (through 1991) and the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime (after 1991), which switched from a coalition of ethnic and regional parties to a unified Prosperity Party in 2018.

For all three regimes, education policy has been a top priority, which they tackled immediately on coming to power. For example, the EPRDF developed its Education and Training Policy even before drafting and adopting a constitution. 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 EPRDF) to a unified party (Prosperity Party).

Education policymaking in Ethiopia has been narrow, with little to no genuine consultation with major stakeholders. Donors, because of their financing, were able to have a modest impact on policies. Parents, teachers’ unions, civil societies, and opposition political parties have had limited impact. But such stakeholders have had more influence in times of political crisis. Accordingly, some opposition parties have been able to challenge the Education Development Roadmap given the multifaceted political crisis that hit the country in the post-2015 period.

The quality of teachers as well as their socio-economic status declined across the three regimes. Despite the introduction of a career path with modest financial incentives after 1991, the socio-economic status of teachers has not improved, partly a result of inflationary pressures on salaries. Teacher quality has declined with the recruitment of unqualified and underqualified candidates as the demand for teachers rose with expanded access to education.

Examinations have remained similar, certifying completion and guiding placement, and curricula have been designed to achieve national policy objectives. Mother tongue education at the primary level serves the goal of self-rule and autonomy for ethnonational groups.

## **Political settlements**

During the Imperial regime, the political settlement was the absolute rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, and modernization and centralization were the primary objectives. Education was to prepare personnel for modern bureaucratic institutions, and it excluded the majority of Ethiopians, particularly in rural areas.

The revolution of 1974 brought to power a military regime (the Derg) committed to a Marxist-Leninist ideology. While the goal of preparing young people for government careers continued from the Imperial period, the Derg reoriented education to entrench its Marxist-Leninist ideology and to create a new socialist citizenry.

The Ethiopian federal system of nine ethnic-linguistic regional states and two chartered cities 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 developmental orientation.

The political settlement under 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 sidelined education. In 2022, it is difficult to speculate how a new political settlement is going to be forged and how it will inform education sector reform.

The three regimes differed in using curricula and examinations to achieve national policy objectives and align teaching with the national and local context.

- The curriculum and exam structures went through multiple revisions throughout the Imperial period and lacked coherence, subject to an assortment of British and later American influences, with little relevance to needs.
- The Derg regime made an effort to revise the curriculum in line with its socialist orientation, such as introducing 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 use agricultural technologies. Examinations remain similar, as they are entirely academic—simply to certify completion of a given level and placement to the next.

### ***The Derg regime (1974–91)***

The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 led to the overthrow of the Imperial regime of Haile Selassie and brought to power the Derg military regime, which ruled the country until 1991, with political upheavals and civil wars for most of its 17 years.<sup>1</sup> The political and economic systems of this period can be characterized as “military and socialist.”<sup>2</sup> The period also saw remarkable changes in the political system, especially the 1975 land proclamation, which ended tenancy, destroyed the landlord class, and removed the primary means of surplus extraction from rural farmers.<sup>3</sup>

The political settlement during 1974–91 had two major phases. In the first, from 1974 to 1977, there was an intense power struggle within the Derg. Although most political forces in the post-1974 period proclaimed the Marxist-Leninist ideology, they bitterly opposed each other. This rivalry led to two movements—the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All Ethiopian Socialist Party (Meison),<sup>4</sup> which resulted in violent conflict and ultimately undermined both organizations and consolidated the power of the military government.<sup>5</sup>

The second phase began in 1977 and lasted until 1991. In early 1977, after eliminating potential rivals, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Chairman of the Derg, became the military government's uncontested leader. After consolidating its power, the military government started building the organs of a socialist state. In 1984, it established the Marxist-Leninist party, the Workers Party of Ethiopia 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, following the model of government practiced by the former 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 that had no choice other than armed struggle. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam and his associates exercised absolute power, but the bureaucracy continued to have a role in public governance.

### ***The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front period (after 1991)***

The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front, a coalition of ethnonational armed movements formed in the late 1980s, came into power in 1991, having defeated the Derg military regime. The political settlement then passed through different phases, with some major ruptures along the way. 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 from 1991 to 1995, comprised more than 20 political parties with no dominant single leader, but collective decisionmaking by its top echelon. This was followed by a transition to a nominal multiparty democracy in 1995, with the Front winning all of the parliamentary elections that year, leaving little room for opposition politics and limited tolerance of media and civil society activism.

In November 2020, intense disagreement between the Tigray People's Liberation Front 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, which started in the Tigray region and expanded to the Amhara and Afar regions, as education suffered greatly. Suffering greatly in the civil war: education.

#### **Major shifts in education policy**

The ideological and political realignment following the 1974 revolution overhauled the educational system with a socialist overtone."<sup>6</sup> The major policy objective of education under the Derg was entrenching the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the regime and creating a new socialist citizen.<sup>7</sup> Students starting from the elementary level were taught Marxist-Leninist ideology as Marxism became a subject at all levels of the education system.<sup>8</sup> 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 as the main pillars of education.<sup>9</sup>

Just as foreign influence on education had shifted from Britain to the United States in line with the preferences of the Imperial regime, 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 Program for National Democratic Revolution of 1976, which proclaimed that free education would be provided to the "broad masses" with the aim of "intensifying the struggle against feudalism, imperialism, and bureaucratic capitalism." It 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."<sup>10</sup> This was later condensed into "education for production; education for scientific inquiry, and education for socialist consciousness."<sup>11</sup>

Political imperatives were just as important in the policy and approach of the Derg toward education. Education was geared toward building political support to establish the Derg as a legitimate government and extend its power through "ideological control of the young generation."<sup>12</sup>

The curriculum for elementary and secondary education was influenced by the curricula of socialist countries.<sup>13</sup> A new transitional curriculum incorporated five new subjects—agriculture, production technology, political education, home economics, and introduction to business.<sup>14</sup>

In line with 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.”<sup>15</sup> The expansion of access to education to achieve universal primary education became an immediate priority of the government, which also aspired to expand general polytechnic education to produce “middle-level trained manpower” to reduce unemployment among secondary graduates.<sup>16</sup>

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.”<sup>17</sup> But some schools enrolling children of politicians and the wealthy remained free from government control.<sup>18</sup>

The efforts of the Derg toward “education for all” had some success in expanding access to education. The number of primary schools rose from 2,050 when the regime came to power in 1974 to 8,260 by 1987,<sup>19</sup> more than a fourfold increase in a little over a decade. The number of children attending primary schools increased from under a million in 1975 to more than 2.4 million in 1986.<sup>20</sup>

The expansion of education was coupled with a decline in quality, as new subjects and schools were introduced without proper planning, qualified teachers, or adequate infrastructure.<sup>21</sup>

The education budget fell from 17 percent of the national budget in 1974 to 10 percent in the 1980s, plunging spending per student.<sup>22</sup> Because the decline in spending per student primarily affected salaries, the teacher-pupil ratio soared, classrooms became overcrowded, and materials became ever scarcer.<sup>23</sup> Insurgency in the north of the country, and minor ethnonational insurgencies elsewhere, required government to allocate a big part of its budget to defense.

The shortage of qualified teachers led to hiring untrained *Digoma* teachers, especially in primary schools.<sup>24</sup> This practice hurt not only quality but also the professional integrity and social acceptance of teaching as a profession.<sup>25</sup> It deprofessionalized teaching as tenth graders became teachers, without the knowledge, ethics or training required of the profession.<sup>26</sup>

The English language proficiency of both teachers and students declined,<sup>27</sup> as “English became a language of obstruction rather than instruction.”<sup>28</sup> This problem plagues the education system to this day. 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.<sup>29</sup>

American advisors were replaced by advisors from countries such as East Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary.<sup>30</sup> As with the Imperial regime, the Derg depended on external financing, making it a recipient of “ideological guidance and technical assistance” from its patrons.<sup>31</sup> Advisors from East Germany became principal partners on education policy and dominated the curriculum department.<sup>32</sup> East Germany and the USSR oversaw “the strict adherence of teacher education

to Marxist/Leninist philosophy and educational theory through nationals disguised as technical advisors, curriculum experts, teacher trainers, and university professors.”<sup>33</sup>

But engagements with western donors and institutions did not disappear, with Sweden as the largest donor to education throughout the Derg period.<sup>34</sup> This is partially explained by the fact that western donors did not punish Ethiopia’s explicit shift to the Soviet camp.<sup>35</sup> The language of instruction from junior high school onward remained English, so most education materials remained dependent on the English-speaking world.

The defeat of the military regime of the Derg and its replacement with the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Development Front created the conditions for a major reform of education policy, the Education and Training Policy (ETP) in 1994, when the country was still under a transitional government and before the new Constitution in 1995.

Preparation of the ETP started immediately. The transitional government established a committee to develop a new education policy, comprising 44 people drawn from the Ministry of Education and Addis Ababa University and 22 from government offices, culminating in the adoption of the new policy in 1994.<sup>36</sup> Experts were also drawn from agriculture, industry, health, culture, science and technology and institutes of agricultural research.<sup>37</sup> Policy development was thus driven by local experts, with donors not part of the process.<sup>38</sup>

The ETP set significant changes in direction.

- It declared that educational management will be decentralized to create the necessary conditions to expand, enrich, and improve the relevance, quality, accessibility, and equity of education and training.<sup>39</sup>
- It proposed tackling persistent regional disparities in education provision, stipulating that special assistance would be given to raise the educational participation of deprived regions.<sup>40</sup>
- It focused on language, recognizing the rights of communities to use their languages.<sup>41</sup> This response was a precursor to 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.<sup>42</sup>
- It allowed private investors “to open schools and establish various educational and training institutions.”<sup>43</sup> 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), followed by two years of general secondary education, and two years of preparatory education (2+2).<sup>44</sup>

Implementing the ETP was guided by medium-term Education Sector Development Plans (ESDPs), which provided specific time-based objectives for improving access, relevance, quality, and equity in education. Five plans have been designed and implemented so far (ESDP I–V), with the first launched in 1997. ESDP VI is currently in development. Most interviewees commented that the first three ESDPs were largely concerned with expanding access, not with improving quality. Only in ESDP IV and ESDP V did quality come to feature more prominently.

- ESDP I (1997–2001)—developed through consultation between the federal and regional governments and international donors (but without inputs from teachers, students, and parents)—gave priority to expanding access to primary education.<sup>45</sup>
- ESDP II (2002–05) was developed similarly, but added innovations such as “adoption of low-cost formal schools, alternative basic education and improving not only the professional capacity of teachers but also their ethical values.”<sup>46</sup> By this time, there was a growing recognition that quality was becoming a problem. ESDP II also gained impetus from UNESCO’s “education for all” policy and the Millennium Development Goals.
- ESDP III (2006–10) highlighted the “intersectoral 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.”<sup>47</sup> It was also seen as the final push to realize the goal of universal primary education.<sup>48</sup>
- ESDP IV (2011–15) 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.”<sup>49</sup> Quality, equity, and improved management became its priority themes.<sup>50</sup>
- ESDP V (2016–20) recommitted to the improvement of quality while also maintaining the expansion of access. Two of its six priority areas were in general education, with one focusing on enhancing quality, while the others emphasized access, equity, and internal efficiency.<sup>51</sup>

The most ambitious (but also controversial) ongoing reform 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 Ministry of Education’s Education Strategy Center, the roadmap was prepared by experts, mainly from Addis Ababa University, and political leaders at all levels, professionals in universities, schoolteachers, students, and parents.<sup>52</sup> Close to 2.5 million took part in consultations over more than a year, with close to 10 million people consulted indirectly.<sup>53</sup>

The roadmap proposed significant shifts, some highly politicized and controversial. The most important is a change in the curriculum, with both the regional governments and the federal government developing new textbooks. Another aspect is splitting the Ministry of Education into two separate ministries—one for general education (MoE) and another for higher education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE). They have since been combined as the MOE.

### **Access at the expense of quality**

The EPRDF committed to increasing access to education, particularly in the rural areas. Later, expanding education at all levels, including a massive expansion in higher education, became an important aspect of the regime’s aspirations for 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 enrollment rate in primary education rising to 95 percent by 2013.<sup>54</sup>

Government financing of education has been also generous, at roughly 25 percent of total government spending.<sup>55</sup> In addition to expanding access, the government adopted measures to



improve the quality of education such as the World Bank-supported General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP I and II, 2008–12 and 2013–18, respectively), and the USAID-supported Improving Quality of Primary Education Program.<sup>56</sup>

Through these and other interventions over the last 15 years, teacher qualifications have improved, the supply and distribution of books have increased, and new methods of curriculum delivery including student-centered methods and continuous assessments have been introduced.

Yet, learning outcomes have remained dismal. In 2010, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the USAID undertook the first Early Grade Reading Assessment conducted at grades 2 and 3. The assessment revealed that a large number of grade 2 students could not read. Students with zero scores (nonreaders), ranged from 69 percent in Sidaama to more than 25 percent in the largest regions of the country, SNNP, Oromia, Tigray, and Amhara.<sup>57</sup> As the assessments between 2014 and 2018 among grade 2 and 3 students also show, about two-thirds of them were either nonreaders or had limited reading comprehension. Despite a lot of investment and measures to improve quality, a significant number of students remained illiterate after completing the first four years of primary schooling.<sup>58</sup> One factor contributing to low performance in the early grades is automatic promotion for students in grades 1–4, advancing them to the next grade at the end of the year irrespective of their educational attainment.

### **Education governance**

Several actors within the education sector in Ethiopia 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 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 have also been important players. 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, have been the most important players. The EPRDF leadership developed a clear and coherent set of policy and strategy documents, viewing education as the primary instrument for structural transformation and establishing the government's 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."<sup>59</sup>

At the federal level, several government institutions influence the education system. These include the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ethiopia National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency (NEAEA). Until recently, the Ministry of Education oversaw all subsectors of education from preprimary to higher education.

In addition to the federal government, regional state governments and local governments are important players in 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, and administer manpower (teachers).

Local governments (*Woredas*) recruit teachers. *Woredas* also administer and oversee all schools within their domain. The primary motivation of *Woreda* political leaders is to increase access and student pass rates, rather than improve learning outcomes.<sup>60</sup> 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*. This suggests tampering with the results to inflate them before the results are transferred to zones and regional level.<sup>61</sup>

### **De-professionalized teaching profession**

Teaching as a profession started to decline during the Derg regime, due to the disruption of the revolution, and the decision to expand access to education despite a reduction in funds.

In the early years of the revolution, the *Idget Be Hibret* campaign (“Development through Cooperation and Work”) involved sending tens of thousands of high school and university students and teachers to rural areas to support reforms, including the nationalization of land. Teachers increasingly spent their time away from teaching and undertaking administrative tasks for local government structures, particularly *kebele* (the lowest level of government administration).<sup>62</sup> Elementary instruction was only in Amharic, limiting access in areas where it was not spoken.<sup>63</sup> The teachers’ association was not strong enough to defend the profession, nor was there strong leadership within the school and educational administrative structure.<sup>64</sup>

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.<sup>65</sup> Despite some reforms such as the Teacher Development Program, Teacher Education System Overhaul in 2003 by the Ministry of Education, and the subsequent implementation of the Post-Graduate Diploma Program in Teaching, the quality of teacher education was not significantly improved.<sup>66</sup>

The Overhaul was a national government-initiated and donor-supported program to strengthen teacher training.<sup>67</sup> It focused on teacher education where student teachers spend more time on practicum activities and interact with students using active learning.<sup>68</sup> But it was abandoned in 2009 without any formal evaluation, and the Ministry of Education announced Post-Graduate Diploma Training. A university graduate with a first degree but no pedagogical training could apply for a post-graduate diploma program in teaching. But the initiative was not welcomed by most educators and faced serious resistance, even by the students.<sup>69</sup> It increased the number of demotivated first-degree holders who were unemployed in their respective specializations and found teaching as a bridge until they get a “better” job.<sup>70</sup> As a result, the education roadmap study team recommended revitalizing the principles and practices of teacher 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. Because of budgetary constraints and difficulty in attracting qualified teachers, some *Woredas* have hired school dropouts and those who have completed grade 10, with little or no training.<sup>71</sup>

The 2007 Teacher Development Blueprint, despite its pitfalls, provided a framework for teacher policy reform, including career development. It aimed to make education an attractive career choice and improve the quality of teachers.<sup>72</sup> It also tried to set merit-based and attractive career, moral, financial, and material benefits for teachers nominated as competent and committed to their teaching profession. But its promises were not implemented.

Teachers' satisfaction in their career has declined since the introduction of the teacher career ladder policy. One of the sources of stress for teachers was found to be the unjust implementation of the career structure where competence as a criterion was mixed with other less important criteria.<sup>73</sup> ESDP V (2016–20) planned to transform teaching into a profession of choice, as applicants would have access to motivating career development opportunities from the time of their application.<sup>74</sup> But neither implementation strategies nor action plans were formulated.<sup>75</sup>

### **Societal engagement**

The role of political parties, teacher associations, and parents in education policymaking and management has been minimal. With the EPRDF well entrenched, the opposition parties were too weak and fragmented to challenge the policy framework. Whenever there was room for participation, criticism focused on the more politicized and polarized aspects of education policy, such as the medium of instruction (language).<sup>76</sup>

Following the antigovernment protests that started in 2015 and the ensuing weakening of central state authority, some opposition political actors became more prominent in influencing the direction of policy. Recommendations to standardize examinations at the end of primary education (grade 8) received criticism from activists and opposition political leaders, arguing that it violated regional self-governance and the use of local language for education.<sup>77</sup> Opposition also came from the regions, which saw it as an encroachment on their constitutionally guaranteed mandates. The Tigray region rejected the proposals partly due to the deterioration of relations with the federal government,<sup>78</sup> and Oromia expressed concerns that the roadmap ran 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. Ethnonational mobilization in recent years weakened state structures by fracturing the chain of command and control and upsetting the balance between federal and regional governments as regions flexed their muscles against the center.<sup>79</sup>

While a decline in the hegemony of the EPRDF in the post-2015 period created the possibility for opposition leaders and even regional governments to exert influence in making education policy, teachers and parents continued to have little influence. This is partly due to the lack of a strong teachers' union, so teachers have had weak political representation with little or no lobbying capacity and influence in policymaking. Given the authoritarian regime, teachers have had little impact on influencing elections.

Parents have been virtually absent from policymaking, even though they are primary stakeholders. Parents were not involved in preparing the Education and Training Policy or in its subsequent plans and strategies. But the draft Roadmap currently under implementation

indicated that parents were consulted in its development—a welcome change from the established tradition.

**So...**

Since 1991, education has been highly politicized as the goals and policies have fluctuated in line with the needs and ambitions of the political elite. Efforts to improve learning have faltered despite the resources poured into the sector. Improving policy continuity to improve learning outcomes requires depoliticizing and professionalizing education policymaking. Clearly required is a stable political settlement that allows education to improve progressively instead of starting anew every time the political leadership changes.

## Annex 1 Indicators of learning for RISE countries

A country's learning adjusted years of school combines the quantity and quality of schooling into a single indicator by multiplying the estimated years of schooling by the ratio of the country's score on the most recent test scores harmonized to 625 (World Bank data for latest year of assessment).

Learning poverty, a combined measure of schooling and learning, is the proportion of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10 (World Bank data for 2019).

The Human Capital Index is the amount of human capital that children born today can expect to acquire by the age of 18 given the prevailing risks of poor health and poor education. It combines the likelihood of surviving to school age, the amount of school they will complete and the learning they'll acquire, and whether they leave school ready for further learning and work. For example, a score of 0.5 means that they will be only 50 percent as productive as they might be with complete education and full health—and that their future earning potentials will be 50 percent below what they might have been.<sup>80</sup>

	Learning adjusted years of school	Learning poverty (%)	Human Capital Index (0–1)
Chile	9.4	27.2	0.7
Egypt	6.5	69.6	0.5
Ethiopia	4.3	90.4	0.4
India	7.1	56.1	0.5
Indonesia	7.5	52.8	0.5
Kenya	8.5	—	0.5
Nigeria	5	—	0.4
Pakistan	5.1	77	0.4
Peru	8.6	44.4	0.6
South Africa	5.6	78.9	0.4
Tanzania	4.5	—	0.4
Vietnam	10.7	18.1	0.7

Note: — = not available.

<sup>1</sup> Clapham, 1988; Bahru, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Clapham, 1989; Bahru 2003, Keller 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Clapham, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Popularly known in its Amharic acronym—MEISON.

<sup>5</sup> Hagos, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Tefera, 1996:7.

<sup>7</sup> Yigezu, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Negash, 2006:18.

<sup>9</sup> Negash, 2006:18.

<sup>10</sup> PMAC, 1977:4, quoted in Tefera, 1996:8.

<sup>11</sup> Tefera, 1996:8.

<sup>12</sup> Semela, 2014:125.

- 
- <sup>13</sup> Bishaw and Lasser, 2012.
- <sup>14</sup> Negash, 2006:18.
- <sup>15</sup> PMAC, 1974, cited in Tefera, 1996:7.
- <sup>16</sup> Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 63.
- <sup>17</sup> Tefera, 1996:8.
- <sup>18</sup> Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 65.
- <sup>19</sup> Tefera, 1996: 9.
- <sup>20</sup> Teshome, 2008: 49.
- <sup>21</sup> Negash, 2006:18–19, 21.
- <sup>22</sup> Tefera, 1996:9-10.
- <sup>23</sup> Negash, 2006.
- <sup>24</sup> Tefera, 1996:10. 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.
- <sup>25</sup> Tekleselassie, 2005, cited in Semela, 2014:124.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview, education researcher 1, July 29, 2021.
- <sup>27</sup> Negash, 2006, 21.
- <sup>28</sup> Tefera, 1996:10.
- <sup>29</sup> Teshome, 2008:50
- <sup>30</sup> Bishaw and Lasser, 2012: 63.
- <sup>31</sup> Samala, 2014:125.
- <sup>32</sup> Negash, 2006:18/21.
- <sup>33</sup> Semela, 2014:125.
- <sup>34</sup> Negash, 2006:22.
- <sup>35</sup> Clapham, 1988.
- <sup>36</sup> Tefera, 2005:27.
- <sup>37</sup> Teshome, 2008:51.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview, former education official 2, July 30, 2021.
- <sup>39</sup> TGE, 1994:29–30.
- <sup>40</sup> TGE, 1994: 32.
- <sup>41</sup> ETP, 1994:10.
- <sup>42</sup> Interview, current education official 2, July 30, 2021.
- <sup>43</sup> ETP, 1994:32.
- <sup>44</sup> ETP, 1994: 14–15. 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.
- <sup>45</sup> Teshome, 2008: 56.
- <sup>46</sup> Teshome, 2008: 59.
- <sup>47</sup> Teshome, 2008:62.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid, 2008:63.
- <sup>49</sup> MoE, 2010:6.
- <sup>50</sup> MoE, 2010:6.
- <sup>51</sup> MoE, 2015:10.
- <sup>52</sup> MoE, 2017:4.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview, current education official 1, July 27, 2021.
- <sup>54</sup> NEAEA, 2014.
- <sup>55</sup> MoE, 2018.
- <sup>56</sup> IQPEP, 2014.
- <sup>57</sup> RTI International, 2010: Es 3.
- <sup>58</sup> Interview, current education official 1, July 27, 2021.
- <sup>59</sup> Wales, Magee & Nicolai, 2016: 21.

- 
- <sup>60</sup> Interview, current education official 1, July 27, 2021.
- <sup>61</sup> Interview, regional education expert 1, July 28, 2021.
- <sup>62</sup> Interview, education researcher 2, July 30, 2021.
- <sup>63</sup> Interview, regional education expert 3, July 29, 2021.
- <sup>64</sup> Interview, education researcher 2, July 30, 2021.
- <sup>65</sup> Geberew, 2017.
- <sup>66</sup> Shishigu et al., 2017.
- <sup>67</sup> Mekonnen, 2008; Ahmad, 2013.
- <sup>68</sup> Geberew, 2017.
- <sup>69</sup> Shishigu, et al., 2017.
- <sup>70</sup> MoE, 2018.
- <sup>71</sup> Interview, current education official 1, July 27, 2021.
- <sup>72</sup> Interview, former education official 2, July 30, 2021.
- <sup>73</sup> Wole, 2002.
- <sup>74</sup> MoE, 2015.
- <sup>75</sup> Habte, 2020.
- <sup>76</sup> Interview, former education official 2, July 30, 2021.
- <sup>77</sup> Jawar Mohammed Interview: Talk w/ Jawar Mohammed on New Education Roadmap—EthioTube. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCj\\_ehUIZ5I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCj_ehUIZ5I). Accessed November 14, 2021.
- <sup>78</sup> Interview, current education official 1, July 27, 2021.
- <sup>79</sup> Yusuf, 2019.
- <sup>80</sup> World Bank Human Capital Index for September 2020.

The authors did not supply a reference list.