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Article Review on the Current Education policy and curriculum issues in Ethiopia: Trends that Reveal the Problem of Practicing Policy Provisions in Institutions
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ABSTRACT

Education and development are closely related endeavours. This is the main reason why we always say Education is the key instrument in the development of nations. Education, as a very important factor to human development, is of a high priority in the overall development endeavor of the government. Hence, it requires an appropriate direction to set a new process in motion and change the alarming situation. For this, a comprehensive education and training policy is formulated. It is having this due attention that the different researchers study on the education and training of Ethiopia and the different policy provisions for citizens. This paper is a review of twenty research studies conducted on Ethiopian education policy provisions and curriculum issues. Its purpose is to understand how much of the education policy provisions and curriculum issues were investigated in those researches and to reveal the possible problems of practicing the provisions in institutions. The examination of the main focus of each study revealed that the current Ethiopian Education and Training Policy has addressed or incorporated the different provisions such as diversity, gender, language, issues of multicultural education, and mother tongue education. But most of the policy provisions were not sufficiently institutionalized and implemented as expected. Possible reasons for the problem of practicing the different policy provisions in institutions and the way forward are discussed.

Keywords: Education, Education policy, Curriculum, policy provision, Institutions, Ethiopia.
INTRODUCTION

Education and development are closely related endeavors. This is the main reason why we always say Education is the key instrument in the development of nations. The world is being changed at a steady pace in all aspects. Curriculum is the most central component of the broad package we call “education”. It is one of the implementation strategies of the education and training policy. As a result the countries of the world are providing educational provisions for their citizens through their education policies where Ethiopia is one.

Education, as a very important factor to human development, is of a high priority in the overall development endeavor of the government. Hence, it requires an appropriate direction to set a new process in motion and change the alarming situation. For this, a comprehensive education and training policy is formulated.

Due attention is also given to the provision and appropriate usage of educational facility, technology, materials, environment, organization and management so as to strengthen the teaching-learning process and the expansion of education. The evolution of a decentralized, efficient and professionally coordinated participatory system is indicated in respect of administration and management of the education system.

It is having this due attention that the different researchers study on the education and training of Ethiopia and the different policy provisions for citizens. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to review different articles written in relation to the New Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia and Curriculum Issues focusing on the problem of practicing different policy provisions in institutions.

Curriculum is among the provisions of the education policy. Articles 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.12, and 2.2.13 stipulates the democratization of the curriculum and emphasizes that its chief contents should be the cultivation of democratic culture, tolerance, peaceful resolution of differences through dialogue, and a sense of responsibility towards one’s own society. It stresses that students must be taught to value equality, liberty, justice and democracy and that their formation reflect high ethical standards. The policy allows the various nations, nationalities and peoples to be educated in their own mother tongues for the appreciation of the role and contributions of women in the society at large.

This paper is a review of different research articles conducted on Ethiopian education policy provisions and curriculum issues at different times. The purpose is to show what the most common focus areas of the research articles, to assess how much of the education policy provisions and curriculum issues were investigated in those researches and to reveal the possible problems of practicing the provisions in institutions.

The questions to be answered by this review are stated as
1. What has been studied about the education policy and curriculum issues in Ethiopia?
2. What were the problems of practicing the provisions in institutions?
3. What solutions were suggested by the different researchers?

METHODOLOGY

In this paper a total of twenty articles on Ethiopian education policy and curriculum issues were reviewed. The paper is a review on studies of journal articles different policy provisions and curriculum issues in the elementary schools, secondary teacher education curricula, and Higher Learning Institutions. Most of the studies were empirical studies in which data were collected, analyzed and discussed in different forms. The articles were accessed using Internet such as Google. Once the studies were accessed, I read each material thoroughly to identify the central focus of each study and to assess how closely or comprehensively the education policy provisions and curriculum issues is investigated.

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by the researcher(s). Although the research questions were given major emphasis in identifying the focus of each research, all sections were given due attention in case the researcher(s) discussed anything significant related to education policy provisions and curriculum issues. Other details such as purpose of the studies, research design, data gathering methods, or data analysis approaches were not the focus of this review (although each were read as sections) as they have no direct relevance to answer the research questions.

**FINDINGS**

The review of the twenty studies disclosed eight major categories of research focuses. Each category is presented in Table 1 together with the number of studies classified under it. Out of the twenty studies twelve are found to be dealing with educational policy provisions and the remaining eight were dealing with curriculum issues.

**Table 1. Number of Studies Reviewed Categorized by their Research Focus**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Research Focus</th>
<th>Number of studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Language policy and MTE</td>
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<td>Multicultural Education and Place of Diversity</td>
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<td>Role of ICT for Education Quality</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
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**Studies on Language policy and MTE**

As it can be seen in Table 1 above four out of the twenty studies included in this review dealt with language policy and MTE (Mother Tongue Education) Daniel (2013), the issue of MTE (Mengisteab, 2017), Instructional language policy (Daniel, S and Abebayehu, 2011) and Hirut (2007).

The studies have come with the following major findings based on the following themes

1. **Resistance to the introduction of MTE (Mother Tongue Education)**

In relation to this in-depth interviews with teachers and head teachers revealed that some parents were initially sceptical of the introduction of MTE. The scepticism was broadly attributable to two factors. First, some parents are reported not to have seen the value of teaching students in a language in which they were already conversant; rather, they believed that the role of education was to widen knowledge by teaching a new language. Second, the data suggested that some parents did not equate MTE with knowledge or quality education. Among the surveyed teachers, a large majority agreed with the statement...
'Mother tongue education is the right of every child' (Figure 4), although it is unclear whether support for the statement equated to approval of MTE, or merely a belief that the EETP confers a 'right'.

2. View that MTE for a period of time is useful

Some interviewees suggested that MTE helps students to develop a better understanding of the subject matter than would be the case if another language was used from the outset. Aside from perceived pedagogical advantages, another explanation for the support of MTE is that it serves an important social function. The headteacher of a primary school in rural Amhara considered that ‘[l]earning with mother tongue language is vital in every society because it enables the students to understand and identify with the community’.

3. Potential problems of MTE

The interview data revealed a number of potential problems associated with its application in Ethiopia. In particular, teachers reported that sometimes it is difficult to find words to express key education concepts in the mother tongue. It was also said that the policy also has the potential to cause problems for students and teachers whose mother tongue is different from that used at the school.

4. First cycle MTE followed by the use of English as Mol in higher grades is problematic

A number of the students interviewed reported being apprehensive about the transition from MTE to English-medium education because of their poor English language skills. The survey data confirm that in all sampled regions, there are students who have limited grasp of English in schools where the Mol is English.

5. Level of adherence to use of English as Mol

The school component data produced evidence that English was not used exclusively (or, sometimes, at all) in schools where it served as the Mol.

6. View as to whether EETP language provisions ought to be revised

The problems associated with transitioning students to English Mol in secondary school led some of the teachers and headteachers interviewed to advocate an earlier exit from MTE.

Generally the foregoing findings present an apparent paradox. On the one hand, there is evidence of strong support for some degree of MTE. On the other hand, an overall majority of surveyed teachers believed that English should be introduced as the Mol in the first cycle of primary education so that students can cope better in secondary school. The interview data revealed instances of students being unable to cope with the transition to English Mol in second cycle and secondary school on account of having a poor grasp of the language. From this it is possible to say that one of the policy provisions/language issues/ was addressed by the researchers.

Studies on Multicultural Education and Place of Diversity

As indicated in Table 1 above four out of the twenty studies included in this review dealt with multicultural education and place of diversity such as Place of Diversity in the Current Ethiopian Education and Training Policy: Analysis of Cardinal Dimension (Tariku Sime and Gara Latchanna, (2016), Imperatives of Multicultural Education in Ethiopia: Reflections on Awareness, Practices, and Challenges in Our Higher Learning Institutions (Dereje, 2016), Representation of the Ethiopian Multicultural Society in Secondary Teacher Education Curricula (Egne, Margo, R.,2014), and Ethiopia’s Multicultural Education: A Negation to the Past and Champion of the New Beginning in Nation Building (Mehari, 2015).

In relation to place of diversity in the current Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia the authors found that as diversity issue is the top concern of many nations. It recognizes differences between people and acknowledges...
that these differences are a valued asset. Because of this, it seems there is a tendency to inculcate diversity issues in all sectors of human development endeavour. To this end, the study investigated the responsiveness of the 1994 Education and training policy of Ethiopia in terms of its provisions of diversity of various dimensions. As presented in the discussion, most of the major diversity dimensions such as ethnicity, language, gender and religion are articulated.

As to the Imperatives of Multicultural Education in Ethiopia: Reflections on Awareness, Practices, and Challenges in Our Higher Learning Institutions it was found that the subject of multicultural education is not known as such among teachers and school administrations. Moreover, issues of diversity and culture are only remembered during the annual nations, nationalities and people’s day.

In relation to Representation of the Ethiopian Multicultural Society in Secondary Teacher Education Curricula the author found that study exhibited an increasing ambition to address issues of multicultural education into the Ethiopian general national secondary teacher education curricula framework. Nevertheless, the study shows that elements of multi-ethnic and multicultural education are, to a great extent, missing in the specific secondary teacher education curricula.

As to the Ethiopia`s Multicultural Education: A Negation to the Past and Champion of the New Beginning in Nation Building, it is indicated that since 1991 nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia have won the quest for national democratic unity. Eventually, Ethiopia`s flourishing political, social, and economic development are results of democratic unity and inclusive policies. And their continuity and sustainability will depend on production of democratic and competent citizens through inclusive, contextually relevant, and democratic education. Hence, it is possible to put that most of the policy provisions in relation to multicultural education are included in the Current Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia.

Studies on Gender Issues
As indicated in Table 1 above two out of the twenty studies included in this review dealt with gender issues, such as Gender Inequalities in the Ethiopian Education System: Past Trends and Current Status (Mulugeta, 2010) and Nature of Women Empowerment in Ethiopia: Constitutional and Policy Provisions (Tefera, 2017). As to the findings in relation to gender inequalities the author suggested that there has been considerable improvement in the participation of girls during the past five years at all levels of the education system. Although the increase in enrolment has been more significant at the primary level, compared to the other levels, progress has been made. In relation to the nature of women empowerment in Ethiopia: Constitutional and policy provisions the researcher found that different policies at national level have been developed which indicate the commitment of the country to the objectives and goals of international convention. There are significant improvements in numerical representation of women in all spheres because of the formulation and implementation of the National Policy and some of the constitutional provisions.

Studies on curriculum
As indicated in the Table above two out of the twenty studies included in this review dealt with Curriculum issues such as The Prevailing Practices and Challenges of Curriculum Reform in Ethiopian Higher Education: Views and Responses from Within (Jimma & Tarekegn, 2016) and Secondary Education in Ethiopia: Supporting Growth and Transformation (Verspoor and Dhoj Joshi, 2013).

In relation to The Prevailing Practices and Challenges of Curriculum Reform in Ethiopian Higher Education: Views and Responses from Within, the author found that First, the trend of educational changes in the Ethiopian HE system is governed by a ‘rational-structural
paradigm’. Within the structures imposed by the prevalence of this paradigm, the initiatives formulating policies and guidelines have foundered during implementation. Indeed, the implementation of proposed changes has not realized the sorts of transformational changes envisaged by the architects. Second, this study has demonstrated that the teachers have not been treated as the main change agents as they did not participate in the decision process in curriculum reform. The rapid expansion and reform agendas seem to be intensifying their fear, frustration and uncertainty.

As to the Secondary Education in Ethiopia: Supporting Growth and Transformation the authors indicated that the general secondary curriculum in Ethiopia was not designed with universal access in mind rather it is academically demanding and closely tied to university entry requirements. Such a curriculum is no longer appropriate because universal secondary education requires a much wider range of abilities and aspirations.

Studies on Early Childhood Education

As indicated in the Table above two out of the twenty studies included in this review dealt with early childhood education: Early Education in Ethiopia: Progress and Prospects (Szente and Belete, 2004) and Scaling Up Access to Quality Early Education in Ethiopia: Guidance from International Experience (Rossiter and Alula, 2016).

As to the Early Education in Ethiopia: Progress and Prospects the author indicated that to achieve its goal of high quality primary education, the Ministry is directing major efforts toward improved teacher training. In this regard, efforts to assure stronger linkages between college instruction and classroom practices appear especially productive since traditional education was nearly devoid of such linkages.

In relation to Scaling up Access to Quality Early Education in Ethiopia: Guidance from International Experience the writers found that ESDP V now leads national planning and implementation in the education sector and highlights pre-primary education as a priority, with the goal: “to provide all children with access to pre-primary education for school preparedness”.

Studies on the Development and Barriers of Ethiopian Education

As indicated in the Table above three out of the twenty studies in this review dealt with the development and barriers of Ethiopian Education: Education in Ethiopia: Past, Present and Future Prospects (Alemayehu, 2012), Review of some recent literature: Identifying Factors that Affect Ethiopia’s Education Crisis (Lemlem, 2010).

In relation to Education in Ethiopia: Past, Present and Future Prospects the author clearly indicated that “As Ethiopians embark on a massive effort to bolster its educational system, great opportunities and significant challenges will shape the course of policy and planning for the future. In addition, the author showed that to understand modern Ethiopia’s needs and the context of educational reform, one must understand the history of education in the country.

As to Review of some recent literature: Identifying Factors that Affect Ethiopia’s Education Crisis, the researcher put that currently Ethiopia’s educational system is in deep crisis. Most of the problems are associated with the following: problems with current education policy, organization, learning cycle, system of educational evaluation, system of quality assurance, academic freedom, intellectual migration (brain drain) and political control of the education system.

Studies on Adult Literacy

As it is shown from the Table two out of the twenty studies in this review dealt with adult literacy issues such as Adult basic literacy “initiatives” in Ethiopia: change and continuity, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia (Ambissa,
In relation to Adult basic literacy “initiatives” in Ethiopia: change and continuity, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, the author indicated that the adult basic literacy initiatives were founded on erroneous conception of literacy - the deficit model of literacy- which assumes an absolute state of literacy/illiteracy. The literacy initiatives also lacked continued commitment from the governing bodies and were largely in response to external drives rather than local needs.

As to the National Adult Education Strategy the ministry of education indicated that it is clearly stated in different development policies and strategies that there is a necessity to build the capacity of the economically active human power (the youth and the adult) through education and training in order to increase productivity by proper utilization of land and other material resources. It emphasized the importance of adult education for the overall development of the country.

**Studies on the Role of ICT for Education Quality**

As it can be seen from the Table, one out of the twenty studies used in this review dealt with the role of ICT for quality education: Information Communication Technology For Educational Quality: Challenges, Prospects in Ethiopian Context (Panigrahi and Wagari, 2013).

In relation to this the researchers found that The reports from schools and official educational experts in a given zone indicate that there is a significant difference in educational qualities among the schools those have been using ICT (plasma TV and radio) and those haven’t yet. One of the demerits of the plasma instruction is the high pacing of the program which makes the students dissatisfied sometimes disparate with the lesson since it is faster than the students understanding pace at all.

Possible reasons suggested by the different researchers for the problem of practicing the different provisions of the current education and training policy are presented one by one as follows.

**Language policy and MTE**

- Difficulty to find words to express key education concepts in the mother tongue.
- Absence words having direct translation from English to mother tongue. There is some confusion when the English words, such as the words in chemistry and physics, do not have direct translation in [the mother tongue].
- There are sometimes difficult words even for teachers to explain in [mother tongue] such as speed, acceleration, power, x-axis, y-axis and the like.

**Possible suggestions**

a. Unlike in Ethiopia where the practice is to abruptly substitute one MoI for another, the model recommends gradually introducing English as a MoI with help from the mother tongue.

b. The challenge in the Ethiopian context is for policymakers to avoid acting on some teachers’ demands for an early exit model in the absence of strong evidence that MTE leads to worse educational outcomes in higher grades.

**Multicultural education and Place of Diversity**

- Presence of missing-link between the aforementioned constitutional provisions and the level of awareness and actions
- Lack of knowledge about the subject of multicultural education among teachers and school administrations.
- A deliberate retreat on the part of teachers.

**Possible suggestions**

1. Based upon the constitutional and policy provisions, it is important to organize a broad-based multicultural awareness (multicultural literacy) education which mainly hinges on the re-thinking of the ideal “We are diverse and once again we renew
that our cultural assets are the basis of our harmony, peace and development”.
2. Education institutions in general and higher learning institutions in particular need to shoulder a unique national responsibility to nurture and produce democratic citizens who have acquired tolerance and respect for each others, and any person from near and a far.
3. Preparing diversity-sensitive curricula, such as multicultural education management cannot be an option but remains a dire necessity to respond without much undue.
4. Citizens need to develop cultural sensitivity which enhances awareness, appreciation, and caring about another culture. University youths, more than any other segments of our society, need to nurture and practices such knowledge and skills.

Gender Issues
• Constitutionally given and recognized right is not sufficiently institutionalized and implemented.
• Given the formulation of Notional Policy of women, but there is an inherent problems in the policy itself, its implementation and institutions and institutional capacity of structure meant for the realization of the objectives of the policy.
• Most of the improvements are in numerical representation of women in all spheres because of formulation and implementation of the National Policy and some of the constitutional provisions.
• Despite improvement in numerical representation, substantive representation and their decision making power is still face critical challenges.
• Challenges in achieving gender equality remain significant, and recent policy initiatives are silent on many of the critical issues of quality and mainstreaming gender within the education system as a whole.

Possible suggestions
1. The government should first develop effective means by which the rural community could be accessed to and understand their right and responsibilities in protecting women from unnecessary traditional practices.
2. Strengthening the institutional structure and capacity at the gross root level including Kebele administration as they are directly interacting with the community at large.
3. Providing training to community elders about women’s empowerment and this enable the harmonization of local practice with national and international laws in resolving local gender based problems.
4. there is a need to understand the forces (push and pull) that shape women’s access to education, especially in the context of the recent rapid transformation of Ethiopian society.
5. the impact of the current strategies needs to be monitored and assessed in order to ensure that current expenditures are actually translated into change or, where necessary, they can be more effectively re-structured.

Curriculum Issues
1. The forces, triggering change are mostly external providing little room for internal contextual factors and the development of change from within the institution.
2. Conformity and uncertainty as well as the rapidity of change have created tension for academics, as the participants of this study attested.
3. The models influencing change are essentially one and the same, with the government’s controlled, centralized, and one size-fits-all approach being driven by policy formulated and pre-determined by the central office.
4. Evaluative processes are absent. This makes it difficult to track records of success and failure because of the absence of research evidence about whether impacts
Possible suggestions

- Policy level change needs to embody important features of change strategy and prescribes that only in the broadest manner in response to institutional plans.
- Further advice needs to be supplied by academics at the different universities and a great deal of mutual trust needs to be generated. This process is innovative and has the capacity to address enduring questions about the management of curricular reforms in universities in Ethiopia.
- A more inclusive approach to educational change that combines and integrates bottom-up and top-down approaches needs to be adopted.
- Consideration needs to be given to raising the awareness of the implementers so there can be an ongoing process of development and maturation.

Historical Development and Barriers of Education

- Difficulty of making education equitably accessible to all regions.
- The quality of education had gradually started to deteriorate, due to a number of factors.
- Educational quality was decreasing as compared with the previous periods.

Possible suggestions

- While foreign investment and aids will likely play an important role in Ethiopian education, those who are developing the educational system are strongly encouraged to focus primarily on meeting the needs of the Ethiopian people.
- The educational system of Ethiopia must simultaneously be culturally relevant and flexible/responsive.
- Ethiopia must invest heavily in teacher training and development because an educational system is only as good as its teachers.

Early Childhood Education

- Lower educational aspirations for children might also be accounted for by the very remote probability of their children being admitted to higher education institutions on completion of secondary education.
- Comparatively low salaries result in little interest in teaching among teachers.
- Considering teaching as only a stepping-stone for future career opportunities

Possible suggestions

- Create conducive condition for increased involvement of private institutions, organizations and individuals in supporting preprimary education.
- Improving the situations through interventions in teacher education programs.
- Reorientation of the teacher educators in the pedagogy of preprimary education.
- Provide appropriate training for prospective teachers in line with the theories of child development.

Adult Literacy

- Inequitable distribution of adult education.
- Unsatisfactory level of expansion of adult education.
- In availability of appropriate organization to lead adult education.
- Lack of continued commitment from the governing bodies and were largely in response to external drives rather than local needs.
- Ideological motives rather than actual needs of the beneficiaries have guided the initiatives.

Possible suggestions

- Eradicating illiteracy' should be seen in terms of who benefits most from such efforts.
- Identify target groups by being equally sensitive to peculiarities of each and every situation/local contexts of the targeted adults.
• Localization of literacy may appear workable in a market-bound and globalized economy under the global neo-liberal agenda.
• Conduct massive awareness creation and popularization activities at Regional, Woreda and Kebele levels to create common understanding on the contributions of adult education
• Strengthening the effort at different levels to increase support given to the sector, especially from education development partners

Role of ICT for Education Quality
• The institutional readiness in capacity building and skilled manpower is not promising currently in relation to high skill gap.
• The ICT materials like plasma TV, internet laboratory, computers and specialized libraries for ICT are insufficient to students number and need
• The plasma instruction is the high pacing of the program which makes the students dissatisfied sometimes disparate with the lesson since it is faster than the students understanding pace at all.

Possible suggestions
• Filling the skill gap both in technical and political commitment, stakeholders' involvement and capacitating ICT with fund.
• The policy makers should revise the ICT lesson in the educational system.
• Adjusting the plasma instruction pacing with the students understanding level or pace.

Conclusion
The different authors have treated the issues under investigation. That is the New Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia has addressed or incorporated the different provisions such as diversity, gender, language, issues of multicultural education, and mother tongue education. But the researcher (s) indicated that the actual practices of the different provisions at institutional level were minimal. Most of the policy provisions were not sufficiently institutionalized and implemented as expected.

Hence, it can be recommended that even though the inclusion of different policy provisions in education policy is a good step, it is better to make the provisions practical in the actual conditions of the nation at different institutions including schools and the local community. To do so there should be commitment and vast activity of creating awareness among the public.

Finally, I conclude my paper by suggesting that it is time for educational researchers to consider the following questions carefully in their investigation of different policy provisions.
❖ What should be done to make the provisions practical at schools?
❖ Is it possible to apply all policy provisions in the existing condition of the country?
❖ How to devise a way to measure the standard of English teaching as a subject at lower levels of education?
❖ How to devise a way to measure the standard of teachers’ English where English is the MoI?

While the lessons that were learnt from this review are significant, future studies with more comprehensive scope of review including both online and print copies of studies, as well as empirical data from policy makers, experts, teachers, students, graduate students and educators on how policy provisions are not practical as expected could be the lesson more complete.

REFERENCES
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