Review of some recent literature:
Identifying Factors that Affect Ethiopia's Education Crisis

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"*The fate and destiny of our country depends on what we do for the young. Our world is a horrible spectacle of undeveloped and misapplied possibilities …How many mute and glorious Miltons have died in silence, how many potential Newtons never learned to read?* "
The Ethiopian Herald, July 24, 1943. (as cited in Wagaw, 1979, p. 36).

Abstract:

Education has been established as the leading power to promote the well being of society by promoting economic growth, creating wealth and development. Ethiopia started introducing modern education in the 1940s. It has remained essential for the country to come out of poverty. And the challenge has been to create educated human capital and skills through developing an education system built and legitimized by the active participation of all the stakeholders who agree to resource and support education development. Several studies (Pankhurst, R. 1972, 1999; Teshome Wagaw, 1979, 1999, 2001; Tekeste Negash, 1990, 2006; UNESCO, 2004; Word Bank, 2005; Damtew Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Messay Kebede, 2006; Damtew Teferra, 2005, 2007; Forum for Social Studies, 2009) have shown that Ethiopia's educational expansion is plagued by the prevalence of poor quality across the education sectors from primary to higher education. This paper reviews existing literature on education in Ethiopia focusing on factors that have hindered establishing a self-sustaining and strong Ethiopia's educational system with a view to discovering possible alternatives that can help establish an educational governance system.

Key words: Education, development and education, economic growth.
JEL-Code: (12, 121, 128).

A Brief Review of Literature:

The focus of this review is to identify the major sources of Ethiopia's education crisis. For instance, the recent study published by Forum for Social Studies (2009) of Addis Ababa University has focused on the deepening crisis of the quality of Ethiopia's educational system. The study revealed that in 2007 the number of students who passed Ethiopia's National Secondary School Examination was as low as 7.6%, and in 2008 it got worse when only 3% of the students passed the National Examination, nation wide. The same study also documented that in 2008 almost 60% of the student's National Secondary School Examination grade was below 25%. This prompted the author to compare such a degrading of students' marks with any ordinary student who can earn a better grade only by guessing the correct answers from multiple choice questions. The study appears to be well documented and it supports its findings by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education national educational data (p.9). Similarly, during the World leaders meeting at UN headquarters, Associated Press (2010) also reported that several organizations; such as Education International, Plan International, Oxfam, Save the Children and VSO indicated that Ethiopia ranks with Somalia regarding the severity of education crisis, thus confirming the findings published by the Forum for Social Studies(FSS). The question is what are the sources of this crisis?

Teshome Wagaw (1979) described that since the sixth century Ethiopia's Orthodox Church had maintained a highly structured, organized system of education from primary to higher education. The focus of this education was around religious themes and principles. The author indicated that an increasing need for trained people had necessitated the redirection of education independent of the church influence. As a result,

the current public school system started. According to Pankhrust (1972), the educational system was modernized by mobilizing foreign scholars to Ethiopia as well as by sending students abroad. During Emperor Menilik (1865-1913) and Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930-1974), they had sent several hundred students abroad for education. As a result, by 1931 many modern schools were established. However, according to Pankhurst (1972), Teshome Wagaw (1979) and Tekeste Negash (1990) the 1935 invasion by Italy seriously disrupted the emerging Ethiopia's educational system. The findings by the authors revealed that the invaders eliminated educated Ethiopians; schools were closed for military purposes; shortages of teachers and teaching materials were created.

Pankhurst (1999) also noted that the fascist education policy for Africa was a failure. The author further highlighted that what Italy tried to implement in Ethiopia "...during the five years of Italian occupation the invaders… attempt to develop the empire with rigid Italian skilled labor alone, and the stultifying policy of providing only the most limited schooling to the indigenous population were likewise detrimental" (Pp. 392-399).

Consistent with Pankhurst's writings The Ethiopian Herald, July 24, 1946 (as cited in Teshome Wagaw, 1979) also highlighted that the Ethiopia's Emperor Speech not only linked education to the development of the country but also to the sovereignty of Ethiopia.

> We call upon all Ethiopians to send their children to the nearest school for it is suicide and a crime against the responsibility which God places in all parents not to educate one's own children. The catastrophe which was brought about the human hand during the past years can be avoided in the future by religion and the hope in God which is in the hearts of the people. And this can be achieved by education (p.7).

According to Teshome Wagaw, during the reconstruction era (1941-1951), following Italy's expulsion from Ethiopia, the government of Ethiopia mobilized foreign scholars to help in modernizing the educational system. However, the author argued that the education problem is associated with foreign scholars' influence. His findings indicated that European scholars pressured the government to implement their recommendation. Teshome Wagaw's findings are highly supported by the 1934 education advisor, Ernes F. Work (as cited in Tekeste Negash, 1990) whose written letter described the problem as follows:

> This country is really the only bit of Africa still in the control of the natives of that continent … European countries are extremely active and zealous in efforts to fix upon the Ethiopians the trade and culture of their respective countries. In my work there I found this influence the greatest hindrance to my efforts in getting any real progress under way**…** From all sides I was asked what sort of an educational system I proposed to suggest … they hoped it would be French, or Italian or English, depending upon the one asking. They often suggested it would be American since I came from America. My answer was always that so far as I was concerned it should be neither French, Italian, English nor American. That I hoped it could be Ethiopian… (Pp. 103-106).

Messay Kebede (2006) also found that the education problem is rooted from the time of modernization. The article blamed the problem on the 1950's Ethiopia's government who started modernizing the educational system without incorporating local and traditional Ethiopian values. However, Messay's findings are not in agreement with the 1934 education advisor's letter, which Work described that the European scholars were obstacles for any progress. Similarly, Messay's study is in conflict with that of Tekeste Negash and Teshome Wagaw in that he blamed only the government of Ethiopia but not the foreign scholars. It appears that the government did not know how to handle the pressure from foreign Government and scholars when they try to force Ethiopia to imitate their own system rather than developing its own national educational system.

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Unlike other European scholars, Work had recommended that the medium of instruction should be Ethiopia's language and he suggested using the national language with some modifications to adapt to typing machines. However, despite the advisor's and some Ethiopians' recommendation, the medium of higher education instruction was replaced by English language (Teshome Wagaw, 1979). Consistent with the advisor's letter about European scholars influences, at Menelik II school primary and secondary school instruction were in French, English and Italian languages. At the same time in Itege Menen girls school both primary and secondary school medium of instruction was in French.

As the 1930's education advisor Work predicted, World Bank (2005) reported that several decades later in Ethiopia primary education is still not universal. Tekeste Negash (1990) findings also highlighted not only on lack of universal primary education, but also he indicated that the current educational system is in crisis and he recommended a great emphasis on both primary and secondary education. Reports by UNESCO (2004) and World Bank (2005) supported Negash's findings. UNESCO reported that the quality of education for all youths remains a challenge. Similarly, the World Bank reported on the deterioration of the quality of education and lack of universal primary education. World Bank also shows great concern over the growing numbers of unemployed and undereducated youths.

More recently, Tekeste Negash (2006) examined the education policies of three different Ethiopia's regimes from 1941 to 2006. By comparing each government's education policy, the study found a correlation between the high level of poverty and the poor education policy. As a result, in 2006 the author warned that the crisis within

education had reached the brink of collapse. He further highlighted that currently there is no effective education policy to correct the ongoing problems. It appears that there are new hurdles such as lack of academic freedom, irregular language implementation and unregulated education policy which only brings the crisis quicker.

According to Tekeste Negash, the Golden era of modern education was during (1941-1974), where in 1951 University College of Addis Ababa, (UCAA) was founded and in the following years a fully-fledged university system became operational. The study highlighted that during its educational progress the imperial government had realized multiple problems, such as; the dramatic education expansion, lack of economic sector to accommodate the high school graduates and unequal access to education throughout the nation. The author indicated that the imperial government did not ignore these problems; instead in response to these the government established Education Sector Review (ESR) and ESR had estimated that by the year 2000 over 90 percent of the primary school age group would have access to education. The study revealed that the first ESR (1971-1972) did not succeed due to the lack of a nation -wide debate. The second ESR came up with a new education policy that had been worked by ESR. However, due to the 1974 revolution the government that came up with new education policy as well as the second ESR is gone for good. As a result, Tekeste Negash described that the new education policy remained on a paper and educated Ethiopians became the target of the new regime.

The author's argument is highly supported by Taffara Deguefe (2003), where Taffara Deguefe indicated that right after the Italian expulsion from Ethiopia; those highly educated Ethiopians had started working to modernize the country as well as to keep the sovereignty of Ethiopia. However, the author argued that when the Imperial

regime is replaced by the military regime, once again educated Ethiopians became the target of the new regime similar to what the fascist Italy did to them. He further described that those few educated Ethiopians who had survived from Italian killings, once again either they are killed by the military regime or thrown to prison. Taffara Deguefe's argument is highly consistent with that of Tekeste Negash and Teshome Wagaw.

Similarly, Teshome Wagaw (2001) found that during the military regime, many of the university teachers were put in prison, killed or forced to leave the country. Additionally, the author highlighted that the University administration was also told what courses to teach including the political ideology of Marxism-Leninism. He further described it as "propaganda booklet and manifestos ruled the day", and this rule ended in 1991 when the rebel group took power. Taffara Degeufe also indicated that while eliminating highly educated Ethiopians, the military regime tried to implement universal primary education by sending high school and university students to the country side, through out Ethiopia. Whether it was for the benefit of the regime or not, "*yeIdget behibret zemecha*" program which means illiteracy eradication campaign, students taught those disadvantageous country side illiterate Ethiopians. As a result, at the end of this campaign in the history of the country for the first time the number of Ethiopians who are not able to read and write became very low.

The military regime was replaced by the current regime and since 1991 Ethiopia has gone through major changes, both positive and negative. All the articles recognized the recent expansion of the educational system, but while recognizing it they did not stop to address how the quality of education has deteriorated. At the same time they indicated that the expansion does not decrease the level of poverty. Some of the literature findings

further highlighted how ethnic politics limited education. For instance, writing on

implication of ethnic-based language policy on educational system, Teshome Wagaw

(1999) described it like this:

> As a matter of fact it can be concluded that as things stand in Ethiopia, for the most part, the language policies pertaining to education are untenable; injurious that would cripple the future interest of the children and youth and ultimately the well being of the national community (Pp.11-12).
> As the author predicted, recent research published by Forum for Social Studies

(2009) confirmed the further deterioration of output from the educational system of

Ethiopia.

> The signs of deterioration of the quality of higher education in Ethiopia are already evident in the skills deficit of the recent graduates and in employer dissatisfaction, the low level in the quality of research carried out by staff in the Higher Education Institutions, the shortage of resources and undue increase in the workload of teaching personnel (p. 162).

Beside the deterioration of the quality of education, under the current regime

Ethiopian professionals (educators and non-educators) have started to face new

challenges. According to Teshome Wagaw (2001) there is a correlation between lack of

academic freedom and the development of Ethiopia. He also highlighted on the

consequence of the current regime's action in 2001 and its lasting effect on the nation

described as in the following:

> Soon after, the regime expelled some 42 of the most senior Addis Ababa University faculty members, including the university president himself. Later the government abolished what was left of the university system's autonomy and academic freedom. At present, all faculties have to submit themselves every two years for renewal of appointment. It is safe to assume that the criterion for renewal is acceptance of government ideology and total compliance to its dictates. Once again, the notion of the need for high-level human resources for national development suffered a great blow, and the university and the nation suffered lasting damages (Pp. 54-55).

Consistent with the findings from the works of Tekeste Negash and Teshome

Wagaw, Wondimu (as cited in Damtew Teferra & Altbach, 2004) argued that contrary to

Ethiopia's urgent need for a great number of academicians, in 2001 the current regime summarily fired more than forty university professors and instructors without considering the adverse impact on the nation's higher education. Following this incident, in 2001 the Network of Ethiopian Scholars is founded. Since then it is advocating for academic freedom in Ethiopia. Similarly, Damtew Teferra (2005) also argued that lack of academic freedom is a major factor for the high levels of intellectual migration (brain drain). More recently The Sub-Saharan Informer, (2008) reported that an American law professor, Abigail Salisbury, who used to teach under the ministry of Ethiopia's education, was fired for her public voicing of the absence of academic freedom. This also is consistent with Damtew Teferra's argument. In October, 2010 CBC Radio interviewed Ben Rawlence, the lead author and researcher on human rights report and during his interview he told CBC, in Ethiopia "*if high school students want to go to university they are told that the ruling party membership card is essential*". He indicated that educational facilities are also misused to influence for political purposes.

Teferra and Altbach, (2004) also argued that in most African countries lack of academic freedom and intellectual migration (brain drain) are major factors that affected adversely educational progress. The article described that without free expression of new ideas the development of the society can not be achieved and they further highlighted that academic freedom plays a major role on the development of the country. According to Hassan and Ahmed, (2007) to become efficient and competitive, academic freedom is necessary. However with the absence of academic freedom, improvement on education and on the society is unthinkable.

In addition to lack of academic freedom, most of the articles associated the

deterioration of the quality of education with current Ethiopia's education policy. Different authors (Teshome Wagaw, 1999; Tekeste Negash, 2006; Damtew Teferra, 2007; Forum for Social Studies, 2009) argued that unregulated national education policy, quality of teachers, and irregular language implementation are additional factors that affected educational progress. For instance, besides implementing unregulated medium of instruction, The Irish Times (2010) also reported on the use of Mandarin and Turkish languages in current Ethiopia's schools, which forced the paper to comment "*At What Cost?*" Most of the literature highlighted the implication of the deterioration of the quality of education on the development of the country and the articles found a correlation between the deterioration of the quality of education with current education policy and the level of poverty.

Tekeste Negash (2006) indicated as the 1994 education policy greatly contributed to the deterioration of the quality of education. The author further highlighted that the problem is on the medium of instruction. He indicated that students' lack of proficiency in English and there are not enough qualified teachers to teach in English at the high school level. He further highlighted that when the Ministry realized the shortage of qualified teachers to teach in English, since 2004 Ethiopia's high school students are using plasma screen for education. However, Tekeste Negash argued that education using satellite television screen is highly negative and the study further revealed that according to several teachers' opinion it would have been better if plasma had not been introduced at all. The study described that plasma eliminates teacher's role, it discourages students, science lectures are poorly organized, and students' English language proficiency is very low to learn in English using plasma screen, and so on.

As Tekeste Negash predicted, five years after education by plasma was introduced, research published by Forum for Social Studies indicated that in 2007 students' who passed Ethiopia's National Secondary School Examination was 7.6% and in 2008 only 3% of the students passed the National Examination, nation wide. These findings also highlighted about students' poor grades on Science subjects as well as on their low English proficiency. Tekeste Negash also highlighted on students' enrollment.

> Whereas enrolment in urban areas is nearly universal, it is only about 45 percent among rural children. Moreover, 25 per cent of newly enrolled rural children drop out before making it to the next grade, and nearly fifty percent of them hardly stay in school for five years. With the exception of Addis Ababa, completion rates are very low in the rest of the country. According to the data assembled by the World Bank for the country as a whole, it is only about 30 percent of school age population who complete the first four years of primary education. And about 20 percent complete 8 years of schooling. In spite of the continuous polemic, the current government has done very little to expand and consolidate primary education in the rural areas. Rural Ethiopia is still short changed. Urban children, irrespective of their economic status, have a far greater chance of completing primary education than rural children. The disparity in schooling is much wider between children in urban and rural areas than between boys and girls, or even between rich and poor. In other words, the urban/rural divide is far more decisive on the educational destiny of children than gender and class.

The Forum for Social Studies (2009) research results highly supports Tekeste Negash's findings. Currently there is no effective education policy that could correct the ongoing problems. Instead the current education policy does not seem consistent. For example, very recently Ethiopia's Ministry of education had outlawed distance education and the reason given by the ministry for the recent change on distance education policy is due to educational quality. According to Tekeste Negash (2006), when the Ministry realized the shortage of qualified teachers to teach in English, in 2004 the ministry introduced teaching by plasma. Similar to 2004, the Ministry reason to ban distance education was due to the educational quality, but within few months the change on

distance education policy is reversed. However, academicians argued that it is a violation of Ethiopia's Higher Education policy. They have questioned on the legitimacy of the Ministry's action and authors like Alemayehu G.Mariam (2010) described that it is contrary to the Higher Education Proclamation No. 650/2009. As a result, most academicians from inside and outside Ethiopia questioned on current Ethiopia's education policy.

Besides academic freedom, education policy and intellectual migration, Tekeste Negash (2006) also found that the center of the crisis for higher level of education is the medium of instruction. Based on its findings the author stated that "In most Sub-Saharan countries education, broadly defined as a system of learning from textbooks and carried out in large classes, is a phenomenon that has a strong colonial legacy" (p. 7). The study assessed different African countries educational system and their correlations with the impacts of the colonial power influences. The article argued that after the independence of most African countries, the education infrastructure created by the colonizers had been left as it is, and this author further argued that Ethiopia has never been colonized, however the educational system that the government implemented was similar to those of the colonized African countries. The article findings are also consistent with that of Teshome Wagaw (1979).

Similarly, Damtew Teferra and Altbach (2004) found that in most African countries the language of instruction in the higher education system was the language of the colonizers. The article indicated that even in some countries the indigenous language used in higher education were replaced by the colonizer's language. The study highlighted "the legacy of colonialism remains a central factor in African higher

education" (p. 24). They also argued that beside the problem in the medium of higher education instruction, in most African countries, academic freedom and intellectual migration (brain drain) are major obstacles. This is also consistent with most of the author's findings.

Historically, except between (1941-1974), Ethiopia's educational system continues to suffer from time to time. First, the emerging Ethiopia's educational system was highly disrupted by the fascist Italy invasion and the invaders eliminated educated Ethiopians. Second, when the imperial regime is replaced by the military regime, those highly educated Ethiopians became the target of that regime. They were either killed or forced to leave the country. As a result, Ethiopia lost those highly qualified Ethiopian professionals. Unfortunately, in 2001, the current regime also summarily fired highly qualified university professors and instructors. Due to all these problems, the country faces high intellectual migration (brain drain) and Ethiopia's human capital is greatly affected. Currently, those highly qualified Ethiopian academicians and professionals are teaching in higher institutions in the western world. It appears however Ethiopia's educational system has not come out of the problems identified in this review of the literature.

Conclusion:

The findings from the literature by authors that have undertaken research show 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, administration, provision, staff quality, system of enrollment, language policy, financing, learning cycle, system of educational evaluation, system of quality assurance, academic

freedom, intellectual migration (brain drain) and political control of the education system. To close the gap between Ethiopia's human capital and the country's needs, most of the author's recommendation includes implementing effective education policy, academic freedom, reviewing the medium of instruction, and replacing the brain drain by brain gain.

There is a need for all stakeholders (educators, and non-educators both from inside and outside Ethiopia) to participate, particularly all from civil society and others both inside and outside the country to find ways to overcome the national problems of education development. We strongly believe hat this generation has great responsibility to pass a strong educational system for the next generation. We conclude by quote from Maimire Mennasemay,

> "It is precisely in regards to the capacity to enable the student to absorb Ethiopia's culture and to be absorbed into it that modern education has failed. It has deprived students of the opportunity to make the crucial transformation from the unhistorical consciousness of youth to the historical consciousness of adults who understand the man-made nature of their circumstances and recognize themselves as collective agents capable of changing these circumstances within the historical possibilities they share with their compatriots.
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> Unlike modern Ethiopian education, that seems intent on cultivating a historical-cultural amnesia, traditional education accomplishes the task of enabling the student to absorb Ethiopian culture and to be absorbed into it. It is precisely when this civilizing process broke down that Ethiopia became a prey to "educated" leaders for whom the life an Ethiopian has little value. The important challenge for modern education is then to awaken the civilizing process that church, mosque, gada and other traditional education systems have already developed but that we have squandered in our blind compulsion to treat ourselves as raw material that Western Education transforms into a finished product. However to awaken this humanizing and civilizing process of traditional education means also to inquire into the reasons that prevented traditional education from bringing about productive social transformations in Ethiopia." (Maimire Mennasemay, 2006)

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