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Outcomes and Challenges of the 1994 Ethiopian Education and Training Policy Reform

*Challa Amdissa Jiru*

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**Box 1: Key points of this chapter**

- The 1994 education policy reform was part of the political, economic, and social reforms that took place in Ethiopia in 1991.
- The goals of the 1994 education policy were to correct the acute shortage and inequitable access, inefficiency, low quality, low relevance, and undemocratic nature of Ethiopian education system.
- This policy was implemented for about twenty-five years and achieved mixed results.
- Any future education program should focus on improving the quality and sustaining the current pace of expansion in access to education.

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**Box 2: Reading this chapter will give you insights in**

- The driving forces for the formulation of 1994 Education Policy of Ethiopia;
- The major changes introduced by the 1994 education and training policy reform;
- The achievements in access, equity, efficiency, quality, relevance, and democratization goals of the education system; and
- The challenges ahead.

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**Box 3: Abbreviations**

- EPRDF = Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front
- ESDP = Education Sector Development Programs
- GER = Gross Enrolment Rate
- NIR = Net Intake Ratio
1. **Introduction: Political Context of the 1994 Education Policy and the Problem Statement**

The 1994 Education Policy of Ethiopia was part of the systemic changes in political, economic, and social order in Ethiopia following the regime change in 1991 (Demeke, 2011). Therefore, to understand the political environment within which the education policy was formulated, it is essential to highlight the country’s macroeconomic policy and the political and institutional reforms of the 1990s. May 1991 is a turning point in Ethiopian history, as it marked the end of the two decades of internal war and civil strife that led to the secession of Eritrea. The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took control of state power in May 1991 and formed the Transitional Government in July of the same year. Upon seizing control, the EPRDF immediately started radically restructuring the political system of the country to establish a country with a new order that differs significantly from its predecessors.

The political reform of the 1990s transformed the old centralized unitary state system into a federal state arrangement, while the economic reform put into effect privatization, deregulation, denationalization, and other liberalization measures. Besides the liberalization of the economy and regionalization of the state structure, new social sector policies such as women, population, education, health, and disaster prevention and preparedness were formulated (Tewodaj, Gezahegn, & Zelekawork, 2008). Among these social policies, the subject of this chapter is the 1994 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia. This policy remained in place until the endorsement of a new education road map in 2019.

Criticisms of the policy by different stakeholders were often heard ever since its commencement in 1994. For example, at the HR Development summit, held at the United Nations Conference center at Addis Ababa from August 30 to 31, 2017, employers’ representatives noted that they were facing challenges due to the incapability of the education system to produce candidates with employable skills. According to views reflected at the summit, the graduates of the Ethiopian education institutions do not have reliable competence that the employers need; as a result, employers face challenges in finding skillful candidates in the local labor market to fill their job vacancies. Since poor labor productivity will make the country uncompetitive in attracting foreign investments, the participants of this summit warned the government to rethink its policy (HRD Africa, 2017).

In addition to lack of competence, the current generation of graduates is also criticized for lacking acceptable moral and ethical behaviors. For instance,
the prime minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, claimed at a meeting in Assosa that the Ethiopian education system is unable to produce graduates who could serve the interest of their family and the interest of their country, particularly from the moral and ethical perspective. Similar to this view (Demeke, 2011) indicates that there are groups who conceive of Ethiopians who have passed through the school system as disrespectful to their society and institutions.

The professionals in the education sector have also been known to criticize the appropriateness of the existing education policy of Ethiopia. This group shares the concern over the deterioration of education quality in Ethiopia and links the problem among other factors with the 1994 reform policy's reduction of four-year degree programs to three-years. Meanwhile, students and parents blame the education policy of the country for poor prospects in job opportunities for school graduates.

Thus, the appropriateness of the Ethiopian educational policy has been challenged by many stakeholders from different perspectives. It is true that the policy has many shortcomings; nevertheless, most of the criticisms of the education system of Ethiopia were not research based. The few available studies are incomplete in balancing both the achievements and the failures of the policy across all aspects of the policy goals. In addition to the scarcity of research evidence, the neutrality of the critics is also questionable as most of them are ideologically driven. The author of this chapter argues that the criticism of education policy has some basis but is mostly not supported by research evidence and not balanced in revealing both the success and failures of the policy. Policy analysis requires a good understanding of policy intentions, adequate analysis of policy environments, and assessment of the policy outcomes in relation to desired goals. In this regard, research conducted so far on the 1994 education and training policy of Ethiopia is insufficient to reveal the lessons to be taken from the past experience.

This study is motivated by such critical limitations in research on education policy. The objective here is to evaluate the effectiveness of the 1994 education policy of Ethiopia in terms of its achievement in access, equity, efficiency, democratization, relevance, and quality goals. More specifically, the study tries to address the following research questions:

1. What were the driving forces for the formulation of 1994 Education Policy of Ethiopia?
2. What major changes were introduced by the implementation of the 1994 education policy reform?
3. How well has Ethiopia achieved the education goals established by 1994 education policy and what are the challenges ahead?
Analysis of these questions is important if we are to derive lessons from the success and failure of the 1994 education policy and to provide policy inputs for future initiatives. Accordingly, by shedding lights on the policy aspect of the Ethiopian education system, this chapter identifies the achievements and failures of the policy and suggests ideas that will help to overcome the challenges faced by the country’s education system. Furthermore, this research shows avenues for future research on education policy of Ethiopia. Guided by these questions, the remaining part of this chapter presents consecutively data sources and methodology, literature, discussions, and conclusions.

2. Data Sources and Methods of Data Analysis

A mixed research approach was chosen to take advantage of combining quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis and to make use of data of different forms. Different secondary sources, which include the official data of government, the World Bank database, government education sector plans and reports and statistical abstracts, were used to analyze policy driving forces, policy goals, policy outcomes and new challenges. The problems of the Ethiopian education system prior to 1994 and the policies pursued by the current government to solve them were analyzed based on a review of government policy statements and other publications of Ministry of Education. Different reform plans and implementation reports were reviewed to determine the changes introduced in the education system by the government, so as to identify the major departure of the 1994 policy from the past. The effectiveness of the education policy was assessed by comparing policy goals and policy achievements. Finally, new challenges not covered by the existing policy are explored based on the views of experts as shown in different statistics, research reports, and media. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the research, the study used data from official sources, after careful inspection of their relevance to the topic. Because of the nature of the data at hand, the descriptive method of analysis was chosen.

The next part of the chapter presents performance indicators in education policy analysis, participation in the 1994 education policy formulation process, the driving force for policy change, and major changes in the 1994 education policy of Ethiopia. It then analyzes the achievements of education policy in terms of access, equity, efficiency, relevance, and quality and democratization. Finally, the discussion part highlights the challenges not properly addressed by the 1994 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia.
3. **Indicators of Performances in Education Policy Analysis**

As education is a complex social undertaking, analysis of education policy is also complex; however, it is worth doing as education is also a determinant of development. Education has become the most powerful tool in providing solutions to various challenges (Semela, 2011) and it plays a key role in the globalized world. The many dimensions of social and economic objectives that education policies aim to achieve are complex to understand, nevertheless, conducting study on education policy is a necessary task.

One of the important indicators of education policy is its attention to educational inputs. The better-endowed schools tend to produce better results, as measured by such indicators as student achievement and schooling careers. As teachers typically represent the single most important component of educational inputs, managing the resources they embody warrants especially close attention (Mingat, Tan, & Sosale, 2003). Achievement on the basis of input measurement focuses on education expenditures, for example on the expenditure on primary education as (a) percentage of GNP and (b) as per pupil, or as a percentage of GNP per capita and as a percentage of total public expenditure on education (Norelius & Mendes, 2003).

Another element of education policy is the issue of equity and access that affirms the need to ensure equitable access and participation of all groups, particularly of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as well as adults. Equity may be assessed from the perspective of gender, geography/region, and place of residence (urban/rural) (Mingat, Tan, & Sosale, 2003). Equity in education attracts interest in public policy for several reasons. In most countries the government subsidizes education, so access to education determines who benefits from the subsidies. Because spending on education represents a substantial share of government budgets in both industrial and developing countries, the education system effectively is a major conduit for the distribution of public subsidies. Furthermore, education affects people’s life chances as adults in terms of their earning capability as well as social mobility. Equity in educational opportunity therefore influences the future distribution of income, wealth, and status in society. Beyond its economic significance, education is viewed widely as a good in itself, and indeed a basic human right with regard to the lower levels of education. For this reason too, equity in education is often a focus of public policy debate.

With regard to methods for analyzing access and equity in education, several approaches are suggested by the vast literature on the subject (Norelius & Mendes, 2003). This chapter uses comparison of differences in access to
a specific level or type of education across population groups, using such indicators as relative rates of entry, transition, and completion. This approach of equity analysis assumes that education is a good in itself without elaborating on the specific nature or value of the benefits.

Besides inputs and equity, there are many measurements of achievements in education policy analysis (Norelius & Mendes, 2003). Achievement in access to education can be measured along indicators such as: gross enrolment in early childhood development programs, as a percentage of the official age group concerned, if any, otherwise in the age group three to five; percentage of new entrants to primary grade 1 who have attended some form of organized early childhood development program; apparent (gross) intake rate (new entrants in primary grade 1 as a percentage of the population of official entry age); net intake rate (new entrants to primary grade 1 who are of the official primary school entrance age as a percentage of the corresponding population); gross enrolment ratio; and net enrolment ratio.

When it comes to assessing quality aspects, indicators like percentage of primary school teachers having the required academic qualifications; percentage of primary school teachers certified to teach according to national standards; and the pupil-teacher ratio are widely used.

Widely used indicators of achievement in relation to efficiency are the repetition rate; the survival rate to grade 5; the coefficient of efficiency; and percentage of pupils having reached at least grade 4 of primary schooling who have mastered a set of nationally defined basic learning competencies. Literacy rate of fifteen to twenty-four-year-olds; adult literacy rate; and the Gender Parity Index can also be used as indicators of education achievement (Norelius & Mendes, 2003).

Indicators are related to goals and targets (Norelius & Mendes, 2003). For instance, some targets of the UN millennium development goals and associated indicators are presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve universal primary education</td>
<td>Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
<td>- Net enrollment ratio in primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Goals | Targets | Indicators
--- | --- | ---
Promote gender equality and empower women | Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015 | – Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education
– Ratio of literate females to males among 15- to 24-year-olds
– Share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector.
– Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

One of the seventeen goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The indicators of this goal among others are to ensure access to free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education; quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education; affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education; increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the global actors agreed by 2030 to eliminate gender disparities; achieve literacy and numeracy; and substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers.

The Education and Training Policy of 1994 has been the inspiration for five medium-term Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP). Each ESDP has its own goals and specific targets. For instance ESDP I aimed at increasing access, improving quality, increasing effectiveness, achieving equity, and expanding finance at all levels of education in Ethiopia (Martin, Riitta, & Tuomas, 2000). The ESDP V is the fifth medium-term plan, which serves as the central strategy document for educational development in Ethiopia from 2015/16 to 2019/20. Its major goals are to provide equal opportunities and participation for all; deliver quality education that meets diverse learning needs; develop competent citizens; promote effective leadership, management, and governance at all levels; and to assist citizens to share common values and experiences and to embrace diversity.

### 4. Participations in the Process of Framing the 1994 Education Policy

The process of policy formulation requires consultations with the stakeholders. Policymakers in education are responsible for developing a vision and strategy for educational development and mobilizing support and cooperation for implementing the former from a wide range of stakeholders. The key
stakeholders of the education sector may include ministers in other sectors, nongovernment organizations that provide resources, teachers, and school administrators; students and their families who are the immediate beneficiaries of the services provided; and employers and the public at large. Thus, this section overviews the participation of these stakeholders in the 1994 Education and Training Policy formulation process.

A taskforce composed of eleven members from various institutions was formed under the coordination of the prime minister’s office to study key educational issues and come up with policy recommendations. The taskforce studied six policy issues: teacher training, teaching methods, professional development, and working conditions; educational measurement and evaluation; language in education; educational organization, management and finance; and educational materials and support inputs (Martin, Riitta, & Tuomas, 2000). In order to assess the above issues a technical committee composed of six study teams from various ministries, research organizations, the teachers’ association, and institutions of higher learning was formed. All in all, forty national organizations and three hundred experts participated in the study. Moreover, public consultation on the draft policy document was conducted at the central, regional, zonal, Woreda, and school levels throughout the country. For instance, schools in Addis Ababa were closed for a day to discuss the Education and Training Policy (Martin, Riitta, & Tuomas, 2000).

In the development of the different educational policy documents, the MoE and the Social and Administration Sub-Sector of the Office of the Prime Minister were key players. Additionally, the regional education bureaus, higher education institutions, and international organizations such as Sida, UNDP, UNESCO, etc. took part in the policy development process (Martin, Riitta, & Tuomas, 2000).

Despite the attempt to involve these stakeholders, commentators describe the government as having a make-or-break role while other stakeholders had a symbolic role in the policy formulation process. As described by Alemu & Tekleselassie (2006), though discussions were held with stakeholders, no input provided by teachers was incorporated in the final policy. Worse, people who reflected different views on the policy proposal were threatened by the government. Alemu & Tekleselassie (2006) further found that the worst outcome of participation in consultations was the split of the Ethiopian Teachers’ Union into two opposing factions (one pro-EPRDF/government and the other independent). The level of the government’s involvement in the Ethiopian higher education system is very high (Yohannes, 2016). The amount of financial contributions affects the influence of various donor groups. Additionally, in countries (such as Ethiopia) following macroeconomic
structural adjustment programs, general policy conditionality agreed on between the government and the World Bank/IMF is significant in framing educational policy (Martin, Riitta, & Tuomas, 2000).

5. The Driving Forces for Change and the 1994 Education Policy Goals

As the twentieth century drew to a close, Ethiopia found itself with an education system that was regimented in its management, conservative in its intellectual orientation, limited in its autonomy, short of experienced doctorates among academic staff, concerned about declining educational quality, weak in its research output, and poorly connected with the intellectual currents of the international higher education community (Saint, 2004). The reform pressures that had begun to build in the 1960s were suppressed by the Dergue in the 1970s and 1980s (Saint, 2004). The seizure of state power by EPRDF in 1991 returned the reform of the education system to the fore of the government’s concerns.

At the time when the education and training policy of Ethiopia was framed, the Ethiopian government was embarking on establishing a new order to transform the command economy of the military regime into a market economy. The new policy direction in the education sector was motivated by the need to destroy the vestiges of the military regime and replace it with the new order. For example, the policy study sponsored by Ministry of Education confirms that it was necessary to replace the educational system that served the old discarded order with a new one (Ministry of Education, 2002). Similarly, Teshome (2003) also notes that Ethiopia engaged in reform to realign its higher education system in more direct support of its national strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction.

As shown in (Ministry of Education, 2002), the government justified a reform and a new policy direction because of the many problems of the previous education system. EPRDF held the belief that the past regime never had a clear policy by which education and training would be guided and evaluated (Ministry of Education, 2002). EPRDF questioned the objective of education under the previous regime, which aimed to produce trained manpower for the emergent government bureaucracy. It also denounced the ambition of the students, which was securing government employment.

It should be noted that, at a time where the country depended on expatriates who were working at various levels in public offices and schools, seeking to produce manpower for the government bureaucracy and replacing expatriates
with Ethiopian nationals should not be criticized as a mistaken objective. Similarly, in the absence of a private sector that would have provided employment opportunities for those who left schools without capital and without necessary entrepreneurial background, students should not be expected to aspire to anything other than securing employment in the public sector. Devising a policy reform simply to avoid the heritage of the past regime is not convincing.

The dismantling of the institutional systems of the Dergue regime was however not the only motive of the EPRDF government in formulating the new education and training policy for Ethiopia. A study by the Ministry of Education (2002) identifies the long-standing problems associated with the Ethiopian education system, which were related to limited and inequitable access, lack of quality and relevance, and continuous decline in quality and standards. These problems are further discussed in detail.

**a) Limited Access:** While many African countries that are generally considered to be poor had 60 to 70 percent of their school-age children enrolled in elementary schools, only 20 percent of school-age children had the opportunity to attend first- to sixth-grade education in Ethiopia. As (Ministry of Education, 2002) shows, in 1993 only 277 high schools, 2 universities, 5 junior colleges, and 16 vocational and technical schools were found in the country. Similarly, there were only about thirteen teacher training centers and sixteen technical and vocational schools, with a very limited enrollment capacity that had never exceeded 2,500 per year. Towards the end of the Dergue period, enrollment was even declining, which is thought to be attributed to the prolonged effects of war and instability. Table 2 depicts vividly the decreasing trend recorded between 1988/89 and 1992/93, particularly at the primary level (Martin, Riitta, & Tuomas, 2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Enrolment Ratio</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Enrolment Ratio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985/86</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>1990/91</td>
<td>32.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986/87</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>1991/92</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987/88</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>1992/93</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988/89</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>1993/94</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989/90</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) **Inequitable Distribution of School Services:** The beneficiaries of the limited educational opportunities were the children of urban dwellers and the rich. The tuition-free primary, secondary, and higher education created an unfair benefit, whereby the poor and the rural population was forced to contribute to the construction of educational facilities to which their own children had no access. This inequity had also created educational opportunity gaps between regions, residents of urban and rural areas, and between genders as well (Ministry of Education, 2002).

c) **Problem of Efficiency:** In the old system, according to (Ministry of Education, 2002), the high repetition rate was considered as an indication of the educational system’s academic rigor and excellence. A high rate of dropouts and repeaters came to be considered an indicator of the inefficiency of the educational system.

d) **Lack of Quality and Relevance:** The other driving forces for the formulation of the 1994 policy were the lack of focus on mathematics, science, and engineering; insufficient vocational education both at the high school and college levels; and a poor supply of educational inputs, such as poor laboratory facilities, poor library service, unmotivated teachers, a shortage of books, and limited opportunity to involve in practical learning. These constraints in educational inputs together with lack of focus on the “more important fields of study,” according to the government, had reduced the quality and relevance of education (Ministry of Education, 2002). Low employability of the graduates was also taken as an attribute of the poor quality of the pre-1994 education system of Ethiopia. The government also considered the twelve years of education necessary to leave high school and four years of university education as irrelevant and wasteful.

e) **Problem of School Language:** In Ethiopia before 1991, the principle that every child should, at least in primary school, learn in the child’s native language was totally ignored. In addition to being a violation of the right to language, every aspect of the contents of the old education system glorified the attributes, contributions, customs, culture, and history of one group and reinforced its domination over the others (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Together with ideological change, the above problems drove education policy revisions in Ethiopia in 1994. When critically evaluated, the meager access to education was well shown by comparing the enrollment with other African countries, but the study by the Ministry of Education did not clearly indicate the repetition rate, the dropout rate, and the level of equity in education. The low education quality and relevance was indicated by a lack of focus on mathematics, science, and engineering, as well as by insufficient vocational education and inadequacy of inputs. Hence progress can be measured by
the proportion of students enrolled in science and in vocational fields, and improvements in educational inputs. Moreover, since the government associates a low education quality with the high unemployment of school alumni, change in employment opportunity is another indicator for measuring the success of the 1994 education and training policy.

Motivated by radically changing the policies of the preceding regime and the need to correct the problem of low access, high dropout and repetition, inequitable access, undemocratic content, and poor quality and relevance, the government of Ethiopia launched an education and training policy and began its implementation in 1994. The 1994 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia set educational goals as describe below:

- **Expanding Educational Opportunity and Ensuring Its Equity:** The government aspired to create access of education to all nations and nationalities, urban and rural residents, the poor and the rich, male and female. It intended to ensure equity in order to reduce the gaps that existed since the introduction of modern education in Ethiopia.

- **Democratization of the Administration and Content of Education:** The 1994 policy aspires to foster the use of mother-tongue languages in order to reduce the difficulty of students learning in the lower primary schools. The decentralized system of government is considered helpful to materialize the use of different languages as medium of instruction in different regions and to increase community participation in education.

- **Provision of Quality and Relevant Educational Services:** Government-revised curricula were intended to make the education relevant to the needs of society and to make the curriculum career-oriented. The policy also established a quality and standards authority to ensure schools and colleges would provide quality education.

- **Ensuring Efficiency:** The government intended to increase the completion rate by keeping repetition and dropout rates at lower levels than they had been under the previous regime.

6. **Major Changes Introduced by the 1994 Education Policy of Ethiopia**

The 1994 policy redefined primary education as grades 1–8 and eliminated standardized testing prior to grade 8. It placed new emphasis on the expansion of technical and vocational education and training and the use of mother tongue languages for primary instruction (Tewodaj, Gezahegn, & Zelekawork, 2008).
Other initiatives included harmonizing curricula for all of the undergraduate programs, adopting a modular approach for course delivery so as to enhance active learning, instituting quality assurance offices at each university, and trying to equip libraries and laboratories. Bachelor degree courses were reduced from four to three years in length, with much of the former “freshman” year subject matter being transferred to the secondary school level (Yohannes, 2016).

Graduate program enrollments are rising rapidly in an effort to boost the supply of academic staff for the expanding system. All existing diploma programs (50 percent of public enrollments in 2003) were transferred to technical colleges to make universities concentrate on the bachelor level and above. A revision of university curricula has added courses like civics, ethics, communication skills, and entrepreneurship, among others. A new oversight agency was mandated to monitor both the quality and the relevance of academic programs. To shore up quality in the classroom, national and local pedagogical resource centers were set up to encourage instructional innovation and to assist less experienced lecturers (Saint, 2004).

Education expenditure also increased as a proportion of the overall government budget, from 9.5 percent to 16.8 percent. Such increases still fall short of reaching the general range of 20 percent to 25 percent seen in most developing countries (Saint, 2004), suggesting the need for further increasing the financing efforts. Expenditure per student was very low and seemed likely to be pushed lower by rapid expansion (Saint, 2004). To reduce the burden on the government budget as a result of expanding the education sector at all levels, the government introduced user charges through a cost sharing program in September 2003.

The proclamation of 2003 (No.351/2003) awards some autonomy to universities. Autonomy is granted in the administration of personnel, finances, internal organization, and in establishing linkages with internal and international organizations, etc. All nonacademic staff is classified as civil servants managed by the national civil service system (Saint, 2004). Strategic planning, income diversification, and information and communications technology development are being encouraged to meet the fiscal, space, and instructional requirements of the on-going expansion (Saint, 2004). The Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009 also grants universities autonomy to administer and govern their core activities. According to this proclamation, universities are free to set up their organizational structures and to introduce reform programs and activities that support academic and research excellence (Yohannes, 2016).
However, in the view of some critics, persistent violations of academic freedom make effective institutional autonomy a difficult proposition. The study by Saint (2004) uncovers that the government has sought to inject political criteria into the academic staff evaluation process and directly appoint universities’ presidents and vice presidents. The government ordered all public higher education institutions to implement BPR, BSC, and other business model management techniques as part of the nationwide reform process since 2008 (Kahsay, 2012).

7. The Performance of Education Policy

7.1. Performance in Expansion of Access

As discussed in the previous section, one of the critical problems of the education system during the formulation of the 1994 education policy was very low coverage, even in comparison with achievements in other poor countries. To reverse this situation, the education policy of the EPRDF-led government has aimed to improve access to education. In line with this policy goal, the government made tremendous efforts to expand educational opportunity at all levels and has achieved remarkable success. The government has implemented five consecutive education sector development plans since it began implementation of the 1994 education and training policy.

This research relies on the ESDP IV, because the data of ESDP V is expected to be compiled only after the end of the planning period. At the end of ESDP IV in 2014, the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for preprimary education reach 34 percent, of which around a quarter is in three-year kindergarten and the remainder one-year O-Class and Child-to-Child instruction (Ministry of Education, 2015).

In the 1971 to 1972 education review, the year 2000 was set as the year when Ethiopia would extend universal primary education to all its citizens (Demeke, 2011). However, Ethiopia was far from achieving universal primary education in 1994 when the education policy was put to effect. The EPRDF government has planned to achieve universal primary education in line with the “Education for All” goals. By the end of ESDP IV, the number of primary schools had risen from 11,000 to 32,048 and student enrollment at this level had grown from less than 3 million to over 18 million. In 2015, the supply of schools allows for full intake of students into Grade 1 when they reach the age of seven years. As of 2013/14, the Net Intake Ratio (NIR) was 106 percent, compared to the target of 100 percent.
Rates of more than 100 percent are technically impossible, but happened in the measure of NIR. Such an irregular measure arises due to imprecise population figures and challenges in measurement of student age at the point of entry due to lack of uniform birth registration. Such a situation makes the precision of educational performance measure less reliable. GER ratios indicate the capacity of each level of the education system, but a high ratio may reflect a substantial number of overage children enrolled in each grade because of repetition or late entry rather than a successful education system. Table 3 depicts the comparison of primary school enrollment.

Table 3: Primary school enrollment, (% gross)

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>101.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>103.2</td>
<td>104.1</td>
<td>103.4</td>
<td>103.6</td>
<td>102.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income</td>
<td>102.4</td>
<td>100.8</td>
<td>101.9</td>
<td>101.6</td>
<td>101.7</td>
<td>102.2</td>
<td>101.9</td>
<td>102.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>103.2</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>104.0</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>102.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators, 2019

Comparison of educational access in Ethiopia with other countries is one way of measuring educational achievement. Table 3 compares performance of Ethiopia in primary school enrollment with Sub-Saharan Africa, with low income countries, and with the world. As depicted in the table, in 1990 Ethiopia performed the lowest of all groups being presented for comparison. After twenty-five years of expansion of education service, Ethiopia had able to exceed the average primary school enrollment of Sub-Saharan African countries.

Secondary school enrolment has also expanded rapidly, roughly increasing five-fold, from an enrolled population of 371,000 in 1994/95 to almost 2 million in 2013/14. However, the achievement in secondary school enrollment was lower than the achievement in primary school, due to low primary completion (flow through the system). The GER in Grades 9–10 has changed from 39.1 percent to 39.3 percent, against a target of 62 percent. Other factors that influence low achievement in secondary education were poverty, lack of transport, the need to work (time and economic restrictions), early marriage, gender biases, lack of accommodation near schools (financial, cultural and social), and disability (Ministry of Education, 2015).
Still, the government has demonstrated a continued commitment to expanding equitable access to higher education. As a result, the number of public higher education institutions has increased to thirty-six at the end of ESDP IV (and now reached forty-five), distributed across all regions of the country. Private higher education institutions have also expanded, reaching ninety-eight institutions in total, accommodating around 15 percent of all student enrollment by the end of the ESDP IV period (Ministry of Education, 2015). This extra capacity has allowed rapid increases in intake. Undergraduate enrollment (government and private) rose from 447,693 in 2010/11 to 593,571 in 2013/14. Of total enrollment, 57 percent of students now participate in regular undergraduate classes and 43 percent in a combination of distance, summer, and extension courses. Likewise, total masters’ enrolment in public higher education institutions increased from 7,211 in 2007/08 to 27,643 in 2013/14. Recently private institutions began enrolling postgraduate students and in 2015 they accommodated 3,000 master’s students.

7.2. Performance of Education Policy in Ensuring Efficiency and Equity

Despite the dramatic achievement in policy goals pertaining to access to education, the Ethiopian education policy did not achieve equivalent success in efficiency and equity goals. Grade 8 completion rate was only 47 percent in 2015. The overall GER and NER in the second cycle stand at 64 percent (63 percent for girls and 65 percent for boys) and 50 percent (50 percent for girls and 49 percent for boys) respectively in 2013/14. These are against targets of 100 percent and 80 percent, respectively. As a result of inefficiency in primary school education, expansion of secondary school was constrained to remain below the planned target. For both boys and girls, the target set in ESDP IV for dropout was 1 percent in all primary grades and the target set for repetition was 1 percent in all primary grades. But, as ESDP V begins, repetition rates persist at around 8 percent and dropout remains at 22 percent in grade 1 and 11 percent thereafter. Both repetition and dropout rates are approximately the same for girls and boys.

Ensuring equity goal in terms of area of residence (between urban and rural), region, and gender remains unattained. Access to secondary schools is uneven, with supply favoring urban areas. Enrollment rates vary from less than 10 percent in Afar to more than 100 percent in Addis Ababa (Ministry of Education, 2015).
7.3. Performance of Education Policy in Ensuring Quality and Relevance Goals

The 1994 Education and Training policy outcome was envisioned as the improvement of education relevance and quality in terms of improving educational inputs, the achievement of 70 percent of students joining the science and vocational field, and the increase in job opportunities for the school and university graduates. This section presents the data and evidence of education quality in higher education and in general education, while the next section will discuss job opportunities.

Quality in Higher Education

The effort to improve education quality by increasing educational inputs has been challenged by the rapid expansion of higher education institutions. Arega (2016) argues the rapid expansion in the number of higher education institutions and student population, with inadequate human and investment capital, negatively affected education quality in Ethiopia. This view was shared by the World Bank (2005), which warned that rapid enrollment expansion in Ethiopia is inevitably bringing progressively less qualified student into the system. A similar view was reflected by Negash (2006), who stated that the most fundamental cause for the decline of education is the uncontrolled expansion of the sector in relation to available material resources and job opportunities.

According to Arega (2016), the poor and declining quality of education is likely not a misperception by the public or the media; rather it is a real phenomenon occurring in the education system of Ethiopia. He strongly argued that rapid expansion of schools for the sake of opening access to education despite inadequate infrastructure and resources has negatively affected the quality of education in Ethiopia. Arega (2016) calls for action, as he believed that the quality of education should be a real concern both for the institutions involved and for the nation at large.

Contrary to the objective of the education policy, the poor quality in higher education is still caused by a low inputs system. Arega (2016) identified some of inputs-related shortcomings as follows:

(a) Serious academic staff shortages with quality implications, such as huge teaching loads, eventually leading to the discontinuation of tutorials (The teacher-regular student ratio was 1:16 in 2014 [when students of regular and non-regular classes are considered, the ratio rises to 1:23]). This is against the international standards of a 1:19 ratio and without consideration of excessive moonlighting.
(b) Employment of unqualified personnel. Given the target of 0:70:30 (Bachelor: Master’s: Doctorate degree holders, respectively), so far only a ratio of 27:58:15 has been achieved.

Bolton and Foster (2014) observe quality constraints due to poor infrastructure. In their assessment, universities still report insufficient supplies of text and reference books, laboratory and workshop equipment, and access to information and communications technology facilities. The country has suffered from regular rolling blackouts, and few universities have generators to keep technical infrastructure operational during power cuts. The construction of classroom space, expansion of library collections, addition of computer labs, and the development of electronic networks lag behind enrollment expansion (Bolton & Foste, 2014).

Many students have joined higher education institutions with results below the 50 percent threshold in the higher education entrance examinations. Students’ behaviors and attributes, such as poor communication skills, resistance to active learning, and absenteeism, were seen as major challenges by internal leadership. Another serious challenge was associated with negative behavior and attributes of instructors, such as low levels of academic qualification, lack of dedication, excessive moonlighting, and lack of pedagogical skills (Arega, 2016).

Financial support for research is low. In 2011/12, the research allocation of all universities accounted for only 1 percent of their total budget. In addition, there are limited numbers of personnel available to conduct high quality research and higher education research is conducted predominantly by postgraduate students.

The government has achieved its goal of increasing the ratio of students studying in the science fields but has been unable to provide resources to achieve quality education. Apart from input aspects, the competence of graduates is also an indicator of education quality. Measuring quality of education in this aspect, Arega (2016) argues there is stakeholders dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates, which can be explained by a large number of graduates who cannot be productive without being retrained to meet applied technical skill and communication skill requirements.

Quality in General Education
The performance of education and training policy in ensuring quality is assessed using the results of students at different grades. Examinations were administered by the government in order to get feedback on the quality of education. Table 4 shows baselines for oral reading fluency in seven languages, at grade 2, and table 5 shows the targeted and achieved examination results. The data in both tables clearly show the poor quality of general education in Ethiopia.
Table 4: Baselines for oral reading fluency in seven languages, at grade 2 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Below basic</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afan Oromo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Af-Somali</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadiyyisa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidaamu Afoo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigrinya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolayttatto</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Proficient": Reading fluently with full comprehension  
"Basic": Reading with some fluency and comprehension  
"Below Basic": Reading slowly with limited comprehension  
None: Non-reader


Table 4 shows that students with proficient and basic oral reading fluency constitute more than half of the students only among those who use the Somali language. In all the rest, students who are proficient and basic in their oral reading fluency comprise less than 35 percent. Surprisingly, students who cannot read at grade 2 are as high as 76 percent in Hadiya and 69 percent in Sidamu. The figure is a good warning signal for the government to take appropriate measures to improve education quality in the lower grades.

Every four years a National Learning Assessment is conducted in grades 4, 8, 10 and 12. For ESDP IV, the shares of students scoring at least 50 percent and 75 percent in National Learning Assessments were set as targets. But the gaps between what was planned and what was achieved at all levels were huge (see table 5).

The data in table 4 and in table 5 show similar results with other research findings. Modern education in Ethiopia has been criticized for failing to provide students with depth of understanding, an ability to interpret and apply information, the habit of critical thinking-reflection, the ability to form opinions and to value the expression of diverse opinions, and the ability to apply school knowledge to realities of personal experiences and the problems of everyday life (Demeke, 2011).

At the outset, the 1994 education policy masked quality with what it calls relevance (allocation of students in different fields). It attempted to improve
the investment of resources but the resources supply was challenged by rapid expansions. Tewodaj et al. (2008) argue that the improvement in coverage of education in Ethiopia has been accompanied by a sustained deterioration in quality of education. As evidence to support their argument, the Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio, which was thirty-two in rural areas and thirty-four in urban areas in 1994, had reached seventy-three in rural areas and forty-eight in urban areas by the year 2001. This chapter concludes that quality never get due attention in the Ethiopian education sector reform programs of the period.

### Table 5: National Learning Assessment results against targets set in ESDP IV (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring 50% or above</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring 75% or above</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 7.4. Performance in Correcting the Undemocratic Content of the Previous Education System

In the political context of Ethiopia, the issue of language as a medium of instruction in schools is hotly debated. Studies on language policy (Ramachandran, 2012; Trudell, 2016) unanimously confirm that using a language spoken by the pupil has comparative advantage over using one that is not. Trudell (2016) indicates that the language of instruction has positive impacts on students’ learning outcomes, their overall learning experience, as well as on the wider community as well. A study by Ramachandran (2012) shows that the provision of mother tongue instruction could increase the percentage of the population completing primary schooling by as much as 15 percentage points. Beyond its effect on educational attainment, the mother tongue is important for effective transmission of knowledge, participation, and division of power in society (Ramachandran, 2012). On the other hand, choosing a language that the learners do not master has high costs in terms of poor uptake of the curriculum content, poor performance on examinations, increased dropout
rates, and the marginalization of populations that do not control the language of instruction (Trudell, 2016).

Providing education in mother tongues has been considered as part of democratizing the education system of Ethiopia (Ministry of Education, 2002). In this regard, the government has seen are markable achievement in protecting and fulfilling language rights of Ethiopian nations and nationalities. By the year 2013, the number of languages used as a medium of instruction in primary schools reached thirteen in the most ethnically diversified region of SNNP. While the Amhara region provides education in four alternative languages, Harari, Dire Dawa, and Gambela use three mediums of instruction, as shown in table 6. Similarly, Somali, Afar, and Oromia are offering primary education using two languages. In 2013 Tigray, Benishangul, and Addis Ababa were using a single language as medium of instruction in schools, but more recently Benishangula Gumz and Addis Ababa started providing education in Afan Oromo. Further study is required to know the level of representation of values, cultures, and history of nations and nationalities in the education curriculum.

Table 6: Number of local languages used in primary education in 2007 and percentage of people with mother tongue other than the official language in 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions /City Admin</th>
<th>No. of local languages used in primary education in 2007</th>
<th>% of people with mother tongue other than the official language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Addis Ababa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Afar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Amhara</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Benishangul Gumuz</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dire Dawa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gambela</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Harari</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Oromia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. SNNP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Somali</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tigray</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled from (Vujcich, 2013)
7.5. Limited Job Opportunity Remain a Challenge

Toward the end of the imperial regime, the public sector could no longer absorb secondary school graduates produced by a continuously growing number of schools. Hence, as early as 1973, up to 25 percent of the secondary school graduates were unemployed (Demeke, 2011). This huge level of unemployment continued to be a problem during the Dergue and the EPRDF regimes. Though EPRDF associated the problem of low employment opportunity for students who leave high school with the quality of education in the past, in the end this government itself produced even larger number of graduates who cannot find job.

The EPRDF-led government criticized the past regime due to a high number of youths that completed grade 12 and could not be employed by the government. However, the problems of unemployment have become worsen and now even university graduates are challenged to find jobs. Saint (2004) correctly understood the problem of limited job opportunity for university graduates as early as the problem became apparent. He states that the Ethiopian labor market for university graduates will remain limited in an economy where 80 percent of the labor force is engaged in agriculture and in which the civil service appears amply staffed.

Only steady economic growth will provide the financing required to improve opportunities for gainful employment for the rising numbers of graduates (Saint, 2004). Furthermore, he notes that roughly a century ago, many of Europe’s industrialized countries had tertiary enrolment ratios similar to those of Ethiopia today. In contrast to Ethiopia, however, they (with the exceptions of Italy and Russia) already had less than 50 percent of their labor force engaged in agriculture and had all achieved universal primary education (Fredriksen, 1984). The implication is that a rapid expansion of access to education at all levels may not by itself stimulate economic growth unless it is accompanied by productivity-driven structural changes in the economy. The latter is yet to occur in Ethiopia (Saint, 2004).

At present the government has accepted the fact that the existing job opportunities will not absorb all graduates of universities. In its ESDP V, the government has planned to increase the share of graduates with degree-relevant employment within twelve months after graduation to 80 percent. This means that even if the plan will be 100 percent successful, 20 percent of the graduates will not find a job within a period of one year. Improving the quality of education and expanding job opportunities will continue to be on the agenda in future education policy change initiatives.
8. Conclusions and Implication for Future Research

The education policy of Ethiopia was developed as part of the impetus to replace past legacies with a new order and as a response to acute shortage in equitable access to education, inefficiency in using limited supply of resources due to high repetition and dropout rates, low quality, low relevance, and limitation in upholding democratic values. The 1994 education policy did not receive wide acceptance among stakeholders due to the unbalanced power of the ruling party in the formulation process, but implemented for about 25 years regardless of those criticism. This analysis shows the policy has achieved mixed results. Above all, Ethiopia has been most successful in addressing the problem of low access to education while still struggling to address the problem of inequity and inefficiency. The promotion of the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools has been successful, while other attempts to democratize the education system as stipulated in the policy goals need further studies. Likewise, the education policy under the EPRDF regime has completely failed in improving the quality of education, particularly from the perspective of the competence of graduates. All the assessed evidence suggests the challenge of low quality is valid at all levels of education, from preprimary to higher education. This chapter argues that whatever reform programs may be introduced, if they have no positive effect on quality of education, then they have little relevance.

Unbalanced growth in the job market with the supply of graduates has been a persistent problem for about half a century. The government severely criticized its predecessor on the basis of the failure of education system to provide adequate job opportunity to those who leave schools, but has ended by exacerbating the problem of unemployment. Whether related to the quality of education or other socioeconomic factors, the shortage of job opportunities for those who leave school has only become worse. Based on these conclusions, the author recommends the central focus of education program should be on achieving quality and the employability of graduates, while sustaining the current pace of expansion and creating equitable access to education.

Though the chapter discusses relevant policy issues using secondary data, there are a number of limitations that must be considered in future research. In a bid to cover achievements in all policy goals, this research has compromised elements of depth. Thus, future researchers will benefit in producing further insights by concentrating on one goal of the education policy and one level of education instead of covering the whole education policy at a glance. For example it is essential to study in depth the educational inputs, competence and motivations of teachers, school facilities, and pedagogical
issues. Furthermore, future study is required to know the level of the representation of values, cultures, and the history of nations and nationalities in the educational curriculum.

Acknowledgement

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