

Changes in Ethiopia's Language and Education Policy – Pioneering Reforms?

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The political changes of the ninety-nineties in Ethiopia were connected with a far-reaching education reform and a transition from the use of only Amharic and English as media of instruction to a system that uses a multi-lingual approach to education. At present 25 local languages are told to be already used at primary level as medium of instruction. Despite the overall success the reform's main obstacle is overcoming material and professional shortages in view of a growing number of pupils.

Introduction

The existing multiethnic and multilingual situation is a challenge to the education system of Ethiopia. Education can only be successful by taking into account the social, cultural and political background of the country. Currently already 25 of the 84 languages spoken in Ethiopia are told to be used as media of instruction in the primary education. This new language and education policy could be a model for other countries with a multilingual situation. Researches in different African countries using the former colonial language as a medium of instruction have shown that the use of a foreign language or a language unknown to the child will have a negative influence on the results and duration of his study, the behaviour of the pupil in class and the development of his personality³.

The main focus of our research was on the change from using Amharic as the only medium of instruction to using various local languages as media of instruction at primary level. Further regard was given to the impact of the education reform on the duration of school attendance, especially to enrolment and dropout rates and the challenges that these two factors bear for this education system.

Value and implementation of mother tongue education

Language is a tool of communication and knowledge as well as an indicator of cultural identity of an individual or a group. The Right of Language has been mentioned in international treaties such as the Anti-Discrimination Act of the Charta of Human Rights. The right to be educated in one's own language has been acknowledged in the UNESCO-Declaration. The new Ethiopian Constitution of 1994 is based upon the principles of democracy and decentralisation.⁴ Each regional state of the Federal

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³ Results of the *Ife*-project in Nigeria (1970-78) show that pupils taught in their mother tongue Yoruba had much better results in the examinations, and mastered all topics as well as English much better than those who were taught in English.

⁴ Teferra 1999, p. 84; Wartenberg 2001, p. 20.

Republic of Ethiopia has the constitutional right to choose, use and to develop the individual languages spoken there and to promote the cultures of its citizens.⁵ In the course of decentralisation each regional state became responsible for educational issues at the primary level meaning for instance that regional authorities decide what languages should be used as media of instruction in primary education.

Experts of UNESCO had already recommended the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in 1951⁶. Broadly implementing a mother tongue education policy in countries with a heterogeneous language situation such as Ethiopia might seem like a mammoth project. In Ethiopia with its more than 80 languages it is virtually impossible to integrate all local languages in the education system not least since many of these languages are not yet adequately developed. Only about 24 of these languages have started to be used as written languages. Despite of the existing problems 25 local languages have already been chosen to become introduced as media of instruction at the primary level. (see appendix table 1)

Decisive criteria for the selection of a regional language as a medium of instruction in Ethiopia in the 1990s were mentioned by Dhaba Hundie⁷:

- Availability of written materials such as books, newspapers etc.
- Number of educated people in the respective nationalities
- Being the language of larger ethnic groups in Ethiopia⁸

The primary language serving these criteria was Amharic which had already been used as a medium of instruction at primary level for decades. Tigrinya, Oromo, Sidama and Wolayita could also be chosen since they had been used in the non-formal education for about two decades.⁹

Research results have shown that mother tongue education should cover the teaching of the mother tongue as a subject *and* using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction¹⁰. Learning in a language that is not familiar to the child is a problem in so far as the child has to learn that language first before it is able to understand the contents of the lectures. This will quite often lead to a situation where the child cannot fully grasp the lessons' contents.

Ethiopia's approach has first and foremost been the introduction of local languages as a medium of instruction at the primary level and followed multilingual education strategies. Ethiopian educational experts of the several regions and zones decided whether the mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction at the first cycle (1st– 4th grade) or during the complete primary level. That means that the medium of instruction can not only be different within a regional state but sometimes even within zones of a region with a multiethnic situation. Local languages are used as a medium of instruction up to the 8th grade in the Oromiya, Amhara, and Tigray regions as well as in Addis Ababa. The SNNP (Southern Nations, Nationalities and People) are using the respective local languages only in the first cycle. Even if in the SNNP Regional State English is introduced as the medium of instruction in the 5th grade the question remains how consistent this use is in a reality where the English skills of the pupils and sometimes even those of the teachers in the visited schools did not seem to be sufficient.

⁵ Federal Negarit Gazeta 1995, p. 78.

⁶ Wolff 2002, 133; Bamgbose 2000, p. 76.

⁷ He was in the early 1990s a member of a commission working out a study on how local languages could be applied in education.

⁸ Dhaba 2005, Interview.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Wolff 2002, pp. 143.

Amharic as a medium of instruction is preferred in urban areas due to the multiethnic characters of many towns where the inhabitants often only share the *lingua franca*. In the evaluated town Shehet (Afar region) only Amharic is still used as a medium of instruction at primary level but the local language Afar is currently being introduced as a medium of instruction at primary level throughout the Afar region. An expert of the education bureau in Shehet stated that Afar is already developed enough to be completely integrated into the education sector, teaching materials are available, but there were not yet enough teachers who had graduated from the teacher training programme at the Teacher Training Institutes (TTI) for Afar¹¹.

It depends mainly on the stage of development of a language up to which grade a language is used as a medium of instruction. Many languages do not have any technical terms needed for scientific subjects. Furthermore the access to and preparation of teaching materials in the respective local languages are crucial. Only Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya are used as media of instruction throughout the whole primary level. Especially the SNNPRS seems to have difficulties in providing sufficient teaching materials written in the local languages. This could be due to the fact that in the SNNPRS more local languages have been introduced than in any other region. Reasons such as the lack of written literature as additional teaching materials particularly for the upper grades, and the absence of written grammars and scientific terms in most of the languages used in the SNNPRS make the implementation of mother tongue education difficult. The codification of grammar and development of technical terms for every language are time-consuming and costly. Despite these problems relatively small ethnic groups, like the Hadiya and the Kafa have already developed dictionaries and grammars for their languages. Larger ethnic groups have not yet reached this status of development. Very often they could not even compromise about what dialect should be used as the standard for developing the language. This proves the decisiveness of the commitment and will of the respective ethnic groups to develop their own languages and to successfully implement their local languages into the education sector. It becomes apparent that the size of an ethnic group plays only a minor role for the development of its language.

The close cooperation of various language and education institutes is another serious factor. In the SNNPR an „Institute for Study of Nations and Nationalities“ has been established by the regional government. One of its functions is developing regional languages. An education expert of the SNNPR explained why research on the local languages is so important:

When science and technology are developed and when the language remains behind, the language can not be strong enough to accumulate the scientific concepts. Therefore the language must try to follow the development of technology and science.¹²

It needs to be emphasized that cooperation between various regional education bureaus and these institutions and universities is essential, but had been neglected until recently¹³.

The local languages are not only being used as media of instruction but also taught as subjects from the 1st grade up to the 8th grade. Amharic is taught as a subject from the 3rd or 5th grade up to the 8th grade to guarantee wider communication possibilities. As

¹¹ Tekeste 2006, Interview.

¹² Fisaha 2006, Interview.

¹³ Fisaha 2006, Interview.

English becomes the medium of instruction at the beginning of the second cycle or the beginning of the secondary education it is already introduced as a subject at the first grade to ensure adequate language knowledge. In regions where English becomes the medium of instruction as early as in the 2nd cycle the children's and many teacher's inadequate knowledge of English at this level makes interaction in the classroom and the understanding of subject matters difficult. In general, the new education strategies result in a mostly bilingual education of the Amharic speaking children and a trilingual education of the other children using the local language, Amharic and English.

Educational indicators

To evaluate the influence and success of the mother tongue education policy it is necessary to utilize certain general educational indicators corresponding to international standards. These educational indicators are tools providing information on the performance of an education system. The Ethiopian government has prepared an Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) in order to fulfil the policy recommendations and targets. (see appendix table 2) The ESDP's aim is to measure progress by using the various indicators as well as providing the necessary financial and human resources¹⁴.

One indicator of a successful education system is primary school completion. To evaluate primary school completion it is necessary to take a deeper look on factors such as enrolment and dropout rates. Different research results on the usage of vernacular languages as media of instruction ascertained a direct influence on enrolment and dropout rates¹⁵.

Enrolment rate

The main statistical indicator referring to the size of the education system is the GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio). It describes the percentage of total enrolment at primary schools irrespective of the pupils' real age. The enrolment rate at the Ethiopian national level has increased from 30% to about 80% during the last 10 years¹⁶. Recent statistics on primary education given by the Ministry of Education and published by the daily newspaper "Ethiopian Herald" show that primary education had already reached a GER of 89% in April 2006¹⁷. This positive trend was affirmatively recognized by the chairman of the UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura. He views the results of the Ethiopian education policy as a promising sign for successfully achieving the UN-Millennium Development Goals¹⁸ according to which a universal primary education should be reached in 2015. Children worldwide, boys and girls alike, should be able to complete primary schooling¹⁹.

This development can be granted to various measures of increasing enrolment. The following reasons for this increase were given:

The numbers of primary schools and teachers have increased considerably during the last years.

Efforts in promoting education, especially girls' education, by the government have a significant impact.

¹⁴ Ministry of Education 2002, p. 60.

¹⁵ Wolff 2002, p.135; Reh 1981, p.542.

¹⁶ Ministry of Education 2002, p. 85; National Education Statistics 2004/05, p. 23.

¹⁷ The Ethiopian Herald, 16.04.2006, p.1.

¹⁸ The Ethiopian Herald, 16.04.2006, p.1.

¹⁹ UN-Millennium Development Goals Report. 2006, p. 4-15.

The introduction of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, particularly in rural areas, leads to an increasing enrolment rate. About 80% of Ethiopia's population live in rural areas²⁰. Most of the peasants except for those living in the Amhara region do not have any or only small access to the *lingua franca* Amharic. Mother tongue education is not as important in urban areas where a multilingual situation exists and the children can be sufficiently educated in a language familiar to them that may not necessarily be their mother tongue.

Dropout rate

The dropout rate is used to measure the efficiency of the education system. It shows how many graduates finish a particular education cycle or level successfully. According to the national statistics of 2004/05 the dropout rate could be reduced from 19.2% in 2002/03 to 14.4% in 2003/04. The trend to increasing dropout rates between 2000/01 and 2002/03 could thus be significantly reversed. When comparing the regional²¹ to the national dropout rate of 2003/04 it becomes apparent that Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Tigray and Harari were ahead of the national average, out of these Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa had already reached the ESDP-target (8.9%) set for 2004/05. Even so it must be emphasized that substantial differences between zones and districts exist in nearly all regions. The SNNPRS, which was the regional focal point in our research, is a good example for the development of the dropout rate at the regional level. This federal state shows a tremendous decrease in dropout rates at primary level, too. This trend was especially impressive in the period from 2003/04 to 2004/05 when the regional dropout rate could be reduced from 21.6% to 11.5%.²²

The highest number of dropouts occurred after the 1st grade and the second highest after the 4th grade at the end of the 1990s²³. After the evaluation of all collected data and various official statistics we can say that the highest dropout rate is still to be found after the 1st grade, but there is a general shift of the second highest dropout rate from the 4th to the 7th grade. More pupils are completing the first cycle but many of them fail to complete the second cycle. Regarding the gender-disparity one can state that the dropout rate among girls is not as high as it had been in the past. The trend even points towards a higher dropout rate among boys especially after the 7th grade²⁴. For more than two years the national dropout rate has been higher among boys in all grades though this national trend can not be applied to every region.

Although the completion rate in both grades increased significantly it is lower for girls than for boys since the enrolment rate of girls is still below that of boys. Generally, the overall decreasing dropout rates indicate that pupils attend school longer than they did in the past.

The average attendance of pupils before they drop out is 3.5 years for boys and 3.6 years for girls²⁵. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the gender disparity will either vanish in the future or even be reversed.

Reasons for dropping out and measures to reduce dropout rates shall be outlined as follows. Among the rural population a prejudice towards girls' education still prevails. Despite the measures taken by both the government and the NGO's to fight under age

²⁰ UNDP. HDR Report. 2005.

²¹ Data related to 2002/03.

²² SNNPR Education Statistics 2004/05, p.106, 107.

²³ Wartenberg 1999, p. 71.

²⁴ National Education Statistics 2004/05, p. 96; 2003/04, p.96; 2002/03, p. 91.

²⁵ National Education Statistics 2004/05, p.18.

marriage many girls in rural areas are still getting married at a very early age²⁶. After marriage many of the girls are forced to leave school. According to interviewed educational experts the introduction of mother tongue education is essential in reaching the goal of keeping children longer in school. The use of the mother tongue increases the child's chances to achieve better results and therefore also strengthens his/her motivation in the learning process. Language is not only an important link between the child and the school, but also between the parents and the school.

Other factors beside the use of mother tongue play a role in reducing dropouts as well: Although school attendance is not compulsory for children in Ethiopia²⁷, teachers often visit families of absent pupils in order to get into a dialogue with their parents and to encourage the pupils to continue their education.

Another important tool to keep pupils from dropping out is the so called 'self-contained classroom management' (SCCM). In the SCCM only one teacher is responsible for one class. In this form of classroom management the teacher also acts as a contact person for the pupils, especially during the first cycle of primary education. Furthermore a single teacher can better take into account the family and social relations of the pupils.²⁸ A better communication between the teacher and the parents changes both the attitude of the parents towards education and the attitude of the children towards school with the result being a more intensive relationship between parents and the teacher.

Beside the SCCM other new teaching methods have been introduced as well trying to furthermore facilitate the communication not only between the teacher and the pupils but also among the pupils themselves. Various subjects are taught with the help of a method called the 'pupil centre approach'. This learner-centred methodology puts the emphasis on the children's needs, especially in regard to their physical and intellectual development, their language and sensory-motor. The 'pupil centre approach' is based on different teaching methods such as learning through cooperation, active involvement and participation²⁹. Nevertheless it can't be concluded automatically that the pupils' motivation to ask questions in the classroom increases through the introduction of SCCM, the 'pupil centre approach' and mother tongue education. Most of the pupils only participate actively when asked by their teacher. The question remains if the realization of an interactive teaching method is possible in crowded classrooms, which are still the norm in Ethiopia.

As another measure to make school more attractive for the pupils all evaluated primary schools offer additional programmes. Pupils with interests in literature, dance, sports, agriculture, first aid, HIV/Aids and gender issues are regularly offered facultative tutorials and clubs. During the tutorials pupils receive more extensive support and get a chance to talk about their problems.³⁰ As a direct result of these tutorials the communication between pupils and teachers is improving and school attendance becomes more attractive.

The various problems leading pupils to drop out of school cannot be solved without an active participation of the community. New different means should be found to get parents to send their children, especially the girls, to school regularly³¹. A stronger

²⁶ Konjit 2005, Interview.

²⁷ The introduction of compulsory education will take place 2 in 015.

²⁸ Ministry of Education 2002, p. 122-126.

²⁹ Temechegn 2002, p. 31-32.

³⁰ Konjit 2005, Interview.

³¹ UNESCO Report for Ethiopia 2001, p.10.

integration of the parents into school activities is desirable and a better communication between parents and teachers is decisive. In some of the evaluated schools so-called parents' committees have been established. These parents committees decide what kind of measures should be taken to support the schools and how the money donated by themselves and the community should be distributed.

Long distances to the schools are a major problem in rural Ethiopia. Due to this situation some parents do not let their daughters attend school. There are two reasons for this: Girls cannot help with the housework while being at school and there is a realistic fear of a possibly violent attack or sexual harassment. To decrease the long school distances the establishment of so-called 'satellite schools' is fostered. These satellite schools are built close to settlements depending on the number of their inhabitants. These provisional schools make it possible for children to spend at least their first school year closer to their homes. Depending on the annual enrolment and dropout rates school service may be extended beyond the first grade.

Economic problems in the children's families are still the main reason for dropping out. Although primary education is free school uniforms and teaching materials have to be bought in some of the schools. Headmasters of primary schools in rural areas often do not force their pupils to wear school uniforms in order to relieve the parents financially. The general economic situation in Ethiopia forces many children to contribute to the family income. One of the measures to minimize the negative effects of this is to adapt school holidays to the harvest seasons. Another measure is the so-called 'shift learning' - each school offers two shifts. This allows pupils to attend either the morning or the afternoon shift. This shift-system is a measure to deal with the increasing number of pupils and allows pupils to fulfil their duties at home.

Beside the above mentioned reasons health and nutrition issues also have an impact on the dropout rates. Diseases like Malaria, TBC and the growing number of HIV-infections take their toll on the people. Children are left as orphans, have to take care of their relatives or are sick themselves. Drought and malnutrition make people, especially children, vulnerable to diseases like chronic diarrhoea.

The different measures to reduce dropout rates that have been described above are mainly of a preventive nature. In the process of successfully realizing these measures the teachers with their individual social, pedagogical and professional skills play a key role.

Teacher education

The introduction of mother tongue education requires specially qualified teachers. Teachers are directly involved in implementing the education reform. Due to the establishment of additional Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) and Institutes (TTI) the number of teachers has already increased³². Furthermore in various regions TTI's have been upgraded to TTC's.

At the beginning of the 1990's one of the main problems had been that all teachers were trained in Amharic only. Therefore the teachers had to be trained for the introduction of mother tongue education and the implementation of the new curricula as a thorough knowledge of the structure and grammar of a local language going to be introduced as a medium of instruction is needed. Several of the chosen 25 languages

³² The Teacher Training Institute trains teachers and gives further vocational training for teachers of the first cycle of primary education. The Teacher Training College trains teachers for the second cycle of primary education and for secondary schools.

have never been written before. Grammars and dictionaries, newspapers, journals or books do not yet exist for most of these languages.

The expanding education sector demanded more teachers in order to manage the growing number of schools and pupils. Between 2000/01 and 2004/05 the number of teachers could be increased by about 40%³³. Until the end of the 1990s the teachers' training at both the TTI and TTC started after the 12th grade.³⁴ Recently the teacher education has been restructured and starts now after the 10th grade. This results in more students becoming available for teacher training since far more complete the 10th grade. In the TTI a certificate for teaching in the first cycle can be obtained within one year. The TTC offers a diploma programme of three years. It is questionable if a satisfactory teacher training can be reached in that way, especially for the first cycle.

At the national level the set target for the proportion of certified teachers in the schools was 99% for the first cycle (TTI) and 80% for the second cycle (TTC) in 2004/05. Although most regions are near the set target only the SNNPR could reach the goal for the first cycle of primary education. Nationwide about 97% of the teachers had the TTI- certificate in 2004/05. The share of qualified teachers in the second cycle was in 2004/05 with about 55% far below the goal of 80%, with the exception of Addis Ababa. As a result of the above explained measurements the number of TTC diploma teachers could nevertheless be increased in 2004/05.³⁵

When evaluating these quantitative efforts undertaken by the regions the question remains if the quality of teacher education is adequate. Special attention has to be given to the problems created through the introduction of the local languages as media of instruction. Main problems are the lack of teacher training materials in the respective local languages as well as of qualified teacher trainers.³⁶ In order to improve the quality of teacher education the obligatory phase of practical training has been extended³⁷.

Teacher motivation

Beside the importance of a high quality teacher education the motivation of teachers should not be underestimated. Teacher motivation plays a key role for a qualified elementary education. When asked what motivated them to become a teacher most of the interviewed trainees replied that the teacher profession guarantees a safe income. Many trainees view the teacher training as a possibility to study their preferred subject at a university later. This implies that many trainees look at the teacher training as a chance for further qualification rather than a profession. According to different educational experts the teaching profession does generally not have a very good reputation due to the low social status of teachers in society, a relatively low salary, and very often poor working conditions. These problems lead to a strong dissatisfaction among the teachers and to a fluctuation process. Teachers as well as headmasters openly confirmed that they would prefer to work in the educational administration rather than in school. The reasons for the ongoing fluctuation process can be found in a lack of acknowledgment, low financial benefits, low quality of teacher education, poor equipment in the schools and a capacity problem. A high level of fluctuation started to

³³ In 2000/01 121,077 and in 2004/05 171,079 primary teachers have already been employed. National Education Statistics 2004/05, p.31.

³⁴ Wartenberg 2001, p.34.

³⁵ Increase of TTC diploma teachers of about 20 percentage points for 2004/05 compared to 2003/04. National Education Statistics 2003/04, p.22; 2004/05, p.23.

³⁶ Agegnehu 2005, Interview; Tesfai 2005, Interview.

³⁷ Sahlü 2005, Interview; Agegnehu 2005, Interview.

occur after local languages had been introduced as media of instruction. The rapid expansion of the new education system and rising numbers of pupils caused not just an increasing demand for teachers but also the fluctuation of teachers to higher education sectors. Furthermore the growing sector of private educational institutions attracted many teachers as these promised higher incomes.³⁸ In order to limit this fluctuation the graduates of the governmental TTI's and TTC's have to serve a minimum of two years at schools in rural areas.

In spite of these fluctuation tendencies a high level of dedication and self-initiative could be noticed among the teachers at the visited schools. In different ways teachers committed themselves to improving the educational process, even beyond their working hours. The lack of teaching and illustrated materials is compensated by the teachers through creating these on their own. It has to be taken into consideration to what extent self-initiative is required, demanded and/or supported by the schools, the educational system and/or the society. Promoting and supporting self-initiative is very important as it is one of several factors for decreasing the high fluctuation inside the education system. A raised motivation has a positive effect on the individual initiatives of the teachers and therefore leads to a more positive classroom situation.

The various described problems require different approaches and solutions. It has to be stressed once more that the single regions and zones are responsible themselves to develop their language(s) and to provide teaching materials for all subjects in the respective local language. These materials have to take into account the cultural background of the respective regions. Teachers remaining in their schools and providing education of high quality should receive incentives such as an adequate financial reward based on their performance.

Final Remarks

The efforts of the education reform have the aim to incorporate all parts of the society and thus to acknowledge the multiethnic character of Ethiopia. An aspect of utmost importance in reaching this goal is the introduction of mother tongue education. The introduction of mother tongue education is a precondition to accomplish complete schooling and a basic education for all.

Since the beginning of the education reforms enrolment rates have increased tremendously. Especially the inhabitants of the rural areas can now participate in the education system. High dropout rates are one of the main problems the expanding education system faces. In the course of the ever growing number of pupils the dropout rates at primary level have increased. The collected data and the official education statistics indicate that there are ways to successfully deal with this problem. To what extent the usage of mother tongue education contributes to decreasing dropout rates could not be evaluated. However, questioned educational experts confirmed that mother tongue education has a significant impact on decreasing dropout rates especially in rural areas. Beside the use of mother tongues other factors such as teacher qualification and motivation as well as infrastructure and equipment of the primary schools have influenced the dropout rates. Furthermore the lack of teaching materials and text books, and the increasing numbers of pupils have an effect as well.

Having these challenges in mind the development of the Ethiopian education system is correctly described as "...a race between overcoming materials, personal and

³⁸ Wartenberg 2005, Interview.

professional shortages on the one hand, and the growing numbers of pupils as well as the rising demands towards the education system on the other hand“³⁹. The level of implementation of the language reform varies among and within the regions. Several factors are playing a role, although to different extents, in all federal states. The poor infrastructure negatively affects especially the rural areas. Despite the increasing public education expenditure there are still considerable differences in the financial situations of the various federal states and of urban and rural areas. The financial situation has a direct influence on the distribution of teaching materials and staff recruitment, including e.g. printing of new books or payment of researchers for developing local languages. The availability of newspapers, magazines and books is an important factor for the successful and sustainable implementation of mother tongue education and the development of local languages but varies significantly within the regions.

For the improvement of the educational situation in Ethiopia a high quality of teacher training as well as a better appreciation of the teachers are indispensable. Assuming a tight financial situation in the near future and taking into account the increasing numbers of pupils, the creativity and the commitment of the teachers and teacher trainers are indispensable. Therefore it is necessary to create a system of professional carrier evaluation. Such a system is proposed in the ESDP II⁴⁰, but has not yet been put into action.

Furthermore the involvement of the community is crucial in achieving a sustainable development in the education sector. Awareness campaigns are decisive in eradicating prejudices, especially against mother tongue and girls' education. The campaigns and measures for improving education have to be adapted to the specific needs of the respective regions. Specific regional conditions call for individual approaches. A region like the SNNPR with a multitude of languages being used as media of instruction faces special challenges in the development of education materials and in the implementation of the education reform. Other regions like the Afar region need to find educational approaches in order to reach their partly half-nomadic populations.

The engagement and commitment of the local planners and decision-makers is very important in the process of the development of the respective languages. To guarantee an effective education thorough planning and efficient management are preconditions. Bureaucracy, lack of authority and the hierarchical structure in the decision making process limit the self responsible action of educational actors⁴¹ and thereby prevent a successful implementation of the educational reforms.

We can summarize that the current trilingual language policy in the primary education of Ethiopia corresponds to the multiethnic character of the country. This is not only a pedagogical approach but also an innovative cultural and economic policy with an international orientation. The attempt to embed socio-cultural issues into education is of utmost importance. Only this attempt guarantees that the multiethnic setting of the country is adequately incorporated and that the diversity of the country can be sustained. However, a precondition for the successful implementation of the education policy is a sufficient number of teaching aids of high quality. This calls for further development of the local languages by developing more educational materials and implementing new didactics and methodology. Only through combining qualitative

³⁹ Wartenberg 2001, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Education 2002, p. 54.

⁴¹ Wartenberg 2005, Interview.

and quantitative aspects of education strategies it will be possible to reach the UN-Millennium Development Goal of complete schooling by 2015.

We would like to conclude saying that the introduction of mother tongue education can be described as pioneering. The integration of 25 local languages into the educational system seems to be a unique effort that could be exemplary for other multiethnic countries.

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Appendix

Table 1: List of Ethiopian Languages used in primary school as medium of instruction and as a school subject

Languages	Ethnic Group Members	Mother Tongue Speakers
<i>Semitic language group</i>		
Amharic*	16,007,933 ⁴²	n.d.a.
Harari	21,888	21,283
Silte*	900,348	191,331
Tigrinya	3,284,443	3,224,875
<i>Omotic language group</i>		
Dawro*	n.d.a.	n.d.a.
Gamo*	719,862	690,069
Gofa*	42,448	42,838
Kafa*	599,146	569,626
Konta*	49,625	48,987
Koore*	107,586	103,879
Wolayita*	1,268,445	1,231,674
<i>Nilo-Saharan language group</i>		
Anuak	45,656	45,646
Berta	118,670	118,670
Mesengo	15,329	15,152
Nuer	64,527	64,907
<i>Cushitic language group</i>		
Afar	972,766	965,462
Awngi	397,494	356,980
Gedeo*	639,879	637,082
Hadiya*	927,747	923,957
Hamtanga	158,225	143,369
Kambata*	499,531	487,654
Kebena*	35,065	35,783
Oromo	30,000,000 ⁴³	n.d.a.
Sidama*	1,842,444	1,876,329
Somali	3,139,321	3,187,053

* School Languages of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region⁴⁴

Sources: Girma A. Demeke 2005; Berhanu Bogale 2007, p. 8.

⁴² Ethnologue 2006, Report for Ethiopia.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Fisaha 2006, Interview.

Table 2: Comparison with Key Performance Indicators of the ESDP

No	Suggested Indicators	Base Year 00/01	Status of 04/05	Tar. Set 04/05	Tar. Set ⁴⁵ 09/10
1.	Budgetary and Expenditure Indicators				
	Education's share of the total budget	13.8%	16.7% ⁴⁶	19,0%	n.y.a.
2.	Access Indicators				
	Gross enrolment rate at (1-8) level	57.4%	79.8%	65.0%	95.8%
	>>>> Girls' GER	47.0%	71.5%	57.0%	94.7%
	>>>> Boys' GER	67.3%	88.0%	72.8%	97.4%
	Total number of primary schools	11780	16513	13201	n.y.a.
3.	Quality Indicators				
	Share of qualified prim. (1-4) teachers	96.6%	97.1%	99.0%	99.8%
	Share of qualified prim. (5-8) teachers	23.9%	54.8%	80.0%	99.3%
4.	Efficiency Indicators				
	Grade 1 dropout rate	27.9%	22.4%	14,2%	0.24%
	Total primary school dropout rate	17.8%	14.4%	8.9%	0.30%
	Avg. primary school dropout for girls	16.9%	13.6%	8.5%	0.29%
5.	Equity Indicators GER in the most underserved regions				
	>>>> Afar	11.5%	20.9%	20.0%	90.0%
	>>>> Somali ⁴⁷	10.6%	23.3%	20.0%	90.0%
	GER: Share of girls in primary school enrolment (1-8)	40.3%	44.2%	43.3%	48.6%

Source: National Education Statistics 2004/05, p.23 (shortened)

Note: Under Status of 2004/05 column data related dropout indicates for the year of 2003/04 under Status of 2000/01 column data related dropout indicates for the year of 1999/2000. The total estimated population of Ethiopia was about 71 millions in the year 2004/05⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Tigray Education Statistics, 2004/05, p.35.

⁴⁶ Provisional expenditure of 2004/05.

⁴⁷ Data of 2003/04.

⁴⁸ National Education Statistics 2004/05, p.1.