Devolution Rhetoric and Practice of Curriculum Policymaking in Ethiopian Primary Education

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Abstract

This paper sketches the rhetoric and practices of curricular devolution since the publication of education and training policy. By exploring curriculum, management guidelines and other relevant policy documents, this paper argues that within a decentralized federal system of governance primary curriculum provisions still suffer from a centralized control. The Ministry dominates curriculum policy decision environment in the name of 'setting & maintaining of standards', 'provisions of assistance' and 'ensures whether the curriculum developed at all levels was free from gender, cultural and political bias'. Capitalizing these discretions, the Ministry goes beyond its jurisdiction in developing primary curriculum. As a result, this paper recommends that regional states balance the power struggle over primary curriculum decision environment, untie themselves to some extent, exercise their policy right and play effectively as genuine stakeholders in the provisions of meaningful and localized curriculum for the only forms of education available to the majority of their constituencies.

1. Introduction

Until the new proposal for education (TGE 1994a), centralized governance was an official government policy. With the establishment of the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts in the 1930s' Emperor Haileselassie held the portfolio of the Ministry until the 1960's. This indicates the closer link education had with government. Similarly, during the military rule (1974-1991), centralism was the rule of the thumb that made ERGESE propose "democratic centralism with follow-up and controlling mechanisms at all levels" (MOE 1986:4).

Although at the end of the 1980s' there was a quest towards "new relationship for the education system in a decentralized structure, no significant task was taken in this respect and the education system remained highly centralized and bureaucratic" (PHRD 1996; TGE 1994a; b). Hence, the long bureaucratic chain was not only unresponsive to the needs of the lower level of education, but also created a system characterized as inefficient in terms of addressing the problems of education (PHRD 1996).

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In Ethiopia the 1990s' was marked by attempts at reforming education. This was part of the emergence of a new political philosophy by EPRDF in 1991 – a regime that claimed to end the anti-democratic nature of the past regimes and abolish suppression exercised over the rights of ethnic groups by granting rights to self governance and to advance ones culture through education. Based on this premise, ethnic federal structure of administration was introduced by the Transitional Charter and later was endorsed by the Federal Constitution (FDRE 1995:7). These developments, argued Tekeste (1993), justify the need and context for educational decentralization.

The policy of regionalization was identified as the "single most significant factor affecting MOE efforts to reform and rehabilitate education" (USAID 1992). Taking this political development, education policy proposal took decentralization as one of the urgent concern towards "the evolution of a decentralized, efficient and professionally coordinated participatory system" (TGE 1994a: 5). As a result, there was an attempt to devolve the highly centralized education system with divisions of power and responsibilities between the federal Ministry, regional states and lower level of educational structures (MOE 1995; 2002).

Despite the Ministry's and government's successful devolution rhetoric (MOI 2002a; MOE 2002; MOE 1999), several studies documented the challenges encountered during regionalization policy implementation that prompts to question the whole endeavour. Although "unusual degree of autonomy" was rendered to the regional states (Kraft 1995; Watson & Lissane 2005), subsequent developments resulted in administration more akin to deconcentration below the regional level (Habtamu 2001; World Bank 2000; Derebssa 1998).

Others also documented the role of several other factors: limited capacity both at the federal Ministry and regional levels (Watson & Lissane 2005, Craft 1995, Ayalew 2000); the influence of the legacy of decades of centralized hierarchy aimed at maintaining control and the dominance of the ruling party (Halderman 2004) and speedy policy implementation (Tekeste 1996). Kraft's comment very well expounds this:

> The Ethiopian Government appears to have successfully decentralized more power to the regions than is found in most other countries, and it appears to this observer that the Regions, at least in education, now have sufficient decision making power to do almost any thing they want. In the absence of trained staff, equipment, materials and budget, however,

they are still very dependent on the centre, and will probably remain so for some time to come. It is a superb chance; however, to do genuine localization of the curriculum, time schedules etc, something almost no other country in the world has successfully carried out (Kraft 1995:2).

In spite of such alleged regional authority, knowledge about the implication of the emerging regionalization on education and early commitment of the Ministry officials (USAID 1992), little genuine localization was expected in light of the constraints encountered. Generally, this paper attempts to address one of the least understood and researched areas of curriculum scholarship in Ethiopian context. Hence, its purpose is twofold: to contribute to existing national debate and to stimulate further discussion in light of the conflicting accounts to the devolution proposal. With this background, the study proceeds to discuss the theoretical framework used, analyse the devolution proposal and finally see how primary curriculum devolution was attempted in practice.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study draws on current scholarship in curriculum and education policy making (Ross 2000; Beyer & Liston 1996; McCulloch et al., 2000; Apple 1979), and the elevation of educational concerns in contemporary Ethiopian politics (Inter African Group 2004; African Initiative 2005). Unlike current curriculum scholarship in Ethiopia, which is preoccupied to attain a 'value-free' curriculum and focuses on means-end relationships, for this study curriculum should not be disentangled from political and cultural forces and hence very crucial in contemporary social life (Ross 2000; Beyer & Liston 1996; McCulloch et al., 2000; Apple 1979).

In the policy making process, more specifically in the context of policy influence different discourses and ideologies are constructed to shape the policy text (Bowe, Ball with Gold 1992). Different interest groups with competing visions of 'the good life' struggle to shape the curriculum policy (Beyer & Liston 1996). Too often, question of decision-making is analyzed with reference to the need to move from centralized to school-based approaches (Morris 1998).

The sharp and uncompromised distinctions commonly made between centralized and decentralized decision making to explain control exercised

over school curriculum was found to be inadequate. Observing experiences of several countries, Skilbeck (1989: 16-17) argues that there is a "shifting pattern" where the "conventional centralized-decentralized distinction is breaking down," resulting in "both devolution and new forms of concentration."

Whatever the framework, key concerns of curriculum policymaking are the politics associated with how curriculum decisions are being made (ICDR 1992; Ball 1990; Apple 1989). In Ethiopian context, curriculum experts are advised to start with key questions whenever they have to make curricular decisions. These key questions, which are formulated by Foshay (1975), run as follows: *who should learn what, when, how, why, under what circumstances, governance and cost* (ICDR 1992:4)(emphasis is mine). Similarly, for Morris (1998: 101) curriculum policymaking is concerned with questions like:

- Who is involved in making decisions on different components of the curriculum?
- Which has the power to control the curriculum? and
- What does the decision affect?

In this study, curriculum policymaking was analyzed by taking into account who (in this case either the ministry or regional states) made decisions over elements of primary curriculum – curriculum goals and objectives, subject content, time required, period allotted, methods of teaching and methods of assessment.

3. The Rhetoric of Primary Curriculum Policymaking – The New Proposal

The slogan 'One *Ethiopia*' and 'Ethiopian unity or death', which was professed by the *Dergue regime*, was replaced by a complete antithesis of it in 1991. Then the new catchphrase emphasizes the rights of various ethnic groups to self-determination including secession (Tekeste 1996; FDRE 1995; TGE 1991). The Charter that was issued by EPRDF in July 1991 introduced a new political philosophy that claimed to tackle previous political suppression, economic exploitation and cultural oppression by

previous regimes (TGE 1991). In discussing the new development made by the Charter, Tekeste (1993: 3) writes:

> In a general sense the Charter of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) of July 1991 provides the context for the measures taken to reform or restructure the education sector. The charter, it is to be recalled, is built upon the rights of nations and nationalities to self determination up to and including session. This recognition has implied the exercise of substantial rights by the more powerful ethnic groups (nations and nationalities) in the country.

To effect this provision, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) issued two important proclamations (TGE 1992; 1993) that could be recognized as pillars to the decentralization proposal. Due to Proclamation 7/ 1992, Transitional Regional Councils assumed overall political power over internal affairs including the determination of working language (Article 15, c) except such matters as defence, foreign affairs & economic policy (Article 9). Regional states are empowered to plan educational provisions based on relevant national policy. In relation to education, the proclamation states that National/ Regional Self-Governments:

> ... shall have power and duties to plan, direct and supervise social and economic development programs in accordance with the relevant policy of the Central Government (Article 10, 3)

With the change from TGE to Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in 1995, the House of Peoples Representative (HoPR) revised previous proclamation (FDRE 1995b). Based on the power vested in the FDRE, HoPR defined power & duties of the federal executive organs (FDRE 1995a) and the Ministry of Education was given 15 key responsibilities.

Without clear policy discretions to determine duties and powers of the regional, zonal and woreda educational offices (FDRE 1995b), the Ministry established guidelines (MOE 1995, 2002). Based on the new development, the Ministry who happened to have control on virtually everything was redefined and made responsible only on key policy matters leaving the management of policy implementation to regional states and lower educational structures (see Box 1).

In delineating the domain of responsibility for the Ministry, one document specified about 15 duties and powers (FDRE 1995b). Some of the key governing duties assigned to the ministry with implications to curriculum policymaking include:

- Determine and supervise the implementation of country's educational standards;
- Determine the educational curriculum offered at the level of senior secondary schools, higher education institutions and training institutions of a similar status, and the type and standard of certificates to be awarded to students; provide assistance to Regional Governments in the preparation of educational curriculum for elementary and junior secondary schools; ensure that the curriculum prepared at any level is free from religious, political and cultural influences;
- Cause the preparation and offering of examinations given at the national level for the purposes of promoting students from one level of education to another and for various recruitments; award certificate thereto;
- Ensure the availability of educational materials and textbooks in adequate quality and quantity;
- Ensure that the education given at every level is being supported by educational mass media; assist Regions in establishing their own educational mass media ;(ibid: 52).

Hence, the ministry appeared to concentrate on key decisions. These include to determine and supervise educational standards, determine the type and standards of certification given at all levels, provide assistance to regional governments in preparing primary curriculum (ensuring that the curriculum is free from prejudices), preparation and administration of national examinations, preparing instructional materials and textbooks in adequate quality and quantity and support education at all levels through education mass media.

On the other hand, within this new partnership framework, regional educational bureaus are also empowered with new responsibilities (MOE 1995, 2002). Among others, those responsibilities of the regions on matters of curriculum policymaking include:

- To develop and implement primary school curriculum based on educational policy
- To be responsible for primary teacher training program
- To make sure that the standard set by the central ministry was maintained
- To coordinate governmental, non-governmental and public organizations for the success of educational aims (MOE 1995: 3; 2002:6)

In this new federal framework (MOE 2002, 1995, Ethio-Education Consultants 1994), primary education was taken away from the Ministry of Education. This empowered the regional states so that they could "develop and implement primary school curriculum based on educational policy" (MOE 2002:6). As a result, the devolution rhetoric advocated for a shared responsibility over curriculum policymaking between the Ministry and regional educational bureaus by retaining responsibility over "setting educational standards" and other key policy decision environment to the ministry.

Box 1 Role and Responsibility between the Ministry, Regional Bureau, Zonal and Woreda Departments

The Ministry
▪ Determine curriculum of secondary and higher institutions and assists regions in curriculum development for primary education
Regional Bureaus
▪ Develop and implement primary education curriculum
Zonal Education Bureau
▪ Follow-up the implementation of the curriculum
Woreda Education Bureau
▪ Supervise the implementation of curriculum at school level and recommend for improvement

Source: Ethio-Education Consultants (1994)

Generally speaking, at the level of rhetoric, regions appeared to have all the power to alter or change the curriculum at primary levels within the general guideline (Kraft 1995). Given the overall poor regional capacity in view of the demands of decentralized system and due to a century-old legacy of centralized education, such policy provisions could be counted both as challenges and opportunities to the newly emerged stakeholders, namely the regional states. This entails the need to understand regional conditions and realities in order to address issues of relevance and to prepare functional citizens for the regional and national economy.

Thus, if implemented correctly, the proposal seems not only consistent with the federalism envisaged, but also with the implication that, among other things, regions do have multiple opportunities to link their curricular provision along with regional economic potential. Regional empowerment in considerable latitude would stem from the need to offer meaningful

primary education. This level was taken as the only formal education available to the majority of Ethiopians.

4. The Practice of Curriculum Devolution – Policy Implementation

4.1 Towards Setting Standards for the Curriculum

The policy recognized curriculum development as one of the most urgent preoccupations (TGE 1994a). The influence of the Ministry in these regards, at least in theory, was limited to setting general guidelines for subsequent regional curriculum development (MOE 2002a). The document set out to illustrate the policy (TGE 1994c) and the ICDR document that meant to bridge the policy with developing syllabus (ICDR 1994a) could be considered key documents in this regard.

TGE (1994c) outlined the general steps that should be taken. ICDR (1994a) documented the detailed decision already made over the nature of the emerging national curriculum. For example, TGE (1994c) after presenting pre-1991 curriculum problems, recommended the following general step: "Major problems of curriculum can only be solved if problem associated with educational organization were solved" (TGE 1994c: 22).

Similarly, the education sector strategy document (TGE 1994b) stated the following:

> The quality and standard of education in a given country is mainly determined by the essence of its curriculum and the process of its implementation. The relevance of any curriculum on the other hand is determined by the extent it meets the educational objectives. In this respect the existing educational curriculum of Ethiopia had not been properly developed to meet the societal and pedagogical demands. One of its major drawbacks has been that the learner's profile and the corresponding educational structure and inputs to achieve it are not well defined, since the educational objectives in relation to the societal needs have not been clearly formulated and stated (p: 3)

> The educational levels are not structured in such a way that they are in harmony with the students profile, the continuous development of knowledge, the societal needs and aspirations and the nation's capacity to support and sustain the system. The interrelationship and

interdependence amongst the different levels of educational as well as the
training structures is inadequate (p: 7).

Based on analysis of curriculum history and taking objective approach
to its development, three key issues were identified in order to address
existing curriculum problems and guide subsequent development
changing the structure from 6:2:4 to 4:4:2:2 (TGE 1994a, b, c), translate
educational aims into curriculum goals and objectives, and state clearly
students' profile for each levels of education (TGE 1994b, c).

4.2 Curriculum Goal and Student's Profile

In order to address issues of curriculum relevance within a federal
structure, especially in a county with diverse cultural potential and in the
context of government policy that firmly took primary education as the
only formal education available to the majority, this paper argues that the
Ministry's role should be restricted significantly.

The Ministry should take responsibility, as was stipulated, over broad
policy framework like stating curriculum goals and students profile for this
cycle and then exercise its other policy discretions – such as maintaining
standards. The document, for example, identified the following curriculum
goals to the first cycle of primary education (1-4) as:

- To provide basic education which is appropriate to the age level,
  physical and mental development of the learners;
- To provide basic education to develop the potential of the learners;
- To acquaint the learners with production and service giving activities
  within their immediate environment; and
- To lay the foundation for further education and training by equipping
  them with problem-solving skills and attitudes (ICDR 1994a: 2)

Given the policy framework, regions are expected to provide basic
education appropriate to the students' background, acquaint them with local
production and service activities and laid foundations for further learning.
Ultimately when students leave primary school, they would be expected to
carryout simple tasks and become 'productive workers' with further

training. In this line, the policy also identified that primary students exhibit the following profiles at graduation (TGE 1994c; ICDR 1994a):

- They are ready to carry out simple tasks that do not require special skills or training
- They will be ready for different kinds of training
- They can become productive workers with the help of directives, continuous training and assistance
- They will actively participate in cultural activities and feel responsible
- With the help of continuous education they can develop their knowledge and skills further
- They have developed good experience of working cooperatively for common goods (ICDR 1994a: 5)

In order to attain these objectives and profiles, the Ministry may not be expected to suggest detailed content specification at this level. Here the argument is not to support Tekeste's (1996) claim of replacing the formal with the non-formal sector, but to give substantial curriculum decision power to local actors.

Besides addressing the political motto of self-administration, this may enable for students to attain both national standard and further add relevance to their leaning. The Ministry, instead of making all decisions, can use other forms of influence – such as pressuring regions so that they could maintain the standards through conducting research (for example, formative & summative assessment, the use of National Learning Assessment of students and posting of results), promoting teachers' education, capacity building, creating public awareness and the use of bureaucratic channels, etc.

4.3 Towards Curriculum Planning

Based on these major guidelines, which are generally taken as new input to recent curriculum crafting, an attempt was eventually made at planning, developing and implementing "relevant curriculum". (ICDR 1994a). Soon after the publication of the policy, ICDR produced a document that fits between the policy and the school curriculum (syllabus, textbook, teachers guide and other supportive materials).

10

The document, however, represents a centralized curriculum policymaking. It identifies what curriculum objectives should be pursued at the national level, what profiles students must have, core curriculum areas, subject divisions, period allotted for each core areas and subjects, organization of content and their rationale, their modality and approaches for primary and secondary school, etc. (ICDR 1994a). Paradoxically enough, after defining every attributes at a national scale and without taking into account the local variations – the types of 'simple tasks' students can handle, cultural activities which they are expected to actively participate in and orienting to the particular productions and service activities to which students are expected to be 'productive workers' – the resulting curriculum was expected to be responsive at the local level. According to ICDR (1994b: 3), the overall intention behind the new curriculum was providing "pupils with adequate knowledge and skills that will enable them to solve problems and adapt it to local levels."

The practice of curriculum decentralization was tightly controlled by central agencies. All major curriculum deci..ons were made centrally. The Ministry therefore remained to be the key player although regional states took part quite lately to elaborate these decisions. Regions were involved when these decisions were translated by commissioned writers (since the subjects were written in regional languages for which the Ministry lacks expertise).

Generally, the zonal, woreda education departments and schools were totally left out from the process and were taken as sites of controlling policy implementation (see box 1). Thus, the process not only marginalized the very actors from making important decisions over the substance of their profession, but also made the policy intent unlikely from being realized. Box 2 lists major elements of curriculum policy determined by the centre, within the new partnership model of decision-making.

Based on the above accounts, this paper questions the relevance of curriculum policy decision made at the centre and shed light on the reason why we have various egional peculiarities. This fact was substantiated in the Summative Evaluation made to Primary Curriculum Materials (ICDR 2001) and explained why significant proportions of parents in the Afar and SNNPR regional states expressed their concern to abandon the curriculum altogether for it was recognized by these groups as 'not responsive to their local reality' (35, 36).

Box 2 Key Curriculum Decision Made By the Ministry In Writing the New Primary Curriculum

▪ Educational aims
▪ Curriculum goals and objectives for each levels of education
▪ Graduate profile of each levels of education
▪ Core curriculum areas of primary curriculum
▪ Subjects to be given
▪ Period allotted for each subject/ core curriculum area
▪ Rationale for organization of content for each content area and subjects to be given
▪ Modalities and approaches adopted for each major content area and subject
▪ Common courses and general courses to be given
▪ Content selection criteria for each subject and each levels of education etc.

Source: (ICDR 1994a) Short Term Plan for Developing and Implementing the New Curriculum. Addis Ababa: Unpublished Material.

4.4 Curriculum Development

At the level of rhetoric, we are informed by major governing documents that curriculum development was taken as regional responsibility (TGE 1994, MOE 1994; 1995; 2002), and the Ministry was depicted as provider of assistance (although the kind of assistance is not clearly mentioned). To analyze the process in terms of who does what vis-à-vis the rhetoric, it is good to ask first what curriculum development is all about in the Ethiopian context. In other words, we have to consider what it includes and what it excludes.

Within the new decision framework, curriculum development was understood as:

> a complex process which involves the process of research and innovation which takes place with in the *formal context of learning institutions* linked into a system where ministries, curriculum centres, research institutes and the like exists (ICDR, 1992: 2)(Emphasis is added).

> A comprehensive term that includes collection of information, curriculum planning, developing the syllabus and other instructional material, trying or testing the materials in selected sample schools,

> evaluating the materials, improving the materials according to the results
> of the try-out evaluation and implementation of the curriculum (ICDR
> 1994b: 10)

In light of the discussion made so far, these definitions further shed light on the confusion encountered. The first instance argued for extreme devolved curriculum is school-based curriculum development where other agencies including the Ministry take part in the process. This seemed contrary to what happened in reality. Although the regions did participate in the final stage, unlike what was defined above, formal learning institutions were not part of the process until the stages of implementation.

In the second instance, the term was conceptualized in its broadest sense involving important steps like need diagnosis, curriculum planning, developing the syllabus and other subsequent steps. Regions have a statutory right to develop primary curriculum. This means they are responsible for these steps. In reality, they only take responsibility over those areas where the Ministry lack expertise and on those sensitive and politicized matters- writing textbooks in various vernacular languages.

Retrospective observation of the process hence revealed that instead of the regional offices which are provided with legal discretion to develop the primary curriculum, subject panels within the ICDR originally prepared both the flow charts and curriculum guides for each subjects. These syllabi were then standardized through a national consultative workshop that involved all regions and administrative towns.

In the Ethiopian context, curriculum guide/syllabus represents a national document that affects the teaching and learning process (Akalewold 2001, Berhanu 1996). In every detail, it represents what should be given in each subject: objectives, content lists and even sub contents, methodology used, instructional materials suggested, time allotted and evaluation mechanisms. It is, perhaps, a good representation of well-articulated national curriculum policy that determines what and how should be taught. Box 3 illustrates the steps taken by the ICDR in developing the curriculum.

Box 3 Steps Taken To Develop the Curriculum by the ICDR

1. National education & training policy
2. Educational goals, curriculum goals, objectives & graduate profile for each cycle
3. Preparation of flow-charts
4. Designing draft syllabus
5. Revising draft syllabus
6. Revising & endorsing the draft syllabus
7. Preparation of textbooks, teacher's guides and other reference materials
8. Field trial and testing of standards
9. Improving materials based on findings/ results of evaluation
10. Orientation workshop to introduce new materials
11. Nation-wide implementation
12. Summative evaluation
13. Curriculum renewal or change

Source: ICDR (1999:32) Teacher Education Handbook. Addis Ababa

The steps described in box 3 could be conceptualized within the new partnership model and classified into four stages based on the relative influence of the central/regional offices during the process. Practice actually revealed that the Ministry played major role in making core decisions about what, why, to whom and the how of school experiences (see box 2). The Ministry, based on its new role in "setting standards," "ensures that standards of education are maintained" and "ensures that the curriculum developed is free from political, cultural and other forms of prejudice" (MOE 2002).

In the second section, after arbitration by central agencies, regions appeared for the first time in the fifth stage in order to give the proposed material an official touch. Here, with the regional role growing, the centre still plays major role in the name of "assistance," "poor capacity at regional level" and "ensure that the curriculum developed free from bias". Even during the try-out period of primary curriculum, the Ministry was charged with the "overall execution of the try-out of the new curricular materials" (ICDR 1994b: 8).

It appeared that the curriculum (in its framework, subject, core areas, periods, etc) being offered across regions do not have any difference. Thus, curriculum policy is defined as a stated, coherent plan or course of actions with regard to curricular problems or issues (Walker 1990). As a result, in effect, the country has a centralized national curriculum within a decentralized system. As a result, one type of curriculum modality governs the entire nation.

5. Concluding Remarks: Retrospective Observation of Curricular Devolution Process

Retrospective observation revealed that the new partnership model over curriculum decision making not only faced with confusion among participating bodies but also lacked clear delineation of responsibilities (MOE 2002a). The devolution process was encountered with a number of problems that resulted in a centralized control. Among the serious challenges the process encountered, Kraft (1995) identified the then poor regional capacity in light of the "superb opportunity" made available by regionalization. To this poor national and regional capacity, Ayalew (2000) further sited the ethnic and language preconditions set with regionalization worsen the process. Added to the above, the very nature of the subject under consideration becomes, in the words of Seyoum (1996), "illusive and slippery" (Seyoum 1996).

In addition to the problem of capacity, Tekeste (1996) and Ayalew (2000) further criticized the speed at which curriculum deliberation was conducted. According to Ayalew, "although curriculum development and textbook writing is a scientific work that has to be carried out phase by phase and after a thorough study of the specific situation, translation work was carried out without major investigation of the constraints and opportunities that were to be encountered during implementation." Tekeste (1996:82) further attributed this hurry in implementation to the interest that was not paid enough attention during the previous governments.

Interestingly, though capacity problems were anticipated quite early (USAID 1992; 1993), building regional capacity in relation to curriculum deliberations was not urgently addressed by the Ministry. Even after the government confessed lately that problems of capacity at all levels are serious challenge to decentralization and hence recommended various

15

reforms taking capacity building at its centre (MOI 2002a), recent study of *Capacity Building for Decentralized Education Service Delivery in Ethiopia* (Watson and yohannes 2005) justified the claim made by Kraft 10 years ago about the administration of curriculum development: "… still very much dependent on the centre and will probably remain so for some time to come' (1995:2).

As a result, the alleged provision of assistance from the Ministry of Education was not adequately carried out – the assistances were not made in accordance to the demands of the regions. Most of the problems were due to the Ministry's overstretching. There were "capacity constraints, functional overload and detachment from local realities at the federal level. Generally speaking, the Ministry was in a state of confusion within a devolved system (Watson and yohannes 2005).

To sum up, the new partnership should be enforced by limiting the Ministry's role within setting and enforcing overall national standards and leaving for regions to deliberate on how to determine these means to the end, based on their various means – ethnic/regional realities and cultures. Each region should be given significant latitude to deliberate on primary education based on its existing economic, social and environment potentials.

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