Political Socialization in the era of Globalization in Ethiopian Schools

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Abstract:

In contrast to other socialization agencies such as the family, peer groups, religious institutions and the tribal elders, and mass media, there is no doubt that schooling commands nearly undivided attention of students for long hours over many years and remains the most controllable channel for important cognitive and affective political socialization. During Haile Selassie’s regime (1930-1974) in Ethiopia, in addition to regarding education as one of the major players for training and the development of human resources essential for economic growth, the overarching goal of public schooling has been to build national pride, a strong common national identity dominated by one ethnic group, obedience to rules and laws, and the development of respect espousing legitimacy for government and the political institution. In keeping with the socialist slogan pursued by the Military Junta from 1974-1991, Ethiopian schools, under the threat of the gun, were assigned to instill Ethiopian nationalism in order to create socialistic-minded Ethiopians under their authoritarian, military rule. Galvanized by the mass terror in Ethiopia under the leadership of the Derg, eventually, the various ethnic groups, preserved through decades of cultural persecution, economic, and socio-political marginalization, coordinated their struggle and managed to form an umbrella of an Ethio-national front, known as the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Front (EPRDF). The EPRDF dismantled the Derg and its functionaries from the Ethiopian power structure in 1991. Contradicting the hallucination of the Derg that Ethiopia should universalize education, based on one language to create an Ethiopian socialist majority and a homogenous national identity, the EPRDF in 1994 strongly recommended that the educational system, curriculum, and contents of each region in Ethiopia should develop the cultures and languages of the various peoples, nations and nationalities of Ethiopia. Regional Governments, set up by the proclamation No. 7/1992, were given the authority to formalize the visions and mission of the educational policy of their regional states. Therefore, the focus of citizenship training in multiethnic Ethiopia has been tailored to serve the needs of regional states and foster the practice of democracy. Over the years, however, tensions and contradictory messages have surfaced that have precipitated many new challenges and galvanized many opposing groups that view the new form of civic training given in the Ethiopian regional states as myopic and parochial and that they may actually limit the Ethiopian youth in their development of empathy, appreciation, and respect for other cultures. In rebuttal, it has been argued that the aim of political socialization needs to instill pan-Ethiopian national identity, to empower Ethiopian youth to have a say in their lives and develop global awareness to meet Ethiopia’s future cultural and national challenges.

Introduction:

In contrast to other socialization agencies such as the family, peer groups, religious institutions and the tribal elders, and mass media, it quite obvious that schools command nearly undivided attention of students for long hours over many years and remain the most controllable channel for rendering important cognitive and affective means of political socialization of their learners. As stated by Coleman (1965),
political socialization refers to that process by which individuals develop feelings towards the political system and for their role in it. It includes cognition (knowledge and the ability to analyze and interpret data about political institutions), emotion (how one feels about the system, including loyalty and a sense of civic obligation), and one’s sense of political competence (what one’s role is or can be in the system). In short, in countries that can offer schooling for children, schools are assigned the task of citizenship training through a) teaching civic education to the young b) selecting, recruiting, and training political leaders, and c) integrating the community or the entire society.

The purpose of this study is to provide an historical document of the political socialization process in Ethiopian public schools from 1930 to 2013. The first part of the paper deals with the socialization of Ethiopian youth during Haile Selassie’s era. The second part of the paper focuses on the attempt of the Military regime to bring about the integration of multi-cultural Ethiopia through socialist ideology and indoctrination. The third part of the paper narrates the transformation of Ethiopia from a turbulent command economy to ethnic federalism, and then assesses the roles of Ethiopian schools in bringing about national identity and global awareness.

Methodology

Research for this brief article relied on many sources, including a literature review of the World Data on Education, the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, various documents from the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, publications by the World Bank, and informal interviews with some former teachers and administrators of the Ethiopian educational system. Even though there is considerable anecdotal information about civic education in Ethiopian schools, there is limited systematic research on the socialization process and its impacts on the learners.

The Political Socialization Process of Ethiopian Youth during Haile Selassie’s Period

During Haile Selassie’s era (1930 to 1974), the central role of civic education in Ethiopian public schools was to build national pride, national identity, to instill obedience to rules and laws, to develop respect and legitimacy for the government, political institutions and established authority. To reinforce these belief systems, students in Ethiopian public schools were required to recite the national anthem every day before going to their respective class rooms, and were also made to recite and demonstrate in writing their mastery of the national anthem while taking the Eighth Grade National Examination. Also, teachers of public schools were obligated to be the conveyors of consensus values that were needed for the reproduction of existing social relations. Thus, public schools in Ethiopia were tailored to serve a one-way flow of information and were established to transfer the above stated cardinal contents of civic education from the school to the society.

In short, during the Haile Selassie regime, formal citizenship education, or political socialization in Ethiopian public schools, was tailored to a) instill national pride that could bind the Ethiopian people together despite the existence of political strain based on ethnicity, language, etc., b) cause learners passively to obey government officials and the law without actively involving themselves in politics, and c) promote acceptance of government rules, authority and policies as God-given and without question. Unlike in Western countries where the basic tenets of political socialization are generally measured by political efficacy, political trust, citizen duty, political participation, and knowledge (see Massialas, 1970), the politically socialized Ethiopians were regarded as well-versed if they could align and exhibit
In contradiction to the assumption that political socialization in Ethiopian schools can only produce obedient and loyal citizens, given the prevailing social conditions in the world (for example, in Vietnam, China, Latin American and African countries, etc), starting in the 1960s, Ethiopian public schools were found not to be producing passive students, thoroughly socialized to accept the continuation of the existing social relations, but instead the public schools were producing students that were alienated from their society and government. To mention only a few, in 1965, university and high school students in and around Addis Ababa demanded land reform. In 1966, students protested against governmental treatment of beggars. In 1967 the students demanded the affirmation of the right to public demonstration and assembly. In 1970 Ethiopian university students and high school students demanded that the various nationalities in Ethiopia be allowed to have inalienable rights to exercise their self-determination. In 1973, students forcefully agitated over the famine in Wello and Tigrai province. In 1974, public school students in Ethiopia violently demonstrated throughout the nation in collaboration with urban workers for price control on gas, and high school teachers’ standing against the government’s proposed education reform, also known as the Education Sector Review, designed with the assistance given by the World Bank, (see Desta, A. 1977).

In short, the naïve observer might have been impressed that Ethiopia before the military takeover of the government in 1974 offered free education to its youth up to the university level. However, that public schooling in Ethiopia was available to only a small minority of the population. For example, in 1974, schools were mainly concentrated in urban areas. The participation rate of primary school age children was approximately 20 percent. The participation rate for the secondary schools was about 5.0 percent. Furthermore, inequality in education existed between rural and urban areas and between male and female enrollment. It could be said that during Haile Selassie’s regime, the education system in Ethiopia opened its doors to some sections of the population but the doors were closed to others and many were left unaware that such doors existed (See for example, Desta, 1977).

Though Ethiopian schools were geared to maintain the class structure and socialize the sons of the nobility and urban residents to respect the existing order, after many years it became crystal clear that unlike what was envisaged, public schools became the source of accentuating conflicts between students and the government. In 1974, for instance, student unrest supported by large group of workers, along with the official cover-up of the catastrophic drought and famine in Wollo and Tigrai regions and widespread corruption accompanied by economic recession, all contributed to the collapse of the Haile Selassie regime.

**Citizenship Education in Ethiopia during the Military Rule**

With the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie, the Provisional Military Administrative Committee (the Derg) came to power and inherited the oligarchy of the ancient regime. To eliminate student unrest, the Military Government, in the name of “development Through Cooperation Campaign” dispersed all university and junior and senior high school students and their teachers to rural parts of Ethiopia. Before restructuring the existing format of the government and without critically examining the relevance of the socialist model to Ethiopian culture, on December 20th, 1974, the Military government delivered a proclamation for Ethiopian socialism (or Ethiopia Tekdame-first) as its slogan to initiate patriotism, and
then instituted the most atrocious authoritarian type of government. More specifically, as if the military government were not a gate keeper, protector and functionary of Haile Selassie’s regime, using new political philosophy and singing Ethiopia Takedam (Ethiopia first) the Derg declared that it would a) maintain the unity of Ethiopia, b) envision all Ethiopian inhabitants living together based on equality, fraternity, harmony, c) eradicate poverty, and d) allow the masses to exercise the right of self-administration at the local level, arriving at responsible decision-making processes that would be fair to the Ethiopian society. In addition, the Military Junta adopted the Marxist-Leninist orientation with a strong emphasis on pan-Ethiopianism, strongly rejecting the right of session doctrine as advocated by the Ethiopian Student Movement (See Habtu, 2003).

Also, after the Military Junta seized power, as if it has not been part and parcel of the earlier government, the Military Junta started condemning the existence of parasitism and exploitation in Ethiopia. By decree, the Military Junta nationalized all banks and insurance companies, and it abolished private ownership of farm lands (December, 1974). However, though the measures taken by the Military Junta amounted to some type of a socialist revolution and the workers and peasants were promised much, the end result accorded nothing to the then exploited masses and workers. In a cynical and telling way, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the Derg’s socialist rhetoric was demagoguery. The Ethiopian masses got nothing, and in denial of the existing culture, like what is used in Western cultures, they were required to add their grandfather’s name to their identification cards to mirror international working class solidarity.

In the area of education, in order to eradicate the existing outmoded concepts and to equalize and reeducate the school children, the Provisional Military Government declared that education in Ethiopia needed to be based on equal distribution of schools. It also pompously publicized that socialist education would make all Ethiopians free from ignorance. Though later it was found to be untrue, the Derg verbally stated that Ethiopian schoolchildren would be well-versed in “Ethiopian heritage” and fully equipped with socialist morality (Ministry of Education, January 1975).

Without modifying the bureaucratic organization that it inherited and by not adequately retraining the existing teachers to improve social relations among their students, nor integrating academic subjects with practical experience during their socialization process, the Military Junta threatened with guns to force schools to impart and create a fully developed (i.e., not staffed with one sided and fragmentary knowledge), well-rounded and highly disciplined socialist Ethiopian. Also, schools were instructed to give more emphasis to sciences, engineering, health science and less stress to liberal arts or the social sciences. In 1979, the military regime initiated a National Literacy Campaign in 15 languages and literacy was offered to adults to insure the inculcation of the military-designed socialist ideology; the emphasis was tailored to build character and to inspire Ethiopian patriotism and nationalism. Though the outcome was dismal, in its civic education program, the Military regime in Ethiopia organized a deliberate indoctrination for about seventeen years, sowing the seeds of militancy, nationalism, and devotion to its pseudo socialist thoughts through the existing schools. For example, while the Military government in Ethiopia imitated the literacy programs to be conducted in local languages and also encouraged ethnic folk music and dance to promote cultural pluralism, the irony of the matter is “...the regime waged a military campaign against ethno-nationalist armed groups” (Habtu, 2003, p. 11).
In the economic sector, the economic record of the seventeen years of Derg rule in Ethiopia was full of unmitigated disaster. By almost every major index of economic growth, the country manifested a regression in its economic growth footprints (Eshatu, 1991). Partly, the economic disaster manifested in Ethiopia during the Derg’s era could be explained because the most productive intellectuals left the country to avoid the Derg’s “… campaign of terror—the RED Terror—that resulted in the jailing, torture, and death of untold thousands, in an attempt to stem rebellion against its policies promoting a unique nationalism through suppression of ethnic diversity” (World Bank, p. 3).

After Ethiopia was submerged in financial crises and fully mortgaged to the former Soviet Union, (which was then economically slumbering and dismantling itself into pieces of various nationalities,) Colonel Mengistu, the head of the Derg fled to Kenya for shelter by the Mugabi Government of Zimbabwe. In short, the Military regimes’ failure in its political socialization process could be attributed to a) its indulgence in a scattered planning and implementation process, 2) the economic recession the country faced because of the breaking up of the country’s major financier, the Soviet Union, and 3) the various ethno-nationalist movements that the Derg attempted to suppress in favor of its centralist policy, based on mono-lingual and mono-cultural identity, regarding the “national question” which Ethiopian students were asking as a taboo (Markakis, 2003 as quoted by Regassa, 2004).

Socialization for National Identity and Global Awareness

With the dethroning and collapse of the Derg in 1991, a coalition of the Amhara Nationality Democratic movement (ANDM), the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDM), the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (OLF), Afar Liberation Front (ALF), the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (a merger of 5 regions), Afar, Somali, Harari, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, and the multicultural national residents living in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa got together to actualize and reconstruct the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (see for example Habtu, 2003). The basis for the formation of the federal state structure in 1991 was to subscribe to ethnic-based territorial units, because the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) believed that mobilizing the ethnically based groups was a formula for establishing equal representation and further integration of Ethiopia as a federal state (see Maru, M.T. (2004).

Therefore, unlike its long history of centrist rule, and the imposition of assimilation into one homogenized and hegemonic culture as tools for maintaining a forced unity and identity advocated by the ancient regime and the military rule, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia created an ethnic-based federalism as a framework for resolving issues of ethnic and regional autonomy. To suggest that Ethiopia is composed of a singular culture defies the rich histories of the various peoples residing in Ethiopia. In other words, the TGE acted as a conduit for the transformation and a means of healing ethnic hostilities to create peace and stability in Ethiopia, which was ravaged by ethnic-based wars during the military era. The TGE allowed the rights to self-determination, including the rights to session as the only way that could make Ethiopia march forward into the foreseeable future (see Habtu, 2003 and Regassa, 2004).

Based on this concept, the outcome of the 1995 Federal Ethiopian Constitution, heavily engineered by the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolution Democratic Front, (composed mainly of ANDM, OPDM, TPLF, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples), was formalized by and large to fulfill the desires of the former ethno-linguistic groups that toppled the authoritarian military regime. As
argued by Regassa (2004), “the pursuit of homogenization as an effective safeguard for maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of the country was viewed as too oppressive to a host of forces that launched a liberation struggle since the 1960’s until they eventually succeeded in toppling down the last of centralist governments in Ethiopia’s modern history…”.

In line with article 46(2) of the 1995 Constitution, most regional states were encouraged to meet language, identity, settlement pattern, and the consent of the representatives of the people in the region. Thus, Ethiopia pursued ethnic federalism. It established itself as a federation of multi-ethnic nations, and political parties were organized along ethnic lines. The constitution was also crafted with the principles of self-rule. By and large, it aspired to achieve ethnic autonomy and equality while maintaining ethicized federal states where ethnic units coincided with regional units as was practiced following the corporate pluralist western countries of Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada (Mattei, 1995, Habtu, 2003, Ragassa, 2004).

In view of the new constitution of 1995, Ethiopia embarked Ethno-linguistic triangulation based on language pluralism and formed autonomous regional governments. That is, based on proclamation, No. 7/1992, the Ethiopian People’s, nation, and nationalities became administered by an elected state council (the highest organ of state authority that defines the region’s policy and has all legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the affairs of the region), and a State Administration (highest organ of executive power) to formalize the functional responsibilities and constitutional powers of these levels of government (World Bank, 2005, p. 4).

In other words, to counter its past history, based on the domination of ethno-linguistic groups and the unitary system of cultural homogenization through state centralization and one-language policy that prevailed; article 39 (3and 5) of the Ethiopia’s Federal Constitution of 1995 fully endorsed that the Nation, Nationality, and Peoples of Ethiopia to have the rights of self-government, and establish institutions of government in their ethno-cultural communities. Also, the Federal Constitution was fully committed to the free exercise of the right to self-determination, including cessation (see for example, the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995).

Over the last twenty years, under the leadership of the EPDRF, Ethiopia has undergone structural changes. It has achieved steady economic growth with a remarkable up trend in social development programs. Though land was nationalized for state farm purposes during the Military era, the EPRDF has widely redistributed land to the rural masses, where its political power was completely cemented. Preventive health services have been made available throughout the country. Some infrastructure facilities, such as roads, air transport, telecommunication services are better engineered than during the previous regimes. In order to achieve Ethiopia’s socioeconomic development, the government has initiated developmental plans but their implementation has been lagging behind because of the lack of capital and structurally intertwined bureaucratic administration. Though it is a paradox for democracy and developmental state to coexist, the EPRDF had promised to pursue good governance. Elections are regularly conducted every five years. However, opposition groups feel that the outcomes of elections held thus far have been fraudulent and based on intimidation by the police force of existing ruling party.

The Derg held that an education in Ethiopia based on one language would create a homogenous socialist state. It even went so far as to declare that ethnic groups who do not speak Amharic are not Ethiopians. In opposition to the notion held by the previous regimes, Proclamation No. 7/1992 gave the
Regional Governments of Ethiopia the authority to formalize the visions and mission of the educational policy of their regions by choosing their local languages for instruction in primary schools. Despite opposition by some intellectuals that the EPRDF’s policy would eventually disintegrate the Ethiopian nation, concurrent with its vision, the EPRDF, in 1994, endorsed that the educational system, curriculum, and contents of each region in Ethiopia to be restructured to meet the cultures and languages of the various peoples, nations and nationalities of Ethiopia. Thus, within the framework of federal Education Sector Development Program, each regional state led a bottom-up educational development plan to re-homogenize and make each ethnic groups fully appreciate their cultural values.

In line with the Proclamations of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia of 1995, the Ministry of Education was given the power only to formulate the country’s educational policies and strategies. However, the main objectives and goals of education as stated by the Federal Ministry of Education, proclamation No. 41/1993, (for example, the Educational and Training Policy (ETP) of 1994,) the Education Sector Strategy of 1994, and the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP1 OF 1997/98), was heavily focused on decentralization of the management of education; people/community participation; equitable distribution of educational services, and the development of local culture (World Data on Education, 2006/07). Specifically, the Federal Ministry of education allowed each region to formulate its curricula and formulate its education to emphasize the development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and communication with the use of mother tongue in primary schools (World Data on Education, 2006/07).

In quantitative terms it is possible to assert that the Ethiopian primary school system is in the process of achieving universal education. For example, for almost all households in the country there is at least one primary school available within a distance of less than 10 kilometers (World Bank, 2005). The gross enrollment ratio for females and males enrolled in primary schools (grade 1 to 8) has increased from 37 percent in 1996 to 91 percent in 2011. Also, there is an equitable representation of males and females in the Ethiopian primary schools. Student’s enrollments in urban areas are almost 100 percent as compared to 86 percent in rural areas. It means that Ethiopia has started universalizing its primary education. But, it remains to be seen that the universalization of primary education is tailored to meet the educational needs and that the curriculum protects and guarantees that students are exposed enough to their culture. In addition, when universalization of primary schools is discussed as a policy issue, not only quantity but also quality of education needs to be taken into consideration.

In terms of quality, it is unbelievable to note that each teacher in public Ethiopian schools must teach about 60 to 70 students in one class room. As a result, the classes are highly congested. The teacher-student ratio in private schools is relatively low, the classrooms are better equipped, and the teachers are well paid. In addition, a sizable number of teachers in public schools don’t meet certification standards. Since most of the students in primary schools are from well-to-do parents or relatives, it is unfortunate to observe that private schools in Ethiopia are becoming class-based and are reproducing inequalities in order to maintain the emerging new class structure (see Desta, A. 2012).

In terms of political socialization, unlike the previous regimes where public schools focused on producing loyal citizens, building national identity and endowing learners with allegiance to Ethiopia as a homogenous nation, the current regime concurrently with the federal constitution has proposed that the educational arrangements of each region recognize and accommodate cultural diversity. Teachers,
according to the ethnicity of their students use different epistemologies and styles of interactive educational patterns.

As if the Ethiopian environment is conducive to political participation, the principle of self-rule rooted in the federal constitution of each ethnically-determined regional state is given the mandate to formulate education for democratic citizenship. For the students to be empowered and have a say in their own education and to develop awareness to meet Ethiopia’s future cultural and national challenges, the schools need the facilities and offerings for participation in extracurricular activities like sports or gardening activities. Meanwhile, the world is moving towards becoming more engaged in physical activities and in the greening of the environment, now extracurricular activities and gardening are seen in Ethiopian schools as a luxury of the past.

The fact that teachers are paid poorly, they use their free time to run immediately after classes to work part-time jobs, if available, in the towns where they teach. Otherwise, because they teach in over congested classrooms, they run to their houses to relax, to prepare lesson plans for the following days, correct the homework of their students, or work as political cadres for the ruling party.

It is obvious that the education given at the primary level is in the local language and the civic education lessons are likely to focus on the ethnicity and government of the region. By using local languages as a medium of instruction, schools, particularly at the primary levels, are expected to reflect the needs and aspirations of the ethnic group which is central to political socialization or civic education lessons. Given the training level of the teachers in Ethiopian primary schools, it is possible to argue that the culture of other ethnic groups may never be discussed, let alone to be considered for accommodation. For example, some of the teaching methods practiced in Ethiopian schools are too parochial and don’t attempt to lay the solid foundation needed for the reformulation of the federal constitution. The failure to integrate nationally will hinder Ethiopia’s integration into the rising global culture.

As currently practiced, schools have a regional-based curriculum and the medium of instruction is the local language. Thus, without revitalizing the languages of instruction and laying the infrastructure necessary for creating shared values, it is impossible to attain what is stated in the Education Sector Development Program- ESDP2 (2002/03 -2004/05) that Ethiopian schools could produce good citizens who understand, respect, defend the Federal and Regional Constitution, and develop sense of citizenship to participate in and contribute to the development of community and the nation (World Data on Education, 2006/07).

Part of the reason a number of students in public schools have been left with parochial thinking is that most school leaders are political cadres of the ruling party. They may receive a monthly salary from the treasury of the school districts but emotionally they have a strong bond with their party. They know that they will be rewarded handsomely by their political party once their political party is in power. Instead of provoking volatility in their schools; they spend a large part of their time outside of school talking and promoting the greatness of their party. Schools taught by these types of political cadres serve as a ladder for a promotion in the political arena.
Given this kind of school environment, it is possible to argue that learners through their teachers and principals learn more about his/her own region and the political party in power than they learn about other ethnic groups let alone knowing in detail about their Federal Government. It has also become clear that students cannot effectively interact or correspond with the bureaucracy because their language capability is fractured, because schools are compartmentalized and are exclusively restricted to teaching in their own mother tongues. Students in the various universities (universities generally recruit multi-ethnic students) have an acute problem of interacting effectively among themselves. In addition, since graduates of regional schools are trained in their local languages, it is less likely that they have the capability to articulate in the nation’s working language, Amharic, for example, while applying for jobs in Addis Ababa or leave alone to work in other ethnically-based regional centers.

Thus, if cross-cultural communication among the Ethiopian students in a globalized world is desired, in addition to ethnic languages, an official language needs to be taught in primary schools because in addition to local language, national language is a pillar for preserving intercultural exchange and creates mutual understanding. Above all, a national language in a multi-ethnic society like Ethiopia is essential for national integration and is likely to promote multiculturalism among the peoples of Ethiopia. Of course, the value of learning a national language or an operating language is essential for national integration and creates economic competitiveness. For example, researchers, policymakers, educators, employers, etc., have arrived at the conclusion that multi-lingual teaching to children as early as possible can benefit the learners to be creative, solve complex problems, and survive effectively in a competitive world. It further benefits society because it enhances economic competitiveness and brings about global understanding (Marcos, K, 1998).

Finally, since globalization has become an indivisible part of the Ethiopian society, it would be naïve not to assume that learning a predominant universal tongue, such as English would be a Western incursion. Mastering English is not likely to promote western devaluation of Ethiopian culture. Recorded history has shown that Ethiopia has successfully rebuffed and challenged European colonial attempts that started balkanizing the African continent starting in the 15th century. In a globalized world, the legacy of building the Ethiopian nation depends on preparing its youngsters to learn English starting at the primary level. If taught English early, Ethiopian graduates of public schools could become global entrepreneurs, like the sons and daughters of the privileged emerging classes. It is not too late for the Ethiopian government to give the same opportunities to public school students as are provided to those of private schools. Thus, Ethiopia’s political education system needs to be re-designed to rescue the country from some of the malaise that has separated it from actively participating in the global world.

**Conclusion**

In 1991, the EPRDF removed the Military regime (*Derg*) and its functionaries from the Ethiopian power structure. Contrary to the *Derg’s* means of forming a homogenous national identity, the EPRDF in the 1995 Federal Constitution of Ethiopia strongly endorsed an educational system, curriculum, and contents for each region in Ethiopia in order to encourage the continuation of the various cultures and languages of the diverse peoples, nations, and nationalities of Ethiopia. The Regional Governments, set up by the proclamation No. 7/1992, were given the authority to formalize the visions and mission of the educational policy of their regional states. Therefore, the focus of citizenship training in multiethnic Ethiopia has been tailored to serve the needs of regional states and actualize the practice of democracy.
Of course, schools in Ethiopia need to develop empathy, appreciation, and respect for the various ethnic cultures in their region. However, as is observed in Ethiopian schools, if students are expected to memorize their own ethnic values uncritically, it is doubtful that schooling is empowering them to affectively and effectively participate to meet Ethiopia’s future cultural challenges in the fast moving era of globalization.

Thus, changes to the education system must be accelerated, damage must be repaired, and Ethiopia’s economy transformed for the twenty-first century, to involve young Ethiopians who can make a difference. It is by designing and adopting workable strategies that a number of emerging nations have substantially changed their economic structure and institutions. Therefore, it is evident that in order to reform the political structure in line with the globalization that is flourishing; Ethiopia’s political education system must be re-designed to rescue the country from a malaise that has separated it from active participation in the global world.

Over the years, tensions from contradictory messages have surfaced, precipitating many new challenges and galvanizing opposition groups that view the new form of civic training given in the Ethiopian regional states as myopic and parochial, which may limit Ethiopian youth in their development of empathy, appreciation and respect for other cultures. Moreover, it has been argued that the aim of political socialization needs to instill pan-Ethiopian national identity and empower the Ethiopian youth to have a say in their lives, and have global awareness so that they are able to meet Ethiopia’s future cultural and national challenges. The EPRDF Party has already laid the foundation for the Peoples, Nations, and Nationalities of Ethiopia to know and realize that they are equal to other groups. Now is the right time to critically examine areas lacking success and determine what is needed to expedite moves towards an even more democratic, inclusive society and polity so that Ethiopia can vigorously and actively participate in the fast moving global arena.

References:


