Discrepancies in Approach and Objectives in Educating Bertha Children in Ethiopia
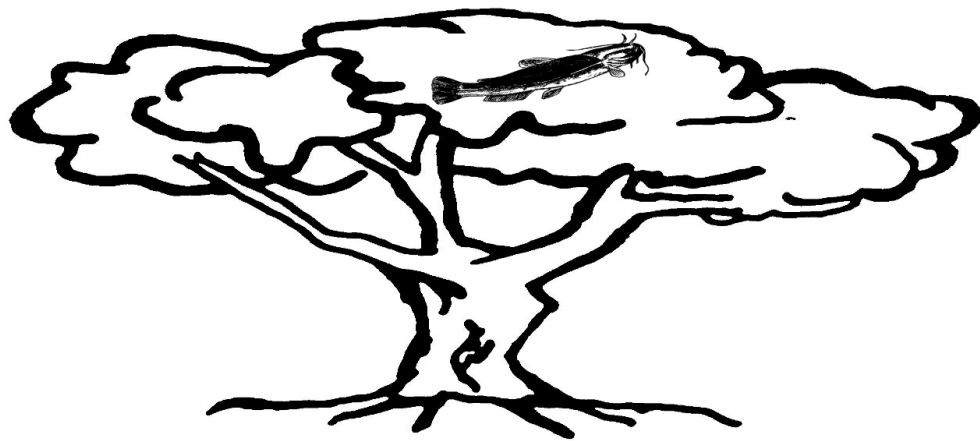
MA Literacy Programme Development

Andreas Neudorf

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the education of children in Bertha society who live in the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State of Ethiopia. It critically analyses and addresses the discrepancies between the objectives of education held by parents and by the educational system. It explores the issues of the relevance of the curriculum and its method of delivery in relation to the lives of the Bertha society and their cultural modes of learning.

This is a qualitative research; the data was obtained by using a flexible research design involving an adapted form of Grounded Theory. Years of observation and working in the Ethiopian education sector, as well as interviews with parents and the review of literature combined with low student test outcomes led to the formation of the theory on which this research focuses.

The study discusses the possibility of including indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, with parents being involved in the activities in the classrooms. It suggests that for education to make a difference, the pedagogy practiced needs to become 'transformative' instead of continuing to use the 'banking' modes of teaching. Furthermore, awareness needs to be raised about the importance of the development of children's oral language skills and how this contributes to their cognitive development. Parents need to intentionally start advancing the skills which will help their children to succeed in their educational careers.

The paper argues that addressing those issues would enhance the quality and equity of education for Bertha students.

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Abbreviations Used

BGRS   Benishangul Gumuz Regional State

EGRA   Early Grade Reading Assessment

L1   First Language (Mother Tongue)

L2   Non-Mother Tongue (all other additionally learned languages)

MLC   Minimum Learning Competencies

MLE   Multilingual Education

MoE   Ministry of Education

MoI   Medium of Instruction

MT   Mother Tongue (first language)

MTB-MLE Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education

REB   Regional Education Bureau

TVT   Technical Vocational Training

MDG   Millennium Development Goals

EFA   Education For All

discrepancy [dis-krep-ənsi] *noun*, lack of agreement between things which should be the same (from a Latin word discrepantia meaning 'discord') (Oxford Student's Dictionary 2007).

1   The Relevance of this Study

Through this dissertation I aim to contribute to a discussion on education in the African context, which has been going on for decades. Most countries have inherited an educational system from their colonizers. Ethiopia has adopted its system from Europe voluntarily. The focus of this study is on the Bertha language community, who live in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) and the topic is based on a hypothesis that there is a lack of coherence between the objectives of the various stakeholders within the education sector. Stakeholders such as donor organizations, the Ministry of Education (MoE), the teachers and the children's parents all have their own interests and expectations of what educational values should be. Each stakeholder influences the sector in different ways. Donors aiming at capitalism set their objectives through conditionalities. The Government, through the MoE, drafts its objectives through educational policies, which shape the content of the educational curriculum. The teachers deliver the curriculum, and the parents, who are the children's first educators, want to ensure a secure future for their children not only outside their communities, but also within. These goals require different sets of skills and knowledge.

This paper will aim to investigate and analyze the expressed and underlying objectives of some of the above-mentioned stakeholders. It will investigate firstly, whether the expressed or reported understanding corresponds with the actions of the stakeholders on the surface level in regard to the achievement of these objectives and secondly, how much overlap there is between the objectives of the various stakeholders. Where there is a possibility of overlap, the study will aim to determine whether there is a desire to expand on the common objectives, and if so, what would be the implications for the day-to-day

educational practices of the Bertha parents and teachers within Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS).

The purpose of this study is primarily to gain further insight on the above-mentioned issues and their overall impact on educational outcomes among Bertha children, and at the same time, to raise awareness among the various stakeholders. This study is not, however, about offensive criticism. It is hoped that this research will provide a theoretical background and learning platform to influence future actions and initiatives, such as 'Family Literacy' (UNESCO 2011; Brooks et al. 2008; Desmond and Elfert 2008), improve pedagogical practices, and provide a more coherent and relevant education. It is assumed that these activities will contribute to the improvement of educational outcomes, thus providing a better future for children, rewarding parents for their educational contributions, and ensuring good economic returns for relevant investors.

While this study focuses on the Bertha community in Ethiopia, it is believed that this topic is by no means unique to this specific geographic location. The results from this study may well be applicable to other similar contexts.

1.1 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter two gives a short introduction to the geographical and demographical setting of the Bertha people in Ethiopia and the basis for the development and use of their language for education, followed by an explanation of my interest and experience in this language community.

Chapter three sets the research in a theoretical framework and explains how the hypothesis was formed and how the data was gathered and interpreted. It also discusses strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the research.

Chapter four presents the literature relating to the respective participants in children's education, and the philosophies behind their actions or policies.

Chapter five presents the data gathered through interviews and observation, and discusses the discrepancies in the light of related literature.

Chapter six concludes the paper with some recommendations of how some of the discrepancies could be eliminated and, as a result, educational outcomes improved.

2   Background

2.1   Geographical and Demographical Setting

Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) is located in the lowlands of western Ethiopia. Assosa, which is 687 km from Addis Ababa, is the main town in this region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, 2010).

Figure 1 Map of Ethiopia
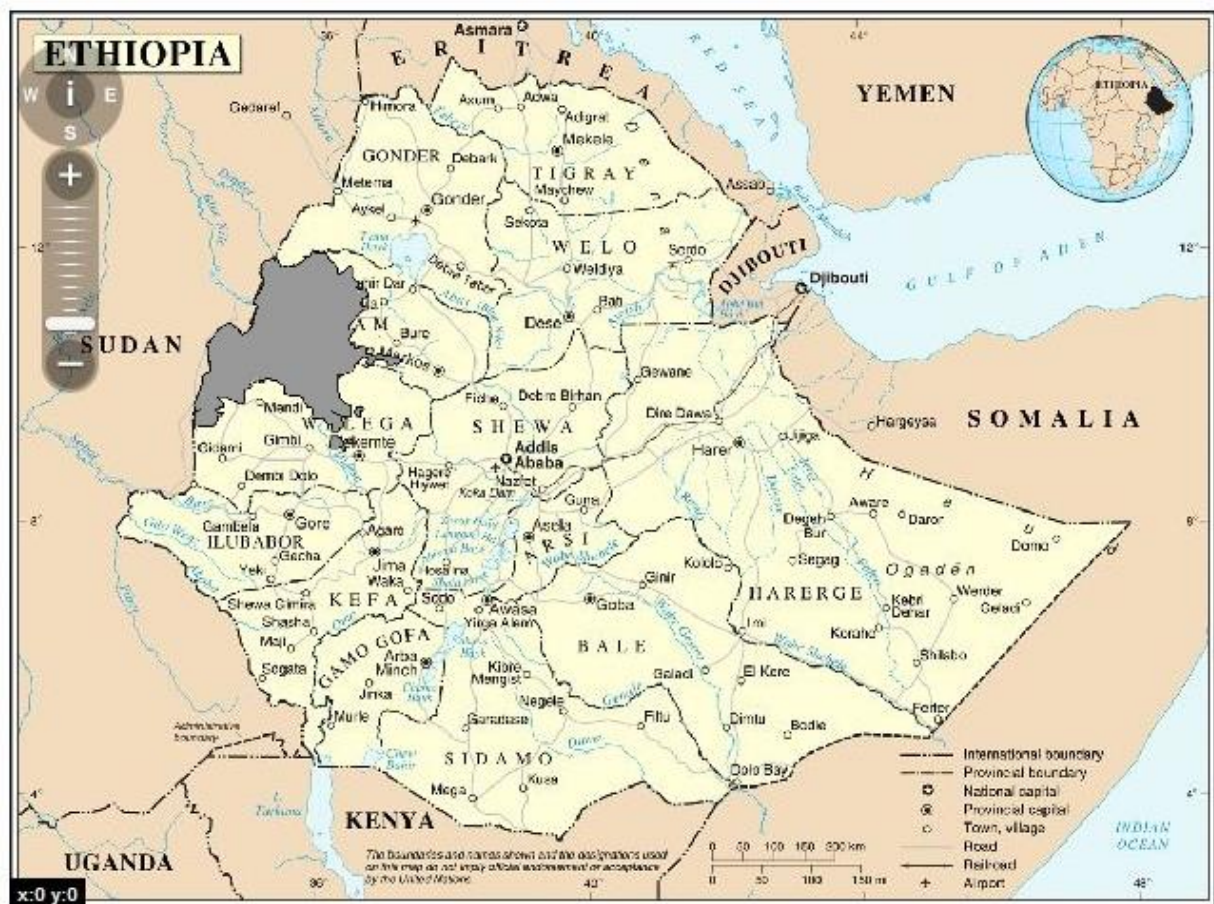
(mapsof.net 2011, Map of Western part of Ethiopia, modified: BGRS marked)

With a population of 183,259, the Bertha people group living in the Assosa Zone is the

largest of six indigenous language communities in BGRS (Central Statistical Agency of

Ethiopia, 2008).

Figure 2 Map of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State's Zones
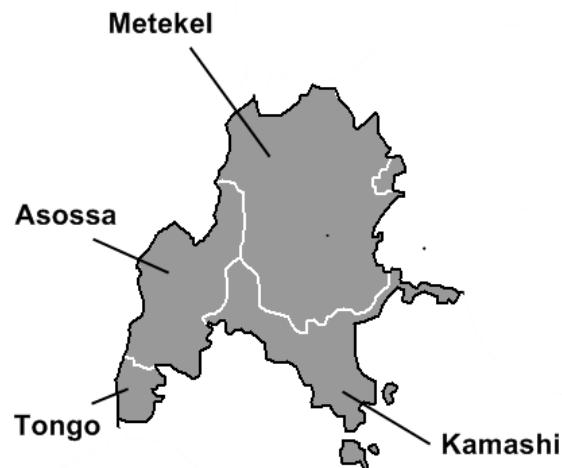
BGRS's government map, (producer is unknown).

2.2   Language and Education Policy in Ethiopia

Ethiopian government policy encourages language development and gives the constitutional right to all people to speak, write, and use the regional mother tongue as the official language of administration in each respective State of the Federation. According to the constitution, there is no so-called national language of Ethiopia. Amharic is described as the language of Federal administration and English is used only for secondary and higher education and for interacting with foreigners (ECL-Ethiopia-Constitution, Article 5 & 39).

> The federal policy calls for use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction (MoI) throughout primary 1st and 2nd cycles, i.e. from grades 1 through 8. It also calls for teacher training to be in the MoI of primary schooling (Heugh et al. 2006, 4).

BGRS government has made use of this right to develop the languages found within the region's boundaries. With respect to education it has established a policy for the respective mother tongues to be used as medium of instruction in the first cycle of primary education, grades 1–4 only. English should be taught as a subject from grade 1 onward and used as a

MoI from grade 5 until the completion of secondary school. Children who start their education in an indigenous language other than Amharic learn Amharic only as a subject from grade 3 onward.

2.3   Personal and Professional Interest, and Justification

My interest and motivation to carry out research on this topic comes from living and working in BGRS in a Bertha community for thirteen years, four of which were spent in a village called Abramo (12 km south of Assosa). This enabled me to learn the language and observe the Bertha way of life. Working for SIL, I have been privileged to partner with the Regional Education Bureau (REB) and Bureau of Culture and Tourism (BoCT) of BGRS. My wife and I were assigned the task of analyzing the Bertha grammar and phonology, and developing the orthography and educational materials. Later I accepted the role of project coordinator to assist the BGRS government in its effort to develop all six languages in the region and to implement Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in grades 1–4.

The first cycle of primary education in the Bertha, Gumuz and Shinasha languages has now been completed. Tests among the children of the pilot classes have been conducted, and the results have shown that Bertha children in the pilot schools who were taught in their mother tongue (MT) have outperformed the Bertha children who are still being taught in Amharic, by about 9% in the first three years. Given the fact that the percentage of students who have achieved the minimum level of competency has increased from 29.4% to 38.4% it is hardly a cause for celebration and there is still much scope for improvement. However, there are some important advantages of MTB-MLE, such as the improvement of student

confidence and classroom participation. Even though these benefits are not easily measurable, they are real and observable in classrooms.

My dissatisfaction with the test results led to a search for additional factors which might contribute to an improvement in the educational outcomes, other than the language of instruction. This led to the formation of the hypothesis outlined below. There is no doubt that other elements such as health, proximity to school, overcrowded classrooms, under-resourced schools, widespread illiteracy among the Bertha parents, gender issues for girls etc., have shaped results, and that addressing those issues would undoubtedly make a huge difference to the children's educational outcomes. Such elements however are beyond the scope of the MTB-MLE project and this research.

A reflection on the type of education being delivered to Bertha children and how it relates to their lives outside the classroom led to the hypothesis that there is a very significant discrepancy in objectives between those of the parents and of those in the educational system. I will argue that this problem contributes to the poor school attainment and that it could be addressed in a sustainable manner, independently of the economic situation of the country, as well as other problems such as poverty, health and illiteracy.

The aim of this research paper is to contribute to a better understanding of the problem, and to encourage adaptation of behaviour, especially among the parents and teachers, so that in the future, children will start their schooling equipped with skills needed to succeed in academic learning. The skills with which the children come to school need to be acknowledged as valuable and be integrated into the curriculum. The pedagogy in the classroom needs to start to develop capacity for critical thinking, asking questions, solving

problems, and debating. I am not however suggesting that the currently used curriculum is ideal or entirely relevant for Bertha children, as will become apparent.

3   The Research Process

3.1   The Nature of the Research

This is a qualitative research using the Flexible Design approach (Robson 2002, 131). Two characteristics of the influential traditions used in flexible design are used in this study: It is based on the lengthy field experience as participant, an 'accepted member of the group', as an ethnographic study suggests (Robson 2002, 142-143), and at the same time it contains some of the characteristics of Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory research method was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, and was widely used in various adapted and modified forms (Robson 2002, 147). The theoretical framework requires a variety of approaches for collecting data (Robson 2002, 132).

Even though this research is not an ethnographic study in its full sense – because it does not give a detailed description of Bertha culture – the observations made during the stay in their village have provided information on how child rearing and education takes place in the Bertha community. In addition, numerous discussions and interviews were conducted in order to understand people's views and the rationale for their actions and a literature review investigated the source and philosophy of the educational system in use. The formation of the hypothesis and the data collection took place on the field and not in an armchair (Denscombe 2007, 89) and the research was not done only out of books (Robson 2002, 131).

The hypothesis was reached after years of observation, reflection, formation of a theory, and multiple revisions of it. The fact that I wanted to test both my understanding of the situation, and the theory which emerged from it, means that the data was collected in a purposeful manner. I did not start at zero, not knowing the direction in which the study might end up going, which makes this approach different to the Grounded Theory approach. Having stated that, it was not a preoccupation with education that provoked my interest. In this regard, I had an open mind. In other words, at the actual start of this research the data was collected with a purpose, but the overall study of the situation had begun years before, in which case it is in line with the Grounded Theory characteristics.

Typical for the Flexible Design approach, I too started with a single idea (Robson 2002, 132): How could Bertha parents better prepare their children for the formal education system? – The idea was to make them aware of the development of the oral language skills of their children. This single problem first developed into a multi-layered enquiry of interconnected realities which included teachers, curriculum, pedagogy and the overall national and international goals of development. Later the focus was narrowed down to the main issues.

In order to minimize the risk of misunderstanding and biased interpretation of the researcher, I discussed the data on many occasions with Ethiopian friends, colleagues and officials at all levels of educational institutions, including at the Ministry level. Their views have influenced the formation of the hypothesis, and verified the analysis of the data (Robson 2002, 132).

3.2 Purpose

If it succeeds in raising awareness of the problem of discrepancy in approach and objectives in educating Bertha children, this research has the potential to impact not only the children

in Bertha society, but eventually also the country's development, its economy, and its goal to eradicate illiteracy and poverty.

3.3   Data Gathering and Approach

3.3.1   Literature Review

I have reviewed literature, which has provided information concerning the source of the national curriculum and the ideology on which that curriculum was originally based. For that I have accessed the libraries and online documents which were available to me, as well as the project's internal documents, such as notes taken during the pilot schools visits, the tests conducted, and reports written by project's personnel and external evaluators.

3.3.2   Observation

Years of observation of how parents communicate with their children and of the pedagogy used in schools has provided some insights concerning rearing and educating children in the Bertha culture.

3.3.3   Interviews

Having completed certain formalities, supporting letters from the REB and the Assosa Woreda (District) administration were obtained, which were presented to the chairman of each village. These stated that I was to be given the necessary assistance and cooperation to carry out this research.

Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews as well as discussions with Ethiopian friends, colleagues, and officials over many cups of coffee have given people a voice to express their views, values, ideas of what their goals for their children are, and opinions on the topic of this research. Interviewees were parents, educators, and the

Regional Education Bureau (REB) personnel. All the interviewees gave oral (audio-recorded) permission to use their answers in this research.

One hundred interviews with fathers and mothers were conducted in Menge Woreda on a one- to-one basis, because the aim was to have a good sample of the amount and quality of communication between them as parents and their children. The interviews were led by two indigenous language workers in the course of two weeks as they filled in the answers to the questions in a questionnaire form (Appendix A).

Group interviews with between seven and nine parents (one or two mothers were present in each group) were held in three Bertha villages. The locations were chosen because they were villages of Bertha speakers and were within one hour's drive of Assosa. The interviewees were selected by the chairman in the respective locations, on the basis that they were raising or had raised children of their own (Appendix B).

In the REB, Curriculum Development Department officials were interviewed, because I considered that the experts in that department are the most relevant for answering questions on this research topic. The experts in that department are responsible for translating the national curriculum into the student textbooks and teachers' guides, and for monitoring the teaching-learning processes in schools. Using a questionnaire I formally interviewed three staff at the Curriculum Development Department who were available at the time, and a number of experts on various occasions and on selected topics only. None of the experts in the educational sector are actually from the Bertha people, but have had many years of experience, first as teachers and later as REB employees (for 6–15 years) (Appendix C).

The REB and the focus group discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed. While the REB interviews were conducted in English, the interviews (individual and group) with parents were carried out in the Bertha language. Abdulnasir Ali, an indigenous colleague of the project, who was present at the interviews, checked and commented on my transcriptions to make sure they were correct and unbiased.

3.3.3.1 Reliability of the Data

Being a foreigner labels me by default as an outsider not only to the Bertha society but to Ethiopia as a whole, and therefore the reliability of the data received in interviews might be questioned. The criterion of an insider or an outsider depends on the category which one chooses (Tinker 2008, 54). Given the attitudes and distrust of Bertha people towards other ethnic groups in Ethiopia, I would like to suggest that, in my case, the opposite was true, and that throughout I was given reliable and consistent information by Bertha parents. I cannot claim this statement when it comes to the interviews with government officials; I was clearly seen as an outsider as will become apparent in 5.2, as the provided information differed greatly from one interview to another.

3.3.4 Interpretation of the Data

I am aware that data collected using social research methods (or qualitative based research) will be subject to the observer bias of the researcher, be it an insider or outsider, because it is influenced by past experiences, culture and world-view (Young 2011, 212). Therefore it is by its very nature 'fallible' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 235; cited in Young 2011, 210). As previously stated, having indigenous friends with whom I was able to discuss and cross-check interpretations of my findings has helped to avoid subjectivity and validate the interpretation of the data.

Grounded Theory as described by Gasson (2004, 82-84), has three stages: Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Selective Coding as the approach for data collection, interpretation and formation of the theory. Open Coding was used to categorize the various relevant stakeholders. Axial Coding was then applied to look for relationships between the categories and emergence of a hypothesis by examining the similarities and the differences and interchange of data collection-interpretation has started informally years ago and is finalized in this research. The most relevant categories which emerged through Selective Coding formed the core of the theory in this research.

3.4   Strengths, Weaknesses and Limitations in Data Collection

I believe that having an understanding of the language and the culture of the interviewees gave me the advantage of being able (at least in some instances) to identify when ideal or 'correct' answers rather than an accurate reflection of reality were given. In such cases it allowed me to present a related question from a different angle or to remind the interviewees to report on what was actually happening. The long-standing relationships and built-up trust enabled me to ask questions which might have been unacceptable for a stranger to ask. Asking questions in Ethiopia has to do with evaluating, challenging or even accusing the person and therefore takes place almost exclusively from a top-down position.

The pre-formulated hypothesis was both a weakness and strength. Having started the research with a more or less clear understanding of the situation, I was able to focus on the actual topic from the beginning. Being aware that this strength is a potential weakness, I – as a researcher – tried to be open and sensitive to unexpected input during the data collection, but cannot completely exclude the possibility that I might have overlooked some input.

3.5 Limitations

This paper focuses only on the issue of discrepancies of viewpoint between the parents, teachers and the REB as the stakeholders who are shaping and educating young people towards a preferred but un-agreed future. This is what I, at this point in time, consider to be the root causes of frustration in the education system, as EGRA results (Piper 2010), and tests by Gebrekidan (2011) are showing, and which should not persist even in spite of issues such as economic constraints in Ethiopia. Many issues remain unaddressed, some of which I have mentioned above, and further questions remain unanswered or even unasked (for example, how can teacher's own competencies in the subjects they teach and their training in pedagogy be improved? how can parents' illiteracy rates be reduced?). These remain as subjects for further studies.

4 Literature Review

4.1 Stakeholders' Perspective on Education

I have no doubt that all of the stakeholders desire to provide an equitable education that paves the way for a preferred future for the young generation. But the question remains: What kind of future and end product (citizen) do the different stakeholders have in mind? More precisely: What is the overall goal in terms of personal and cognitive development? What kind of knowledge and competencies need to be acquired, and for what kind of jobs in the future? How do the content, strategies and means go together to achieve these goals?

4.1.1 Enculturation Process

I am aware that one is on dangerous ground when making generalizations about people. Nonetheless, based on my observations, I would like to risk stating that, the typical enculturation process in Bertha society is by observation and imitation. It is similar to that in

the Mbuko culture, as described by Gravina (2006). In her PhD dissertation about how the Mbuko adults acquire new skills, she draws attention to parallels between how they, and how children learn, and concludes that watching, trying, and doing with very little or no oral explanation, is the way they learn new skills, and that lots of what children learn in the first years of their lives is acquired in this way.

> … it depends on observation and imitation rather than verbalization, with children often mimicking adult behavior; questions rarely feature and hypothetical situations are never discussed (Gravina 2006, 71).

Baquedano-López (2003) draws attention to the presence of the analytical aspect in the enculturation process. For instance as all children develop competence in their mother tongue, they do not only observe and imitate others but

> … actively generate hypotheses about language rules that they test against whatever linguistic input is available to them (Baquedano-López 2003, 67).

As a result of this analytical approach they become creative and competent users of the language and culture. In spite of the fact that many of the cultural stances are not taught to them explicitly, they succeed in learning to behave in generative and socially appropriate ways. Babies, who have no awareness of language or concepts, manage to develop knowledge about the world, cause-effect relations and ways of manipulating the environment for their advantage, for example, how to get and maintain attention of others, get or display an emotional response. This standpoint attributes an active, analytical and creative role to the learner (Baquedano-López 2003, 69).

Holt (1968) argues that children are by nature curious, receptive and perceptive, and want to make sense of the strange, confused and complicated world surrounding them. They want to find out how it works and gain control over their environment by doing what they see others doing. They want to experiment without fear of making mistakes, to taste, touch, bend and break things in order to find out how they work (Holt 1968, 184-185).

4.1.2 Parents' Role

Early childhood learning is generally seen as not only a preparation for formal education but also as a foundation for it. The literature on 'family literacy' issues in general seem to agree with Ball that:

> Parents come first. They are both the child's first educators – and the most
> important influence in the child's life (Ball 1994, 42).

Since a Western curriculum is used in Ethiopia, the comparison of child rearing practices in Bertha society and in the West is relevant. LeVine (1994) compares Gusii mothers in Kenya and typical middle-class American mothers with regard to the amount of time and kind of attention that infants receive over the first 30 months of their lives. The relevance of using the Gusii as an example for this study is in terms of the underlying philosophy concerning the rearing of children. From my observations, the Gusii and the Bertha mothers have much in common in this regard, and therefore I consider this research to be worth looking at.

Those items from LeVene's observations which I found to be similar to those of Bertha mothers are summarized in the table below. They suggest that there is a discrepancy between Bertha parents' understanding of the rearing of their children and the state

educational philosophy, because by choosing a foreign educational system, Ethiopia has

inherited the foreign educational philosophy as well.

Figure 3 Rearing practices

	Gusii	American
Model called	'Pediatric', because its content is concerned primaraly with survival, health, especially life-threatening illness, environmental hazards, and physical growth.	'Pedagogical', because it is concerned with behavioural development and preparation for educational interactions. This may include engagement in social interaction, promotion of curiosity in surroundings, exploration, etc.
Amount of care/attention given	Declining as a child gets older, as the need for protection diminishes, and reliance on older children for play and social interaction increases.	Increases over time as the children become more capable of verbal conversation, sleep less and learn how to keep mothers' attention.
Asking questions	Why ask if the child can neither comprehend nor answer?	Frequently done in order to promote participation in social exchange.

Praise	Very rare because it encourages conceit, makes a child disobedient, and results in a disruption of the hierarchy.	Constantly given because it encourages the children to learn and engage socially, and it it encourages self-confidence.
Giving commands (positive as well as negative)	Results in a child being respectful, obedient, submissive, compliant, easily manageble, fitting into a hierarchial home (most subordinate in the sibling group).	Nothing is said about this.
Physical exploration	Dangerous (walking is enough).	Promotes development.
Conversation, play and interaction	After integration into the sibling hierarchy, the mothers can start reducing the time they give to their toddler. It is expected that the youngest learn from the older ones in the sibling group rather than from mothers.	Frequent use of questions to promote the infant's participation in social exchange.

(Based on LeVine 1994, 249-259)

Looking at this table from a western point of view, one might think that the picture of the Gusii mothers is a negative one. This is not LeVine's intention, in describing their living circumstances and their understanding of childcare. Both the American and the Gusii models are positive. They represent strategies, however, with different objectives. The author makes it clear that the main goal for Gusii mothers is to ensure the survival of their infants, and she shows that their mode of raising them contributes to this goal (LeVine 1994, 260-262). In the developed country, such as America, where infant mortality is no longer such an acute concern, the mothers' role has shifted. They are more concerned with the education of their children. Consciously or unconsciously the cognitive development of the child has become a priority, and this is in line with their educational system.

4.1.3 National Government's Role (Curriculum)

National governments typically create or adapt a curriculum with the overriding purpose of making their people patriotic citizens. The curriculum is designed to promote peace, unity and prosperity. It encourages people to be innovative including in job creation and productive in order to facilitate development in the country (Hollman 1981). Tekeste (2006), an Ethiopian scholar, adds that rationally the curriculum design should be done in consideration and inclusive of social, cultural and political values (Tekeste 2006, 41). These are the goals towards which the government has set Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs) which are defined for each stage of education.

The curriculum aims to meet the MLCs. It has specified objectives and consists of subject content which serves as a base for textbook development, activities and teaching strategies. Both Nigerian educators Ajibola (2008) and Oludipe (2012) propose that a

> … curriculum is at the same time a policy and a technical issue, a process and a
>
> product, involving a wide range of institutions and actors (Ajibola 2008, 51).

Regarding development of a curriculum, Oludipe sees it as a continuous work, not only in delivering it, but also in making it serve the needs of the society as it continuously searches for qualitative improvement as it responds to societal changes (Oludipe 2012, 422).

> By design, it is expected to satisfy the needs of the society through the relevance and
>
> functionality of its content, method, processes and application (Oludipe 2012, 426).

After gaining independence from colonial powers, the first Tanzanian president Nyerere (1967), reflecting on the economic facts and the realities of his country, and the irrelevance of Western education in Tanzania, suggested that the Western education system in its present form (curriculum as well as the pedagogy) should not be used. Furthermore, the education should not be simply a preparation for an exam, which leads to selection for higher education, but should be preparation for the kind of life "which the majority of children will lead" (Nyerere 1967, p15). The education system should be a response to the question:

> What is the educational system in Tanzania intended to do, what is its purpose
>
> (Nyerere 1967, 5)?

Every society in the world has, and has always had, an educational system. As Nyerere (1967) describes it, at a fire-place in the evenings history is transmitted, riddles are used to develop abstract reasoning and proverbs to pass on wisdom. Rites of passage and periods of initiations are opportunities for teaching how to behave and function in the society. By

doing, children learn how to take care of animals, work the fields, etc. The purpose of every formal or informal education system is:

> ...to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society and their participation in its maintenance or development (Nyerere 1967, 1).

According to Nyerere, the Western educational system, which was British in the case of his country, is based on capitalist philosophy which encourages the individualistic instincts of mankind. It leads to individuals possessing material wealth, giving them social status, worth and value. At the same time it is

> … inducing the attitudes of human inequality and underpinned the domination of the weak by the strong (Nyerere 1967, 3).

4.1.3.1 Origin of the modern Ethiopian Curriculum

The Ethiopian education system as it has been practiced in the Orthodox churches and monasteries is recognized as one of the oldest education systems in the world.

> Mastery of the alphabet was followed by reading and recitation of religious texts that began with the Psalms of David (Hoot 2004, p3).

Even though Ethiopia was never colonialized it has made use of a Western education system, namely that of Germany (Negash 2006, 21). One of the senior interviewees in the REB (Regional Education Bureau) mentioned this fact and added that the style and the structure are still the same today. He said that the only difference is that the REB is trying to localize, and to make a curriculum for each region that suits its needs. The content of

Physics, Chemistry, and Biology courses in Secondary education, as well as the examinations, are almost identical to those in German schools (Interview, 121128).

At this point it may be helpful to have a brief look at the education plan for Baden-Württemberg, one of the German Federal States (education is decentralized in Germany). Shedding some light on the educational ideology of the country from which Ethiopia's education system originates will help us understand what has been inherited by choosing to use that curriculum.

The Baden-Württemberg education plan states that education does not start with the beginning of formal schooling. It states that children's curiosities, talents, search for identity and orientation all contribute to the definition of educational goals. (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2004, 5).

Hentig adds, in the same document (2004, 7), that education should develop and strengthen the personality of the students, preparing them to face the uncertainties of the future, contribute to the survival of their societies and should encourage them to take on an active role as citizens of their country in the midst of globalization.

Henting states that it is not enough to provide encyclopedic knowledge. He sees three areas that education should address: Attitudes, Competence and Knowledge, these are summarized below.

Attitudes are not teachable as knowledge in a classroom; attitudes cannot be tested as competencies are, and there is no end to their development. A deliberate effort needs to go into developing positive attitudes – overcoming fear, gaining confidence, developing curiosity – so that children experience satisfaction from learning and from life in general,

and at the same time become aware of their responsibility and obligation to active participation in, and improvement of their own society. Attitudes determine how students defend their convictions, express their criticism, and engage in debate (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2004, 9).

Competencies should not be confused with knowledge. Competency, according to Hentig, is a combined ability of evaluation of complex issues, correct judgment of constantly changing and sometimes abstract issues, followed by action. Competencies are not learned by rote methods in order to recite certain facts. Students learn to go beyond observation and learn to evaluate, to record their conclusions, ask questions, do research, experiment, draw conclusions, and form their opinions. Competency is a good understanding of correlations between the issue at hand as well as self-confidence, experience, and the right attitude (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2004, 7-13).

Knowledge is more than being informed, it is also the understanding of the relevance and consequences to one's life. Learning facts for the sake of being able to reproduce them, without being able to connect the information to reality and therefore to one's cognitive schemata does not contribute to a person's knowledge (Ausubel cited in Brown 2007). Topics like: history, conflict, geography, climate, natural disaster, tools and technology, chemical compositions and bonds, economy and ecology, world religions and ethics all have relevance for us living in the 21st century, and need to be taught in a cohesive manner. The curriculum needs to be checked for its relevance and applicability to real life situations. The pedagogy move towards 'learning by doing', and 'discussing multiple perspectives' means that knowledge, competencies and attitudes will be acquired and developed by the

individual students themselves, instead of being fed to them by educators (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2004, 8, 16).

At the time of the Reformation in Germany, which was thousands of years after Ethiopian education began, the purpose of education was just as in Ethiopia, to teach students to read and write (mainly the Bible). Later it was to gain social status. Today the educational purpose is to increase 'human resources' in order to create and secure working places in the country (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2004, 9).

In the 20th and 21st century Germany's economy is based on highly technical products and therefore the education system is aimed at that market. Implementing the German curriculum in Ethiopia would suggest that the goals for education have been adopted as well.

I argue that curriculum and pedagogy go hand in hand and therefore if the first is from an unknown sphere of the world, making the latter meaningful would be challenging, if not impossible.

4.1.3.2 Pedagogy

To understand how to teach most effectively, it is imperative to try to understand how human beings learn. One of the many theorists in this area is Ausubel (1968), who tried to explain how the human brain processes and stores information. According to his theory the new information needs to be connected to already existing knowledge, in other words, connected to the existing cognitive structure, or, as Brown puts it, 'hanging new items on existing pegs' (Ausubel 1968 cited in Brown 2007, 91).

> The most important factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly (Ausubel 1968, iv).

Application of Ausubel's theory in the classroom situation means that the teacher activates the students' prior knowledge and experiences, which provides the basis for learning, and facilitates a successful connection of the new material to the children's cognitive structures. In other words, the learning is an integration of the new input into the existing cognitive structures or schemata (Cummins 2001, 66).

Cummins (2000b) contrasts two teaching models, one he calls the 'transmission' or 'banking' model, the other, the 'transformative' model (Cummins 2000b cited in Baker 2001). In describing the 'transmission' model, he talks of learners as buckets, into which the teachers pour the knowledge, which the curriculum developers – wherever they are in the world – have decided is important. Knowledge is poured in and stored, whether the learner wants it or not, whether it is relevant to the learner or not. This model reinforces the worthlessness of indigenous knowledge and the powerlessness of the ethno-linguistic minority student. In this model, a good student is expected to recall the facts which were poured into his 'bucket'. The 'transformative' model, on the other hand, emphasizes the value of guided learning in which a dialogue between the learner and the teacher takes place (Cummins 2001, 64–65, 98).

> If the 'banking' model is allied to the disablement of minority language students, then the 'transformative' model is related to the empowerment of students. This latter model aims to give students more control over their own learning, with consequent potential positive effects for self-esteem, cooperation and motivation (Baker 2001, 396).

The transformative teaching model, or meaningful learning model, provides the base for learners to become active seekers and generators of new knowledge, creators of literature and art. It encourages the student to develop critical thinking skills rather than 'low-level' memorization skills (Cummins 2001, 64–65, 98).

Relying on Ausubel's learning theory, Brown (2007), while using different vocabulary makes a similar distinction between the two methods, described above:

> The distinction between rote and meaningful learning may not at first appear to be important since in either case material can be learned. But the significance of the distinction becomes clear when we consider the relative efficiency of the two kinds of learning in terms of retention, or long-term memory. We are often tempted to examine learning from the perspective of input alone, failing to consider the uselessness of a learned item that is not retained (Brown 2007, 93.)

The German curriculum as described in 4.1.3.1 is a transformative one, and by default, is designed to be taught using transformative methods. It is not really compatible with the banking or rote teaching-learning methods.

4.1.4 International Organizations

Like Germany and all capitalist countries, the World Bank has the same aims when it lends money to countries for primary education. It lends in order to increase human resources for the global market. Capitalism, which has brought prosperity to the Western countries, is seen as ideal and gets promoted in other countries in the name of education.

Brock-Utne (2000) considers these policies as imposed and raises questions like: "Whose education for all, toward what ends, by what means, and in whose interests?" (Brock-Utne 2000, xviii).

She also states that:

> Education is not looked at as a right, a joy, a tool for liberation and empowerment, but as an investment (Brock-Utne 2000, 12).

And one of the objectives in educating girls is even contraception.

> Even some years of schooling of a girl child are said to be beneficial to curbing population growth (Brock-Utne 2000, 13).

Ignoring the financial and infrastructural reality (for example, limited access to electricity, computers and internet) in which many people in Africa live, and which is certainly true for the Bertha people, Adeyemi (2002) states, in my opinion inappropriately, that no person is considered to be truly educated if he or she is not computer-literate, and is unable to access information in electronic form. He argues that education in every African country should be developing and utilizing those skills (Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2002, 227-230).

4.2   Reflection on the Literature Reviewed

The literature discussed above provides the background to the topics which will be discussed in relation to the situation in which children of Bertha society find themselves. The main issue concerns how children's enculturation in the pre-school years fit with the pedagogical practices in formal schools. Parents' practice of rearing their children in Bertha society is just as rational as parents living anywhere else in the world, but as it will be argued, it is neither equipping the children with the skills to help them to succeed in their

educational careers, nor with knowledge which is considered to be valuable in the education system, because it is not being used for acquiring new knowledge. At the same time it was shown that the curriculum which is being used in Ethiopia was meant to be transformative, and was not designed to be memorized and recited, as was (and still is) the common practice in, but not only in, traditional religious schools.

5 Data Collection

5.1 Interviews with Parents

Individual structured interviews were conducted, by two Bertha language workers, in the Menge village with 100 parents. The interview focused on communication between the parents and their children.

Besides succeeding academically and in professional careers, Bertha parents want their children to be good people in terms of character. The summary of all group interviews and discussions was that a good Bertha man is one who respects cultural values such as hospitality, proper social, moral and ethical behaviour; who keeps peace with everyone in the village and negotiates peace between quarrelling neighbours; and who raises his children well by giving advice and instructing them and the other children in the village to be good people. A good man does not shift the borders of his land; he is sent to negotiate marriages; he respects himself, elders as well as young people; if he succeeds in becoming rich, he does not become proud, does not separate himself from his community, does not despise poor people, but rather helps them out if they are in need.

A good Bertha woman is expected to manage her household well, keep herself clean, as well as her children, the clothes of the entire family and the place around her house. She

respects, serves and obeys her husband, is hospitable to guests, giving them water to wash, food and coffee. She visits sick neighbours, and instructs her daughters to live with their husbands in good ways. A good Bertha woman helps and feeds orphans, and participates in community work. She does not wander around in the village and does not spread gossip and does not create conflicts between people.

A good Bertha boy respects and obeys his parents, teachers and other adults in the community; instead of doing his own will he helps in the house and community work without complaining, and supports his parents. A good boy does not fight with others, and does not skip school. He listens to the advice given to him; he does not insult anyone, does not consume alcohol or drugs, and does not steal.

A good Bertha girl is guided by her father and mother, listening, obeying and following their instructions and corrections. She cooks food, fetches water, cleans the compound and the household items, and collects firewood. She contributes her effort and ideas to solving family problems; she wears decent clothes and goes to school. She does not waste her time gossiping and running after the boys doing shameful things; does not go anywhere without permission; does not participate in quarrels in the village; does not run after the latest technology like mobile phones, talking to people far away instead of talking to her family. A good girl does not marry someone without the consent of her father.

The following table shows the combined answers to questions about which skills and knowledge children in Bertha community have acquired, before they start formal education:

Figure 4 Skills which Bertha children acquire before school age

Speak at least one language	Weed the garden
Herd goats and sheep; know when to give them water, and how to help them during birth	Look after their siblings (carrying them around, protecting them)
Protect the garden from monkeys; and small chicks from birds of prey	Look after the locked house when parents are away
Fetch drinking water	Shop for small items like: sugar, salt, oil
Take messages from one person to another	Serve water for washing hands before and after food
Sweep in front of the house	Grind salt
Sell small items: eggs, chicken, fruit	Play some local games
Collect twigs for fire, make fire, and fetch fire from the neighbours	Start playing musical instruments
Know what is sacred, clean and not clean	Start hunting small animals
Girls know how to wash clothes	Know what parents like and dislike
Know social rules and regulations and how to greet people properly with all the forms of respect	Know what is edible

(Interviews, q.12)

Children learn all these skills by trial and error, observing their parents, and older siblings or friends and by imitating them. An example given was that sometimes when children watch their fathers building a house, they imitate and build a little one to the side (Interview 121026, q. 18).

Parents would like their children to learn about the history of the entire world, the technology which is available, and the world languages, especially Arabic and English. They also emphasize the fact that since the start of educating in the Bertha language, the children are learning much better and going to school much more happily (All interviews q.16-17).

Parents want education for their children in order for them to become professionals such as doctors, office workers, heads of Bureaus, government workers, so that their children will be in a position to improve the situation of their country. If their children do not manage to go to higher education, then they think that the entire education was useless and irrelevant for the lives in the village, because it did not teach anything about the farming practices (Interview 121026, q.19).

The interviewees saw that what they thought of as irrelevant education was not only irrelevant, but in many instances even harmful:

> Our experience with the dropouts of grades 8 or 10 is that they disturb people. They pretend to be educated, but they do not want to work, thinking they are knowledgeable. Learning only a little is the same as burning with fire (meaning wasting time). They are not educated and are not working, just running back and forth. It would be better that they had never gone to school (Interview 121202, q.19).

In (121026) it was said that it would not need to have been so, if the curriculum content had been about the indigenous environment and the issues at hand. In such a case, they as parents would be willing to contribute their knowledge and to be involved in the teaching of their children in school (Interview 121026, question 22). Additionally the interviewees have

emphasized that the old people have a lot of wisdom. They know the social values, the local history, their origins, their wars, how people lived well. They can give advice on how to live and work in right ways. All that knowledge and experiences are very valuable to the community and must be passed on through incorporation of it into the curriculum of formal education (Interview 121026, q.25 a, b, c.).

To the question, "Is the education in school making your child a better person? -In what ways?" the interviewees (121202), answered that:

> School does not make our children better people; some of it might be useful but not really. In times of our traditional instruction everybody was good, but now with teaching all the technology everybody has become rotten. In school they teach our children prostitution by informing on usage of condoms which supports immorality. They inform our children on the rights they have to do things but do not tell them the obligations they have. Children benefit from school only if their families teach them the religious values at home, but the school does not make a child a good person (Interview 121202, q.21).

Traditionally it was not acceptable for a child to ask questions, it was considered rude or disrespectful towards adults and a sign of bad character. Children were ignored, rebuked, beaten, and chased away, if they did ask questions (Interview 121202, q.15).

In the interviews with a number of fathers in Menge, the response given to the question about whether or not they talked with their children, was that talking with their children would bring the fathers down to the level of the children, resulting in a loss of respect.

Our family did not give us the right to speak, not even greetings; they would say we were not their friends, and asking questions was unthinkable (Interview 121202, q.15).

In every village the interviewees agreed that this is still the norm.

Even though we know that children learn when they ask questions, we do not want them to disturb us, so we beat them for asking, so that they do not get silly ideas and do stupid things. We also do not ask them any questions either, we know that they know nothing and are not able to answer any questions, it is simply a waste of time (Interview 121202, q.15).

At the same time, it was reported in every village that there were a few exceptions to this practice nowadays. This was generally considered to be a positive development and was agreed that the awareness for it needed to be raised. It was said that some of the younger parents, who have spent a few years in school themselves and those who are by nature more patient people tend to promote or at least tolerate children's questions.

It is good to have tolerance and answer the questions, because it helps the child in its development (Interview 121026, q.15).

Some others have added:

If a child asks questions, it shows that the child is ready to learn. It is an indicator that the child will become an active independent person. We need to explain things to them, so that they are able to continue learning in school. It says a lot about their future learning (Interview 121125, q.15).

5.2   Interviews with Educators

All of the interviewees in the REB (Regional Education Bureau) thought that the governmental investment into the education of its citizens was for the sake of the development of Ethiopia. They said that education would guarantee development, bring civilization and democratization, create good governance, and introduce new technology. Education was a human resource development which would enhance the economy and lead to the eradication of poverty. Educated people were supposed to create jobs and self-employment, to become modern farmers, experts in bureaus, IT experts, and to become agents of change. In terms of personal aspirations, it was hoped that the Ethiopian citizens would love themselves, their families, culture and country, that they would believe in equality and equity of nations and nationalities, people who respect the ideas of others and are willing to share theirs. Ethiopia has also a commitment to national and international goals such as Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Education For All (EFA), etc.

Two of the interviewees thought that the education was based on the assessment of the people's life situation and was entirely addressing their needs. That was the reason for gradual improvement of the living standard of the nation. In spite of admitting that the life in cities and rural areas could not be more different from each other, they thought that the curriculum was relevant and addressed the needs of people in all places of the country. (Interview, 121122; 121203)

In contrast to this, one interviewee felt the opposite, the curriculum was totally irrelevant, it was not based on the needs of the society, and it did not address adequately urgent issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis and the deforestation of the country. The

introduction of technology was not for agriculture, even though the people were mainly agriculturalists (Interview, 121128).

One interviewee reported that the student-teacher ratio in the region is 1:16, with the exception of a few classrooms, and that teachers' education levels are mostly above the diploma level, which is a sign of quality education. The enrolment of children into schools is growing steadily also; and because of that, the human resources are increasing. However, the living situation is not changing significantly for most people (Interview, 121122).

In one interview (121128) it was said that most graduates expect the government to provide jobs for them instead of creating jobs for themselves and others. Farmers are still working their fields using the same techniques as they did centuries ago. This he ascribes to the 'theorization' of the curriculum and the outdated pedagogical methods. Concerning the content:

> The historical aspects taught in the schools are simply facts which do not have any implications either to our today's development or to the globalized world. In geography for example, facts like the length and depth of the rivers and countries through which they flow are taught, but not how to make use of them and at the same time experiment with the streams in the area. The current curriculum covers only theoretical aspects of science; there are no practical parts/implications, like experiments, procedures, observations, activities. Therefore it does not produce problem- solving people, people who believe in equality, equity, justice, freedom, and responsibility; all these aspects are not included properly in the curriculum (Interview, 121128).

The other two informants in the interview (121122; 121203) were convinced that the

Ethiopian curriculum has been entirely developed in Ethiopia based on societal,

governmental and industrial needs of the country. But some best practices might

have been adopted from other countries, so that is why we are doing so well

(Interview 121122, q.5).

On mentioning Gebrekidan's (2011) test results, which have shown that the educational

outcomes were not that great at all, both these interviewees were taken by surprise. The

reason for meagre educational outcomes was attributed to low teacher performance, which

on the other hand was a result of a poor teacher selection process and training, and their

lack of commitment to teaching and improving their own skills.

Due to the poor writing skills of the textbook writers, the provision of the decentralized

education policy to localize the educational materials has not been used, but instead the

books were simply copied. An additional factor for low educational outcomes was the

shortage of educational materials (121128).

Nevertheless the recent implementation of the Mother Tongue based MLE was a milestone

towards the delivering of quality education (Interview 121122).

All agreed that to be a critical thinker is a desirable virtue and both the educational system

as well as the parents of the children should aim to produce such citizens. Students should

have the right to ask any question, they may have even petitions; it is good if they compare

and contrast the governments of various countries, but this needs to be performed in a

peaceful manner. Along with those rights students need also to know their duties and

responsibilities. Traditionally, critical thinking was not promoted at home, but now it seems to the interviewees that among the educated parents this has started to change.

One interviewee though revealed that asking politicians 'Why?' questions inevitably results in demotion rather than promotion in the job and diminishes the prospects of being advanced to the next level of higher education. Compliance and 'Ishi' (OK, I agree) is expected and works in the long run for one's advantage (Interview, 121120).

The interviewees agreed that the actual education policy prescribed that a student-centred teaching methodology was to be used in classrooms, which would produce critical-thinking students with problem-solving capacity. This problem-solving capacity was supposed to lead to the creation of new jobs. But in reality, teachers were using a completely teacher-centred methodology. As a consequence, students' achievements are low and they are not able to read even after completing grade 4 or 8.

It was also said that the reason for this teaching practice lay in the religious and traditional schools, which were focusing on memorization.

> A person who memorizes huge amounts of information is considered to be an intellectual in our society. Because of this, we cannot separate ourselves from this tradition. Both Christian as well as Islamic education is based on memorization. This education is our father and mother (Interview 121128, q.8a).

The interviewees reported that they themselves, having studied the science of pedagogy, have taught the same way they had been taught in their entire education career, 'lecturing and spoon-feeding', because that was the only methodology they had experienced as students.

When I was a child, my teacher used a lecture method and I considered him to be a knowledgeable person. I did not respect my knowledge which I had at the time; it was the teacher's knowledge that had value. I kept silent and listened. When I went to university (studying pedagogical science), I was lectured, I just listened considering them as a source of knowledge (Interview 121128, q.8a).

An interviewee added that 99% of teachers were using lecturing methods which he blamed as the reason for students failing to achieve the national Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs). At the same time, given the real-life situation, the MLCs were not based on realistic goals and have not been tried out (at least not in rural areas). While the students simply got promoted to the next grade, the curriculum in the following grade was, as common sense dictates, based on the assumption that the MLCs of previous grades have been achieved. So the gap between the MLC and the actual achievement of the students grew from year to year. As a result, even some teachers, who went through this system themselves, were not at the level of MLCs of primary education at this point in time (Interview 121128, q.9).

5.2.1 Comment on the Interviews with Educators

The inconsistency in the responses of the interviewees coming from the same institution demands an explanation, which I have chosen to forward to some of my Ethiopian friends.

The most likely explanation is the extent of involvement in the political party of the interviewees. It influences the degree of idealization of the situation, leading to a partial detachment from reality; also problems become objects of talking-away into non-existence rather than being dealt with (130212).

It is not uncommon to observe that 'What should be' becomes 'What is' in the minds of people who have more of a political agenda then a readiness for critical analysis of the situation.

It is interesting to mention that the person, whose opinion deviated from the others, was indeed not involved in politics, whereas the others were.

5.3 Teachers, Curriculum and Pedagogy

Van Ginkel (2010) visited the pilot schools in BGRS and submitted a report which is very much in line with my experience, indicating that most of the teachers do not understand any principles of the transformative pedagogy which are described above in 4.1.3.2. Memorization and recitation of information and provided solutions to problems by the 'more-knowledgeable' is the norm, and questions are not allowed in the classrooms (Van Ginkel 2010, 8). This approach has worked for centuries in religious schools, and traditional knowledge has successfully been passed on over generations. Now the teachers are expected to deliver the education in, to them, an unnatural way. The Student Centred Approach is being endorsed and is on lips of every educator in BGRS. This modern education system is a foreign one, it demands that the teacher be a facilitator of the learning and thinking process. The teacher's job is to help the learner to understand, analyze, identify a problem, and come up with a solution, preferably not pre-formulated but a unique and a creative one.

The discrepancy between the traditional education system and their job as teachers of modern education is inevitable. That it is impossible to deliver such an extensive curriculum, containing a number of more or less foreign components and concepts using the traditional rote methods of teaching is attested by the poor results seen in the EGRA report

Reading comprehension zero scores are 54.0% in Grade 2 and 32.3% in Grade 3

(Piper 2010, 23),

and in the tests conducted by Gebrekidan (2011) mentioned in 2.3.

Adeyemi (2002) adds another component to the contrast between the education systems.

He states that in traditional societies there was and is a clear gap between the teacher and

the student. Nowadays though, a number of educators demand that a teacher be more like

a friend to the students, socialize with them, laugh with them, etc. The same demand

applies to the parent-children relationship (Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2002, 234).

During the learning outcomes assessment of the pilot schools in BGRS, Gebrekidan (2011)

has discovered that there is a disparity between what the national standards for education

are, and how little the teachers expect their students to achieve. 40% of the teachers do not

expect their students to be able to read a simple story even with some mistakes by grade

three, and 68% of teachers do not expect students to understand what they read, even

when they read in their mother tongue (Gebrekidan 2011, 26). In reality, the low

expectations of teachers, compared with the test results have turned out to be optimistic.

Only 5% of grade three students could read a simple story with comprehension. In grade

two 75% and in grade three 43.3% of the students did not know any letters at all

(Gebrekidan 2011, 9).

Gebrekidan's findings point out the discrepancy between the wishful standards in the form

of Minimum Learning Competencies (MLC) and the reality in the Bertha classrooms. The

consequence of this disparity is that the gap between "What should be" and "What is"

grows from year to year because the curriculum for the next higher grades is based on the

assumption that the competencies of the previous grades have been reached. For example, after the completion of grade 1, there is no more provision for teaching letter discrimination and reading skills, because it is assumed that children know how to read and write. Teachers follow the curriculum faithfully in spite of the fact that most of the children do not know even the basics.

It is true that if students do not drop out, they still do slowly but steadily develop and improve their literacy skills as they progress into higher classes, but I think it is fair to state that this improvement is to be attributed to the students' analytical ability (Baquedano-López 2003) rather than to the teacher's accomplishment.

5.4   Language in Education and its Consequence in BGRS

Benson (2010) points out that despite the provision of the national policy to learn in the mother tongues up to grade 8, the BGRS is changing the language in education into English in grade 5. The rationale for this early switch to English is what Benson calls the 'two myths' about language learning: "the more dominant (English) language, the better" and "the earlier the better". In other words it is expected that children will be fluent in English by the time they reach upper high school because they have had so many years of English by that time. This expectation has been proved wrong by various studies (Benson and Kosonen 2010, 147) and is contestable in BGRS as well.

The discrepancy between the national policy on language in education and the practice in BGRS is based on wrong assumptions and on the exclusion of the reality in BGRS. It was made without consideration of teachers' own competencies in English. It is an exception to find a primary school teacher in BGRS with whom one can have a day-to-day conversation in English, and who can read with comprehension the grade 5 student textbooks which are in

English, and yet they are the ones who are supposed to prepare the children to start learning in the English language at that level. The result of this policy bears multiple negative implications, which the parents have expressed as well (Interview q.16).

The biggest concern of the negative impact of the use of English in education is for children's development. I do not feel competent to go into the details of the psychological effects on children, who feel helpless and ignorant and excluded from participation in the classroom because of the language in use, but it would open up an entire area of study, which is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless the issue of cognitive development, as already addressed above, is of significance; Thomas and Collier (1997) argue that the early switch into the child's second language is counterproductive in terms of the child's cognitive development.

> The more children develop L1 (mother tongue) academically and cognitively at an age- appropriate level, the more successful they will be in academic achievement in L2 (English in the case of Ethiopia) by the end of their school years (Thomas and Collier 1997, 49).

Additional to the deceleration of the child's cognitive and academic development, the BGRS' policy of using English in education is also targeting only the small percentage of children who will reach higher education which is in English, while ignoring the majority of children, who will continue living in their villages, and who would benefit more from cognitive development than from proficiency in the English language.

Parents have also expressed the fact that the language of instruction creates a big challenge to their children (Interview 121202, q.16).

It must be acknowledged that there is a paradigm shift in BGRS as to what education possibilities there are after grade 10. The TVT (Technical and Vocational Training) colleges are spreading in order to train young people in non-academic occupations. But Thomas' and Collier's statements about the early switch into English as MoI, applies to those students in just the same way.

As shown above, by the end of primary school most Bertha children are not yet at the literacy level at which they can read for information in their first language. So, not only do the immediate needs of a child's society (Nyerere 1967, 24) remain unaddressed but also there is no acquired literacy skill that can be transferred from L1 to L2, and the textbooks written in English, which are supposed to open access to literature and knowledge worldwide, remain closed books for the majority of children. In other words, the school stops contributing to the cognitive development, because even the thinking, analyzing and problem-solving skills are not possible in a language which a student does not master.

> (So) the education produces the reproducers of facts and not the people who can reason (Nyerere 1967, 16).

Nyerere calls for a realistic analysis of the situation in the country. Just as in Tanzania, the majority of Bertha children will not become doctors and engineers and economists on a national or international level but will remain living in their own areas. Therefore their education should be geared to improving their lives right there (Nyerere 1967, 6).

5.5   Discussion

5.5.1   Parents' Role and Involvement

In times of better medical care, availability of vaccinations and infant supplementary foods, and the infant mortality rate going down, the matter of survival is not quite as prominent as it used to be. As living conditions have changed, so have the requirements for success in a modern world. The demand for self-confidence, assertiveness, independence, and critical thinking is growing. It is doubtful if this can be achieved without some adjustment in parents' behaviour.

Involving parents in schooling in order to improve its effectiveness is a recognized and long-established need in Ethiopia. Parents develop a sense of ownership if they contribute their time, labour and finances to the school and at the same time it can save resources that are needed, and improve the learning environment. Parents support and encouragement has a direct influence on their children's performance (Herbst 2011, 220).

> Where parents are given power and status in the partial determination of their children's schooling, the empowerment of minority communities and children may result. When such communities and parents are kept relatively powerless, inferiority and lack of school progress may result (Baker 2001, 395).

In the interviews it has become evident that parents, the majority of whom have never gone to school, often do not see themselves in a position to help their children do their homework, review with them what they are learning, or practice reading with them. This gives them a feeling of powerlessness and worthlessness; their knowledge is inferior compared to the knowledge taught in school; their language, as they say: 'Does not cross

the next river'. They see their contribution limited to the physical needs of their child, supplying them with a pen and exercise book, and when their manual labour is needed, they work on the school yard, for example building a fence, or dorm for the teachers.

Moreover, Bertha parents often do not recognize what they can actually do in terms of the cognitive development of their children, such as talking to them, explaining the environment to them, asking questions of them and answering theirs, listening to their reading, etc. It does not take educated or literate parents to start purposefully taking action towards developing children's oral skills. By doing this they will prepare the children for reading and writing.

An enormous amount of literature has been written on the importance of developing oral competencies of children.

> In this respect we cannot too urgently say to the parent: - Converse with your children (Hansen 2009, 7)!

A good oral knowledge of the language is a foundation for acquiring literacy skills. If the children would start schooling with higher oral proficiency, meaning their vocabulary was well developed, and they would be able to express themselves well, they would learn to read and write faster and better. Children's good knowledge of their environment, and understanding of cause-effect relations in their surroundings, would serve them well in absorbing new information and in continuing to develop cognitively. Therefore Hansen (2009) repeated Hall's (1907) advice:

> The best preparation parents can give their children for good school-training is to make them acquainted with natural objects (Hall 1907, 48 cited in Hansen 2009, 5).

A good grasp of their language would also help the children socially and emotionally, and boost their confidence to enthusiastically participate in classroom activities. This is true especially, but not only, in the language-related subjects. Vella (2002) whose writings are mainly addressing adult education needs, emphasized the importance of a safe environment for the learners. It would be hard to argue that learning taking place where the learner feels confident and secure would not apply to children as well (Vella 2002).

Baker provides an observation with another practical implication:

> Parents listening to their children reading on a systematic basis tend to be effective agents of increased literacy (Baker 2001, 395).

5.5.2 Educational Returns

The REB interviewees see education as a tool for development and the eradication of poverty in the economic sense of the words. Negash (2006) raises a critique on the misconception that education inevitably leads to economic returns:

> Such understanding involves the fact that what is taught is appropriate and relevant (Negash 2006, 14).

According to Negash, the existing assumption about the educational returns – that it would inevitably eradicate poverty and bring development – was based on the Sultz study in America from 1930–1950. He points out that industrialization in America was the precondition for educational returns, because the demand for many educated people in an industrialized country is naturally high. Negash does not think that the Ethiopian economy, which relies mainly on agricultural production, is comparable to America's, especially not in terms of industrialization, and as a result educational investment could have a negative

effect. If neither the government sector nor the economy of the country is able to accommodate the growing number of people for which they were educated, the result could be an unemployed and unhappy mass of people (Negash 2006, 14).

Adeyemi (2002) supports this statement by claiming that unemployment did not exist in African traditional societies prior to the introduction of formal education. As mentioned above, parents have confirmed that their children, who went to school for eight or ten years, are now feeling that they are too good to work in the fields; instead they are unemployed and linger in a city. The fact that the secondary schools are usually in bigger centres, makes it hard for the drop-outs of high schools to come back to their own villages. These youngsters are left without real prospects. Educating them was not only a waste, but in some cases even counter-productive (interview 121202).

It is a known fact that the vast majority of students who enrol in school will not pursue academic careers, so as Adeyemi argues, if the education for this majority is irrelevant, it is a waste of human capital and can do harm instead of benefitting society (Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2002, 231).

Agreeing that the aim of education is to increase human capital, Herbst (2012) proposes that its primary purpose is to build socially sustainable communities.

> Children receive the ability to understand and address problems that the community is facing; they are enabled to make a contribution to their own community and find good solutions for problems that will, in turn, prevent further problems in the future (Herbst 2011, p.11).

Quoting Hallak, Brock-Utne (2000) advocates that the education is of worth only if it is designed to improve the daily lives of the children and that it helps if it is adapted to the environment. It must also prepare them to live outside their rural environment (Brock-Utne200, 15).

5.5.3 Curriculum

It is generally accepted that for the learning process to happen, the learning content must be based and built on what the learners already know. That means that it is relevant to their lives (Ausubel 1968).

But in the case of a foreign curriculum, which at this point in time seems not to be sufficiently relevant to the learners', it is difficult to find 'existing pegs'; new knowledge stands unrelated to anything known by them, thus it is easily forgotten. In the light of a non-indigenous curriculum the teacher's perception of children as being ignorant is fully understandable and in fact true, because all prior-to-school knowledge and skills which children come to school with are in fact valueless.

Continuing in the same thought, it can be anticipated that if the non-indigenous curriculum continues to be delivered word-for-word as it is in the student textbooks, the parents have nothing to contribute either in classroom activities, or with homework, especially when the majority of parents are illiterate. So the teacher remains as the only 'knowledgeable' person in the classroom and in the village.

Looking into the content of the curriculum, it is hard to imagine how it can be equally relevant to the citizens living in urban and rural settings in the entire country, as one interviewee claimed. Especially not in a country like Ethiopia, which has about 85 cultures

and languages living within its borders. Life in Addis Ababa is very different compared to life in a Bertha village, as was admitted in the interview. Again life in a Bertha village compared to an Afar or Mursi village is entirely different in terms of the structure of society, the issues people are facing, what they do for a living, and their environmental conditions.

Negash makes an interesting statement on educational outcomes in an urban-rural situation:

> Urban children irrespective of their economic status have a far greater chance of completing primary education than rural children (Negash 2006, 25).

This is happening in spite of highly motivated and dedicated Bertha parents who want their children to be educated.

5.5.4 Pedagogy

As pointed out above, Bertha people learn new skills in the same way as the Mbuko people; they learn by seeing, analyzing and doing, and not by listening to explanations given in the form of a lecture. As reported in the interviews, it is not common practice for parents to talk to their children, and yet children acquire many skills before going to school. None of these skills are passed on by lecturing methods, but are acquired through children's analytical ability. As pointed out above by Baquedano-López (2003), children come to school already with analytical ability, able to generate hypotheses, eager to try them out and learn new things. These skills need to be fostered, not quenched.

Holt (1968) makes it clear that children need to learn to give oral explanations or descriptions before they can follow those of others (Holt 1968, 181). But as already established, typically in Bertha culture adults do not talk to children very much, and

therefore children do not come to school with this skill well developed. As a result the children found it difficult to follow oral instructions and build competencies. In all the Bertha schools which I visited, the teachers were using words to explain things and processes, rather than trying to do things in a tangible manner. For this reason the children gave the impression that they were unable to learn, even when the content was not entirely unfamiliar to them.

This perceived inability to learn, together with the non-indigenous content of the curriculum, might suggest that the choice to teach by rote method is the more logical one. Students who are unable to comprehend can at least repeat and internalize the oral content, and hopefully manage to reproduce enough of the learned facts to pass the exams.

The persistent use of a teacher-centred methodology is understandable. Today's teachers are mimicking their own teachers, because that is what they did throughout their education. To be willing and able to break out of this kind of cycle, a person needs to be able to analyze the situation and recognize that change is possible and worth the effort. I think that today's Bertha teachers are struggling to change and apply new approaches in their teaching, not because of a lack of commitment (which is a criticism often used against them by politicians in BGRS), but because of underdeveloped critical thinking ability. It is this limitation that prevents them from identifying problems and looking for solutions.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Parents' support

Concerning the involvement of families in education, LeVine (1994) discusses the cost-benefit to the infants as well as their parents. He suggests that in all parts of the world

where education is considered worth pursuing, not only siblings, but also parents and all other members of the extended family benefit from doing activities which contribute to building the so called 'modern' virtues, which modern education demands from students. LeVine suggests that giving more attention to talking, interacting with, praising and playing with children are activities which foster these virtues (LeVine 1994, 253-254).

At the end of the day, it is not the choice of skills which are being passed on to small children that matter, but the way in which the chosen skill is taught. It is the qualitative element that counts. If parents could be made aware of the importance of this aspect and get assistance from teachers and other educators on how to pass on traditional skills so that they can help prepare the children to learn later in school, I believe many would consider trying it. Unschooled parents in particular need to be aware of the learning culture in schools and institutions of further education.

As in many African cultures, Bertha culture has the concept of '*ámaha*', the communal work in which the entire village or clan participates. There is a whole set of activities which fall into this category. The raising and instructing of children in the village is one of them. (Interview 121125, q.1). Formal education should also be included. Teaching in school should be a kind of '*ámaha*' instead of it being the monopoly of a teacher. If teachers invited parents to come to the schoolroom, they could benefit from the wisdom and 'relevant' knowledge which they could bring to the class (Neudorf 2011, 11). Teacher-parent communication and cooperation would be crucial for this change to happen. In this way a culture of questioning, discussing, and debating on local issues and individual complex problems could be developed, which is more suited to the changing world around the students, and as a result of that they would eventually be able to

...understand (their) social processes better than any outsider ever could. Education creates power within – meaning people learn that they are able to understand problems and find solutions. Instead of expecting others to come in and provide help they are motivated to provide the help themselves (Herbst 2011, 31).

These are reasons that the Bertha parents have also expressed as their objectives for educating their children.

McCoy and Cole as well as Cairney (2003) have pointed out that the parents' level of education is a strong determining factor in how well their children learn (McCoy and Cole 2007). This is true especially in the sense that they can understand what kind of learning their children are experiencing in school. Nevertheless, I would like to argue that any parent could and would contribute if they were aware of the kind of preparation and support their children need during their education in order to succeed. This is true practically, in the area of developing oral language skills, and therefore the development of the child's cognitive structure.

Oral development in practice could look like this: Parents, care-givers and extended family members, such as grandparents and siblings, would be talking with the children about their personal experiences and feelings, about problems which their society is experiencing (cause-effect), environmental issues, for example which plants are used for what, names of the birds, plants, etc., and cultural norms (explaining why things are done in certain ways and not in others). Encouraging curiosity in children and nourishing the culture of questioning, allowing it go both ways – children to adults and adults to children – will result in the development of analytical and critical thinking of the next generation.

Goodling (2003) supports this by stating that young children whose parents talk and play with them, develop good oral language skills before they start school. He argues that they are much more likely than the children whose parents do not, to become good readers and excel academically (Goodling 2003, 5).

Great respect must be given to parents, especially in rural areas, who have not had a chance to get any formal education themselves, but who invest in the lives of their children by giving them an education and providing the necessary educational materials while sacrificing the children's contribution to the livelihood of the family. Those parents envision a bright future for their children; the education system owes those children (and parents) a fair chance to succeed by providing a high standard of coherent and relevant education. Therefore I agree with Young that:

> Teachers should be accountable to the parents for the quality of their service (Young 2011, 344).

6.2 Curriculum

The curriculum could be based on learners' prior experiences, so that instead of using a prescribed story or an 'artificial' topic, the texts used in the classroom could be developed based on topical issues like: crop failure, cause of accidents, health in the community, gender equality. This would reverse the theorization of the curriculum. Grammar which needs to be taught could be taught using those texts by asking pupils to change certain elements in the story such as the tense, the participants, and they could be asked to add personal touches.

By letting children create their own texts from stories they know, or from personal experiences, or events happening in the village which affect them or their society at large, the entire learning process could change. It would become a form of facilitation instead of a lecture (because the teacher is not the only one who knows the story). This approach would increase the children's capacity for self-expression, and it would make the acquisition of literacy skills easier and more meaningful for the students. Parents would also find themselves in a position in which they could contribute to the education of their children by contributing from their experience and expertise, both in the classroom and by helping with homework. Strong teacher-parent ties and joint ownership of education would develop out of this (Baker 2001).

Bertha parents could be involved in the choice of characters – the kind of 'great man' – that should be presented in the school books. This is important, "Because those do influence children's dreams for their future" (McLaren 2007, 197).

Interviews confirmed the saying, "With every old person dies a library." The interviewees said with concern that the traditional knowledge, such as the use of local herbs as medicine, the history of the Bertha people, and proper codes of behaviour, is being lost with the death of their old people. Nyerere (1967) suggests that since local knowledge is based on logic and reason, it can be studied and further developed. That knowledge could, and it should, be incorporated into the curriculum and have the same value as any other science (Nyerere 1967, 13).

Nyerere also argues that the content of the curriculum should not be determined by what doctors, engineers and economists need to know, but by what would help the children to live their lives happily in the rural society in which they find themselves, and enable them to

become effective in improving the living situation there. Some of the suggestions given by Nyerere for the content of the curriculum are: soil conservation, proper grazing practices, animal husbandry, and usage of improved seeds and fertilizers. This type of education would help the children to fit into and serve their own communities, instead of alienating them. In his opinion, the fittest will not suffer in moving on to higher education (Nyerere 1967, 16).

Concern might be raised that if some of these local elements are substituted for the non-indigenous ones, some elements of the latter might end up not being taught because of time constraints. But does it really matter? I think it has become apparent that neither the amount, nor the type of facts which are memorized, matters. It is the ability to process information in logical ways, to draw conclusions and to bring about change that really matters. It is the attitudes, competencies and knowledge gained that defines transformative education. In other words: What is needed is a transformative pedagogy, and an appropriate curriculum does of course facilitate such pedagogy.

> The goal of education is the facilitation of change and learning. Learning how to learn is more important than being taught something from the "superior" vantage point of a teacher... (Brown 2007, 97).

With regard to using the English language for education, it needs to be said, first of all, that only a comparatively small number of students actually go on to higher education. Those who do, benefit from having learned how to identify and solve problems using their own language and from knowing how to draw information out of books – skills developed because during their schooling they were able to access their textbooks in a language which they understood. Competency in another language is based on the student's ability in his

own language. It is, like all other learned skills, transferable (Thomas and Collier 1997, 43; Cummins 2007). For the majority of Bertha students, who will go back to their villages, or pursue vocational jobs, a good knowledge of the Amharic language together with problem-solving capability will serve them much more than a good knowledge of the English language ever will, at least for now and the foreseeable future.

My intention in this paper was not to focus on an irrelevant curriculum, which, given the amount of space given to the issue might seem to be the case. But because education is both the content and the delivery of that content, making one to be meaningful without the other is not an option; both need addressing. I think that it is the pedagogy, the theorization of the subjects that is to be blamed for the low educational outcomes rather than the content of the curriculum, which is not all foreign. If content is only being memorized, and never learned to be applied, what difference does the content make? Education is all about the acquisition of the skills needed to process information, identify the problem, find what can be improved and be able to solve the situation at hand in a creative way – perhaps in a way in which it was never solved before. Learning these analytical and problem-solving skills is not limited to some foreign and abstract knowledge. On the contrary, the local issues at hand serve this purpose much more effectively. Once these skills are internalized, there is no limit to what the students can achieve (intellectually as well as working practically with their hands) in whatever they pursue in their lives.

6.3 Pedagogy

What we need to do, and all we need to do, is bring as much of the world as we can into the school and the classroom; give children as much help and guidance as they

need and ask for; listen respectfully when they feel like talking; and then get out of

the way (Holt 1968, 189).

There is no need to make education highly theoretical, abstract, and detached from real life.

It can be used and practiced in and outside the classroom. Instead of talking about soil

conservation methods or planting trees, why not do it as a class exercise? (Nyerere 1967,

19)

Educators at all levels, including parents, need to understand not only *what* is expected

from them in terms of specific actions, but why these actions are important, and what the

philosophy is behind the formal education. Only then can they be motivated to implement

reform in a meaningful way (Buchert 1998, 30). Furthermore, even though the BGRS'

language policy enforces English in the early stages in education, it is a long time before

students are able to think and learn in that language. Consequently the learning and

cognitive development slows down, or stops all together in the early stages of education.

> It is quite obvious that unless a student has a good proficiency in the language of the
>
> classroom, his ability to have a meaningful learning experience in the school setting
>
> will be hampered (Olupide 2012, 432).

As a consequence of such a policy, the development of memorization skills is about all that

remains as an option, because it is the only suited methodology for teaching in a language

which is not understood.

Setting up TVT (Technical and Vocational Training) centres in order to educate young people

as the human resource for the creation of new jobs for the local market, is to be applauded.

Towards this end I would like to argue that the cognitively well-developed mind is much

more likely to produce a better carpenter, farmer, metal worker, and mechanic graduates of TVT, and to achieve a higher standard in many other types of creators of jobs. People who pursue these sorts of occupations definitely need to function better in Amharic than in English. Promoting TVT centres in BGRS, and at the same time having a policy which prescribes English as a medium of instruction from grade 5 onward seems to be one of the discrepancies in the educational system in BGRS.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging the hard work and commitment of educators, parents, teachers and REB personnel, who are working towards a preferred future for their children, their communities and the country as a whole. I believe that they work with the best intentions and sincerely would like to see Bertha children reaching their full potential. Therefore I would like to encourage all stakeholders to make a truly critical analysis of the current education system, and take whatever action is necessary to pave the way for Bertha children to reach their full potential.

Wordcount: 15273

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7   Appendixes

7.1   Appendix A, Questionnaire for Interviews with Parents in Kashaf

1. Shanine squllañgo? Name _____

2. Ñgo gídí geedí mbá garraqí tha shulindu 1-4 yua? ከት/ቤት የሚማሩ ልጆች አላችሁ ወይ**?** Do you have children at primary school? _____

3. Ma zííqí shulíndu kamú garra maré? ካሉ ስንተኛ ክፍል **?** In which grades?: _____

4. Añgó adaqi marra tha almadarasúa? Did you go to school? ትምህርት ቤት ትዛዳለህ/ትዜጃለሽ?
    _____

5. Shulíndú kamu garrañó? How many grades did you complete? ስንተኛ ክፍል?
    _____

6. Añgó madí garráya? Do you know how to read? እንደት እንደሚነበብ ታውቃለህ/ታውቅያለሽ?
    _____

7. Tha ndu wáánegú? In which languages? በምን ቋንቋዎች?
    _____

8. Ñgo gídi alkitábá máñ thaqa thañthañá? Do you have any books at home? ከቤታችሁ ማንኛውም መጽሀፍ አለ? _____

9. Nano alkitab mba mmane? Rootha alukqedé náñ kqalné? What kinds of books? Titles: ምን ዓይነት? ርዕሱን ብትገልፁ?
    _____
    _____

10. Geedíqa gídí alkitábá garra maré tháñá? Does your child have school books? ልጆችሁ የት/ቤት መጽሀፍት አላቸው?
    _____

11. Ziqi taani mmanáñá? Any other? Titles: ሌላስ ?ርዕሱን ብትገልፁ? _____
    _____
    _____

12. Ñgo rotuqí tha geediqale mba ziigañóá? Do you spend time talking with your children, just for the sake of talking? መነጋገር ስላለበት ብቻ ከልጆቻቹ ጋር በመነጋገር ጊዜ አሳልፋችሁ ታውቃላችሁ?
    _____

13. Irothua tha gedí ale shabahañgoqí tha gidi alfaqidaya? Do you think it has any value? ከልጆች ጋር መነጋገሩ ዋጋ አለው ብላችሁ ታስባላችሁ?

_____

14. What kind of value ? ምንደነው?

_____

15. Náñ roothúñoqi thaalu tha geedíqalé? What is your communication with your children usually about? ከልጆቻችሁ ጋር በተለምዶ የምትነጋገሩት በምን ዙሪያ ነው?

_____

_____

16. Ñgo sqésqeriñ geedíqaye rotha maabi gabulu? Do you tell stories to them? ለልጆቻችሁ ተረት ትናገራላችሁ?_____

17. (Makqal Ñgo sha hííñ) Náñ sqésqeriñgáñonegu? Give a few examples. አው ካላችሁ ምን ዓይነት ? ምሳሌዎችን ቢሰጡ? _____

_____

_____

18. Walá ma sqesqeríñgañogu nánoqí? If not, why not? ካልነገራችሁ ለምን?

_____

_____

19. Geedíqa sqésqeriñiñgo rothamaabí gabuluá? Do they tell stories to you? ህፃናት ለእናንቴ ተረት ይናገራሉ? _____

20. Mbá kqalá shañíné masal? What kind? Give a few examples. ምን ዓይነት? ምሳሌዎችን ቢሰጡ

_____

_____

21. Ñgo dqokqothiñ geeediqa, sha: Náñ maadó Ñgo, Náñ maadó Ñgoqi, Náñ shaba háné Ñgoé, náñ sháqará Ñgoqí thañ Ñgo dqokqo thiñ geedí míthíla mbaleá? Do you ask questions like: What do/did you see, experience, feel, etc.? ህፃናትን ምን አወቃችሁ ፤ እንደት አያችሁ እና ምን ተሰማችሁ የመሳሰሉት ጥያቄዎችን ትጠይቃላችሁ?

_____

22. Ñgo dqokothíñ geedíqagu giñ zioqi tha almadara sayúá? Do you talk to your children about their school experience? ልጆቻችሁን ስለ ት/ቤት ቆይታቸውን አጫውታችሁ ታውቃላችሁ ወይ?

_____

23. Geedí pqíshígañgú shá máré zá tha almadarasayué qíá? Do they like going to school? ህፃናት ት/ቤት መሄድ ይወዳሉ? _____

24. Ñgo kqadarí sha geedíqagu garraqí ma pqishía? Do you think they are good at school/learning well? ልጆቻችሁ ትምህርታቸውን በጥሩ ሁኔታ ይማራሉ ብላችሁ ታስባላችሁ ?

_____

25. Ñgo madí gíñ garra geediqa yomi tha almádarasuá? Do you know what children are learning at school right now? ህፃናት አሁን ከት/ቤት ምን እየተማሩ እንደሆነ ታውቃላችሁ?

_____

26. Náñ mané ? What is it? ምንድ ነው እሱ? _____

_____

27. Geedíqa madí shambá garra maré alkítábá? Does your child know how to read? ልጆቻችሁ ማንበብ ይችላሉ?

_____

28. Geedíqa garráñgo gíñ garra maré marráiá? Do they read/demonstrate that they can read by reading to you sometimes? ህፃናት አንዳንደ ለእናንቴ አንብበው ወይም ገለፃ አድርገው ያውቃሉ?

_____

29. Geedíqa madí shambá hasabimaréá? Does your child know how to count? ልጆቻችሁ መቁጠር ይችላሉ? _____

30. Le tha kamuyu? Up to what number ?

_____

31. Ñgo áshakaliñ geediqa alalámátí alhísábúá marra marraya? Do you make your child calculate sometimes? ልጆቻችሁ የአንድን ነገር ስሌት እንዲሰሩ ታደርጋላችሁ ወይ?

_____

32. Náñ agengañgo geedíqa gundí tha almadarasué? Why do you send your child to school? ህፃናትን ለምን ት/ቤት ትልካችሁ?

_____

_____

33. Sha geedíqa maré thíkq annadíjá pqííshí tháñoqígú tha albáálá? Are you helping your child to succeed/improve in school? ልጆቻችሁ በትምህርታቸው ውጤታማ እንዲሆኑ ትረዳላችሁ?

_____

34. (Makqalne sha hííñ) Ándi thá ñorindu shañiné thá hathunaqí tha albaal? How do you do that ? አዉ ካላችሁ በምን መንገድ?

_____

_____

35. (Makqalneo sha eqé) nánóqí? If not, why not? አይደለም ካላችሁ ለምን?

_____

_____

36. Geedí sha amaré thíkqa annatíja tha almadarasú fédqí alé pqaadagú ma madíño shá mbá pqadíñonegú roothá? If you knew how to help your child to do better in school, would you do it? ልጆቻችሁን በትምህርታቸዉ ዉጤታማ ለማድረግ እንደት መርዳት እንዳለባችሁ ምታዉቁት ከሆነ አረዳዱን ብትናገሩት? _____

7.2   Appendix B, Questionnaire for Group Interviews with Parents

1. What qualities does a good Bertha man have in your community?

2. What personality makes a man a bad man?

3. What qualities does a good Bertha woman have in your community?

4. What is a bad woman?

5. What qualities does a good Bertha boy (age 7-18) have in your community?

6. What is a bad boy?

7. What qualities does a good Bertha girl (before marriage) have in your community?

8. What is a bad girl?

9. What would you like your child to become when she grows up?

10. If he/she would remain living here in your village, what kind of a person would you want him/her to be?

11. How do you ensure that your child becomes the person you have described?

12. What kind of skills and knowledge did your child have before he/she went to school?

13. How does a child learn to do things, e.g. shepherding, work on the field, cut brunches, trap animals, produce honey etc.?

14. How do your children learn about the things around them, e.g. names and usefulness of plants, birds, why you do things the way you do them, etc.?

15. Do you like your child/person asking questions like: Why? What for? Why not do it this way?

    a.   Do you ask questions of your child too? –What kind?

16. What kind of challenges does your child encounter in school?

17. What are the advantages of being educated?

18. How much schooling do you (parents) want for your child? Why? If only primary- is it worth it to educate your child at all?

19. If your child will not end up studying, is the education still useful? –How/In which regard?

20. What do you feel when thinking that your child might not go to higher education?

21. Is the education in school making your child a better person? -In which regard?

22. Can you suggest what school should teach your children in order to prepare them best for their future? –That would be useful here in the village.

23. How do you support your child's education?

24. Do you feel like you could contribute something to what is going on in the classrooms? –What?

25. Do you think that there is a lot of knowledge which only the old people know and it is going to die with them? –Examples?

    a. What will the consequences be if that knowledge gets lost?

    b. How does the value of that knowledge compare with what is being taught in schools?

    c. Would it be good to include that knowledge in the school curriculum?

7.3 Appendix C, Questionnaire for REB Experts

1. What is the main objective behind such huge investment in education?

2. To what degree does it achieve this objective? On the scale 0-10 (0= not at all, 10= excellently)

   a. in Addis Ababa?

   b. in rural communities?

3. For what kind of jobs does the education prepare the young generation?

   a. Does the content of the curriculum reflect (proportion wise)the current reality on the ground, e.g. available jobs, peoples' main occupations/source of income, etc. or is it based more on hopes/'preferred future'?

4. What type of people/personalities does the education hope to produce? (compliant, questioning ones, critics)

   a. Is the objective of the government and the parents the same?

   b. If not, does synchronization need to happen?

   c. (If not) Whose objective should be aimed for?

   d. (If not) What should parents or education do differently in order to contribute towards that common goal effectively?

5. Can you give a short history of the origin/development/adaptation of the national curriculum?

6. On the scale 0-10 how well does the curriculum serve the people (0= not at all, 10= excellently)

   a. How relevant is it for Addis Ababa?

   b. How relevant is it for rural communities?

7. On the scale 0-10 how would you describe the educational outcomes? (0= bad, 10= excellently)

   a. In Addis Ababa?

   a. In rural areas, e.g. Benishangul Gumuz R.S?

8. What inhibits/obstructs the deliverance of effective education in rural areas?

9. What kind of methodology do you think is mostly practiced in classrooms?

   a. In BG it the rote learning method is used –Why is it so?

   b. Could that be a more natural way of teaching/learning? Is generally speaking the teaching/learning process a cultural issue?

   c. If yes – is it possible to learn all the abstract/theoretical things by heart/memorization?

   d. What would you suggest needs changing in the teaching methods?

10. Are the MLCs realistically set? Are they achievable, or are they more wishful thoughts? -If not, why are they set so high? (Most children in BG cannot read till grade 4-5, and teachers are not expecting them to do so).