

## **Clinging to the managerial approach in implementing teacher education ‘reform’ tasks in ethiopia**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, the author argues that the pre-service secondary teacher education ‘paradigm shift’ or ‘system overhaul’ that has been implemented during the 2003-2005 time period in Ethiopia reflects the pursuit of pathways which the author refers to as a managerial approach. Grounded mainly on personal narratives of a key self-narrator and views of other faculty reform performers, the author brings to surface the ideology upheld by central reform planners and administrators. The author identifies four reform tasks to demonstrate the consistency in the paths pursued to effect policies of central priorities. These reform tasks which mainly concern changes in curriculum and instruction were planned and have been effected in managerial spaces and tools. The author further argues that, in effect, if not in intent, the managerial approach has had a sidelining effect because the larger practitioners, professional associations, communities, student teachers, and private popular media have been given little or no opportunities for participation. According to the author, the approach has also reduced pedagogical concerns and values to an adjunct or secondary position.

**Key words:** managerial approach, reform, teacher education, practicum

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## Introduction

Education has recently become a terrain of insurmountable and perplexing discourse and practice. Both popular and professional media seem to have given discussions of educational issues a significant degree of attention in recent years. In particular, the times leading to May 2005 election in Ethiopia, education apparently remained a crucial and top agenda of election campaigns and debates. Moreover, the reform movement that was launched formally in 1994 has recently attracted professional discussions in various symposia. In this paper, I assess this same educational 'reform' movement in Ethiopia which has apparently 'reshaped' the discourse and practice of education in Ethiopia. My particular concern is, however, to examine the pre-service secondary teacher education *reform tasks* that have been commissioned by the Ministry of Education since 2003.

Lived stories of a reform participant in the form of episodic narratives<sup>1</sup> [1] and views of other practitioners constitute the main part of the evidence in my analysis of the reform tasks. The focus on lived stories [2] of a participant whose concern for and intimacy with the teacher education profession has a methodological significance. My reform analysis begins with a brief background of the educational reform movements in Ethiopia which spans over half a century. The background is hoped to put my analysis in a historical context.

Then I describe four teacher education reform tasks that have been carried out since 2003. I finally discuss the reform tasks with the notions of human capital and

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the narratives was included in my article titled The Teacher Education Reform Process in Ethiopia: The consequence on educators and its implications. *Teaching Education* (Volume 18, Number 1, pp. 29-48, 2007).

institutional control which are reflective of the agendas of the reform administrators. By doing so, I wish to surface the dominance of the managerial approach.

### **Historical Background of Educational ‘Reforms’ in Ethiopia**

Since formal education took a modern Western style schooling structure at about 1908 in Ethiopia (Tekeste, 1990; Marew, et al., 2000), state actors have self-adjusted in various historical moments to make formal education as appealing as possible so that they would win the hearts and minds of those target groups intended to please. In other words, in various times in history of formal education in Ethiopia, large scale reforming activities have been undertaken to change and modernize formal education. The reform movements might be better presented in terms of the distinctive political and historical contexts they occurred. These reform movements encompass a period roughly spanning from 1950s to present. During this half a century, three state structures have succeeded. Therefore, the reform movements roughly correspond with the periods of the three distinctive governments. Historical and political analyses (e.g. Tekeste, 1990) largely emphasize the impetus of public frustration and discontent on formal education to forceful changes in state structures.

The first period of reform movement or campaign is traced back to 1950s during which the intervention of USA through its Education Advisory Group impacted hugely the Ministry of Education to pursue a policy of rapid expansion in primary schooling. Moreover, the Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa which was held in Addis Ababa in 1961 was an impetus for the reform activities followed in subsequent years. In particular, targets set by the conference to reach Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 1980 were influential in

pushing the then imperial government to pushing towards a policy of massification (Tekeste, 1990). With the added impact of the USA's advisory team, the conference led the state to restructure the schooling system and increase enrollments. One of the noticeable changes during this time was the emergence of the Faculty of Education in Addis Ababa University in 1961.

However, in early 1970s it became evident that the policy and reform campaigns proved far from success. Tekeste (1990) contends that dissatisfaction with Ethiopia's performance with regard to expanding primary education as set by the 1961 Addis Ababa conference was expressed by UNESCO and other international organizations. Intimidated by the disapproving rhetoric, the imperial state launched another campaign to review the activities of the educational sector. To this effect, the Education Sector Review (ESR) was entrusted with the task of evaluating the educational sector and to coming up with better alternatives. Accordingly, the ESR recommended alternative courses of action to hasten primary education to reach UPE by 1980. However, the domestic discontent had already reached a revolting climax in which the middleclass and university students spearheaded a campaign of government change. Therefore, it was too late for the government to appease the disenchanted with a shift of policy. Even before the proposal of the ESR began to be digested, the imperial government was overthrown through coupdetat in 1974[3].

The second period of reform movement began two years after the coup. A policy direction was highlighted in the document titled the National Democratic Revolution in 1976. In 1980, the Ministry of Education published the General Directives of

Ethiopian Education in which a detailed framework was outlined. Mekwanint (2000) explains:

Following the 1974 revolution, the military government believed that the educational system as a whole needed a major overhaul based on... Marxist-Leninist values. The solution to the fundamental problems of Ethiopian education was conceived to be what came to be known as the General Polytechnic Education. (pp. 30-31).

Very much similar to its predecessor, the new government decided a time target to reach Universal Primary Education by 2000. To this aim, teacher preparation activities were scaled up a certain degree by opening additional training centers called Teacher Training Institute (TTI) and Teacher Training College (TTC). Following this, thousands of teachers were prepared, resulting in increased primary school enrollments. However, the target set to reach to all school age children with primary school provision was once again far from what had been projected. As a result, the government, like its predecessor, called for a comprehensive review of the education sector in 1983. The official call for the national educational review was also partly motivated by the apparent realization of the growing public discontent concerning the poor condition of schooling.

In response to the official call, the Ministry of Education mandated the Evaluative Research on the General Education System of Ethiopia a comprehensive study and possible recommendations. The review task force, following positivistic research method, which was partly flawed (see Tekeste, 1990), revealed several weaknesses and problematic situations and outlined 'remedial' actions. Although the

government had ‘recipes’ for a possible course of action, the heightened war in the northern part of the country and rebellious engagements by various groups elsewhere constrained resources and the morale of ‘loyal’ politicians. After seventeen years in power, the government was dismantled brutally with all its administrative and defensive structures 1991[4].

The third educational reform movement began as soon as the succeeding government established its grip on power. Although a shift in policy and direction was officialized in 1994 with the Training and Education Policy, the regional administrations had already taken certain actions to restructure schooling, such as the introduction of mother tongue as medium of instruction in primary schools found in certain regions, and its follow up measure mainly the removal of primary threshold national examination. Following the formalization of the ‘reforming’ education policy in 1994, the government has taken several readjustment and restructuring measures, such as the apparent decentralization of primary schools, secondary schools, and teacher education colleges; the introduction of a grade ten leaving national examination that determines whether students should go to vocational or academic studies; the reduction of undergraduate studies by one year; the introduction of liberal policies which include the private school and college licensure; the large-scale expansion of undergraduate and graduate programs supported by World Bank/UNDP funding to constructing several public universities and recruiting of expatriate (mostly Indians) instructors having higher degrees [5]. As it always is, the impact of USA (e.g. through USAID, particularly BESO) and European Union (e.g. with its trendy self-naming as “donor

countries”) seem to be actively influencing the direction of Ethiopian education through the financial resources and expertise they offer to the country.

The third reform movement includes the setting of UPE [6] target. The target has been set for 2015, possibly in line with the Millennium Development Goals. To this effect, the government has been much more expansive than its predecessors in building primary schools, especially in rural areas. According to the latest restructure, a two-tier arrangement has been introduced as First Cycle Primary (1-4) and Second Cycle Primary (5-8). To speed up enrollments, the government has introduced free promotions from one grade level to another as well as a policy of self-contained teaching in First Cycle Primary. Moreover, to prepare as many teachers as possible to cater for the growing number of students, teacher preparation system has been restructured [7].

To conclude this brief review of major reform movements in Ethiopia, I would point out an important and cross-cutting feature. The history of large scale and comprehensive educational reform tasks indicate that each new government largely appeared to use formal education as a tool to mobilize the populace towards its political agendas. The reform history reveals significant parallels among the three alternating state: the manipulation of formal education to consolidate the control of public services and perpetuate the *status quo*. Moreover, the influence of international institutions and Western donors is always strong that the change agendas and directions are generally influenced, at times, engineered by them. However, outsider’s direct influence in the formal education of Ethiopia in the past, as well as, at present, which has often been prescriptive and ideological imposition largely have had little impacts in improving education. The prescriptive change advice is often fruitless because they often disregard

local (Ethiopia's peculiar and diverse) contexts. Public officials at times bow down to donors'/lenders' policy imposition though they would realize the adverse effects or minimal impacts (see Samoff, 1999; Banal, 2002).

**Narratives of Four Reform Tasks:  
Characterizing the Pre-service Secondary Teacher Education Reform**

I use the term 'managerial approach' to characterize the nature of reforming pathways center-staged in the latest teacher education. The term, though not common in the literature, refers to methods, routes, etc. that give precedence to administrability rather than pedagogical values (knowledge (co)-constructions, justice, collaboration, inclusiveness in co-joint decision making and opportunities). The term also emphasizes the concept of involving mainly people in the management to accomplish a teacher education reform task, whether the activity calls for the involvement of managers or not. The term is deliberately selected to emphasize the hierarchical, top-down, and centrally-controlled enactment of reform task. It also reflects the systematic sidelining of teacher educators in the form of deprofessionalization, deskilling, and intensification. Researchers who have studied educational reforms (e.g. Fullan, 1993; Goodlad, 1991; Sarson, 1990; Taylor & Teddlie, 1992; Schlechty, 1990; Ball, 1994; Liston & Zeichner, 1991) contend that educational reforms fail largely because reform planners and implementers ignore the fundamental characteristics of instructional and curricular changes. Educational reform management is often equated with industrial or corporate reform management. Consequently, under girding educational reform worldwide is the corporate style restructuring model that focuses on efficiency and administrability. The ideology of economic rationalism and the implicit intent to tighten control over institutions and practitioners are overriding other national agendas such as access and



equity. Economic rationalism is the basis for educational reforms not only in developing countries but also in industrialized states. After the emergence of the concept of the *human capital* in 1960s and 1970s, the importance of education to accumulate wealth became popular. Blackmore (1997) explains:

‘Human capital’ theory has tended to dominate the official view of the school-work link during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It presumes an instrumental view of the relationship between school and work. At macro level, human capital theory assumes an essentially structuralist-functionalist view of the education-society relationship. It presumes direct, linear and positive correlation between education and technology, education and individual productivity, education and national economic productivity. At the micro level, the model can be summarized thus: education is an investment which benefits both the individual (and the nation) in that education proportionally increases the potential for individual effort (productive work) and the economic rewards gained from this effort (p. 226).

Although the human capital model has increasingly informed educational policy, it has often been criticized for its claims of universality and determinism (see Blackmore, 1997; Vallas, 1990). The link between education and wealth has often been presented as a basis for reform and improvement. The rationale for reform is increasingly couched in economic needs (Ball, 1994). When education reform is couched in the ideology of economic rationalism, the focus of the change is usually on efficiency, cost reduction, competitiveness, privatization, managerialism, and corporate culture. According to Smyth (2001), restructuring takes place along lines that “... reinstitute hierarchies, diminish co-operation, foster competitive individualism...

requiring them (schools) to be entrepreneurial and more like business” (p. 32). Fuller (1991) also elaborates:

Political elites draw on sacred Western beliefs or faith that the school contributes to individual development which, in turns, spurs economic expansion. Dipping into the symbolic scriptures of materials secularism, the state projects its obligations, commitments, and builds *trust with the polity* that it can deliver (p.71).

In some of the official discourses, various forms of arguments have been put forward to show the direct relationship between education and economic development. For example, courses that focus on entrepreneurship have been suggested. The need to introduce cost-sharing and cost-reduction has also been surfaced in various documents. Perhaps the cut in the duration of undergraduate course relate to such an argument (see MoE, 1999).

Gewirtz and Ball (2000, p.256) also state that policies are stuffed towards “new managerialism” with its customer-oriented ethos, concern for efficiency, cost-effectiveness and competition, and emphasis on individual relations. Economic rationalism, as often argued (e.g. Blackmore, 1997; Ashton & Green, 1996), is often couched in “skilling” concepts which include “multi-skilling”, “reskilling”, and “deskilling”. Education is taken as a preparation for the free market.

The impacts of economic rationalism in educational reform are profound. Gewirtz and Ball (2000, p. 253) argue that such reforms have consequences “not only for work practices, organizational methods and social relationships but also for values of schooling.” In a similar vein, Robertson (2000, p.28) describes the shift in values as a

“transformation of cultural assets: from trusteeship to entrepreneurship, procedural to marked bureaucracy, and collective to individual association.” Sinclair (1996, p. 234), too, states the emergence of a new managerial discourse with “new icons such as outcomes and missions, new rituals to enshrine them including corporate planning, performance evaluation, and new fiscal accountability arrangements.”

The economic rationalism results in the emphasis of instrumental purposes of schooling such as scaling up standards, student achievements (which must be corroborated by conventional testing), levels of attendance and school leaver destinations. Such instrumental pursuits are frequently articulated within a lexicon of enterprise, excellence, quality and effectiveness (Gewirtz and Ball, 2000). Such pathways also have a damaging consequence on the lives and work of teachers (Smyth, 2001). According to Gee et al (1996,) educational institutions adopt a kind of socio-technical engineering such as a new set of tools and procedures, designed to change social relations in the work place. Smyth (2001, p. 10) elaborates the effects of such a rationality by identifying three relays: (1) the culture and character of teaching corrupts because there is a tendency to individual responsibility for delivering out comes; 2) school administration focuses on pursuing corporate visions rather than supporting the work of teaching; and (3) teachers have to lead divided lives owing to the dislocation of their pedagogic and professional identities.

Giroux ( 2000, p. 85) succinctly argues that central to such a reform agenda is the attempt to “ transform public education from a public good, benefiting all students, to a private good designed to expand the profits of investors, educate students as consumers and train young people for the low paying jobs of the new global marketplace.”

Summing it all, Sinclair (1996, p.229) states, “The debate about the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of education is superseded by a fixation on the ‘how’.”

The second explanation to the pursuit of the managerial approach derives from the behaviour of the state apparatus and the state actors. When the Ideology of state administration is propelled by the desire to secure an uncontested political control, education becomes an important means to such an end. As a result, the reform planners and implementers would be those who must be trusted ideologically and managerially. In the process, those whose pedagogical interest supersedes that of political control would be sidelined. The state then trusts the managers who are at varying administration roles because of their apparent loyalty to the state ideology. Because of this, according to Fuller (1991, p.68), “when educational reforms are attempted, they are embedded in...traditional bureaucratic structure. So, changes are translated into a Weberian sequence of reducing complex tasks into revitalized steps which are then sanctioned through hierarchical regulation.” Fuller also argues that state officials exert control over the content of the curriculum by subscribing to a uniform national curriculum, standard materials and tests. Instructional means invented by the state often reinforce the social rules and form of activities enacted by the teacher. By doing so, they signal and legitimate certain form of authority and human interaction that come to be seen as normal in a modern organization.

I would try to illustrate the dominance of pathways typically associated with this approach by identifying four ‘important’ *reform tasks* commissioned by the Ministry of Education [8]. The reform tasks include: 1) designing a reforming framework; 2)

reframing curriculum; 3) planning or writing modules; and 4) managing practicum crisis.

*‘Designing’ a reforming framework*

The emergence of the discourse of TESO [9] was an important element of the reform tasks. The discourse of TESO appeared in November 2002 with a document titled “A National Framework for Teacher Education System Overhaul”. With this document, the Ministry of Education formally embarked on the rhetoric of ‘system overhaul’ and ‘paradigm shift’ in the national teacher education. The document outlines, what I here refer to as a ‘reforming framework’: the rationale, the mission, the vision, and the objectives of the sought teacher education in Ethiopia. The document reflects a strategic planning and management model in its approach. For instance, the committee-based curriculum planning put forward prominently in the document is atypical feature of the strategic planning and management model. I quote an illustrative paragraph from the document:

Members will be drawn from TEIs [Teacher Education Institutes], MOE [Ministry of Education], VSO [Voluntary Service Overseas] and the steering committee. The members will be divided into three groups: first cycle primary, second cycle primary and secondary teacher education. For the initial work a core group will be formed consisting of the steering committee (1), VSO (2), TEIs (3), and MOE (4). Education professionals from the MOE, TEIs and REBs [Regional Education Bureaus] will work with the sub-committee (MoE, 2002, p.23).

The document also suggests that participants from NGO partners such as DfID, Ireland Aid and BESO [10] be included in the process. It is evident in the above

excerpt that the need for reform, the type of the reform, and the pathways of the reform were conceived in managerial spaces rather than in the actual setting where teacher education takes place. By following a top-down approach the Ministry of Education through this official document decided the composition of the ‘reforming’ task force or committee. The committee-based work plan was deliberately intended to involve individuals who would likely come from managerial positions, for example, deans, department heads, and program coordinators. Furthermore, if by chance teacher educators or curriculum specialists happen to be among the committee members, given the committee composition suggested, the contribution such people make would be quite minimal or insignificant for their power to influence those participants from the management is small. By making rare references to the actual practitioners (e.g. teacher educators), the document also reduced important reform performers to an adjunct position.

Arguably, the reforming framework signaled from the start the approach or direction. For instance, references to the role of school teachers, faculty teacher educators, students, and parents are made in the document only passingly. Therefore, the document was a rhetoric signal concerning the decision making direction intended.

### ***‘Reframing’ curriculum***

Teacher education curriculum framework was further detailed in the National Curriculum Guideline for Pre-service Teacher Education Programmes which was issued in 2003. The document, in a rather prescriptive style, identifies teacher education duration, amount of course work and practicum in credit hours, sequence of courses (including titles of several courses), and practicum schedules. Having circulated the

document sometime ahead, the Ministry of Education summoned representatives of six university faculties in Addis Ababa. Below, I describe the meeting partly by focusing on the critical encounter/scene with an episodic narrative of my key self narrator:

As I was chair of the Department of English Language, I received a call from the dean of the Faculty of Education, where I had a fulltime faculty position, to travel to Addis Ababa with my colleagues (all chairs of academic departments in the faculty) for a national meeting. The dean didn't have the details about the meeting. Without knowing the reason for the meeting, we all went for the meeting. At the meeting, we were briefed about the meeting and instructed to work in subject groups. I sat among six chairs representing six Departments of English Language of six universities in the country. After a few minutes of self-introduction by each, we worked out titles of courses and amount of work required in each in credit hours. We preferred a simplistic approach in that we recalled the courses we used to offer and made modifications in them in ways that they fit into the framework we were instructed to follow. Then we divided the courses among us and wrote course objectives, contents, methods, and assessment procedures (Excerpt 1: personal story).

This personal story, too, demonstrably points to the managerial approach at the centre of reframing curriculum. It is highly likely and as it might well be, the Ministry of Education had called for department chairs' meeting because of their managerial proxy positionality. The person, whose story was quoted above, was invited to the meeting as a leader of an academic department; it was not with his teacher educator identity. Therefore, the meeting was part of the 'managerial politics' played out by state officials for their publicity tent. It was a managerial trick to 'demonstrate' to international lenders and the skeptical public that the reform was participatory.

That the 'consultative' meeting was a mere publicity trick might possibly be illustrated with the way the reform administrators behaved:

More troubling was the rigidity of the reform planners and administrators who were delegated from the center. We, participants who were delegated from the peripheries, were not allowed to make any changes whatsoever on the curriculum framework handed out to us. As a consequence, we didn't have the motivation and

synergy to making expected contributions. Like my fellow colleagues and participants, I repeatedly self-withdrew from the tasks through withholding relevant information, reluctance to speak up my mind, and sometimes by being absent. In the closing ceremony, delegates expressed their positions and opinions disapprovingly. Among the disapproving comments expressed by participants, the length i.e. the three-year pre-service teacher education, the amount of credit hours allocated (i.e. 25 credits out of the total 108) for practicum were in the forefront (Excerpt 2: personal story).

### ***Module ‘planning’ or ‘writing’***

A few months after writing course titles, objectives, codes, credits, methods, and assessment procedures, the Ministry of Education ( through its sub-committee ) recalled faculty delegates most of whom were participants in the previous meeting. I describe the meeting and its consequence with another critical encounter/scene episodic narrative of my key self narrator:

I arrived for the meeting with the usual uncertainty. The vice minister, escorted by Ministry of Education officers and overseas volunteers, explained why the ‘consultative meeting’ was needed and what was expected of us. Small groups were formed bringing together individuals having the same specialization. Unlike the previous meeting, during the second one, a lecture was given by overseas volunteers who worked at the Ministry of Education on methods of giving students active-learning experiences and written guidelines on module writing. Day one meeting was characterized by angry questions, dismissive comments and total withdrawals because we were asked to write course texts or materials which would require intensive cognitive, emotional and physical involvements. In spite of a strong resistance, we were forced into the business. If force and imposition bore fruits, our work on subsequent days would be fruitful. On the closing ceremony, the vice minister appeared and spoke on the success of the meeting. Delighted by the ‘work’ we accomplished, he presented further instructions that we must engage our teaching staff who work under us to produce course books for all courses (Excerpt 3: personal story).

Top-down management is so deceptive that a superficial ‘acceptance’ of a certain course of action by line managers is taken as a ‘managerial success’.

At the meeting, we gave in to the pressure of the vice minister and the head of Teacher Education Department at the Ministry of Education. That was merely a self-protection move. We did not want to jeopardize the



image senior officials had about us. During the time we were there, i.e. three days, in my group, we wrote a thirty-page lesson, largely by modifying available literature, in a modular structure we were instructed to adopt (Excerpt 4: personal story).

Contrary to the ministerial position, the majority of teacher education practitioners sanctioned the implementation of the reform through their agency. I cite a few examples which my key informant revealed to me: Teacher educators have refused to write modules without some financial rewards for almost two years; they have often remained reluctant to adopt the modified course syllabus sticking into the old; still a great number of teacher educators would prefer to involve their student teachers in school experience in the same old ways by ignoring the new components introduced as field experiences known as the **practicum**. Although the practicum has been designed as a major component of teacher education with 20% of the entire teacher education work and action research requirements, I have not yet seen teacher educators' commitment that signal the involvement of student teachers in such a degree.

### *'Managing' practicum crisis*

The initial core discourse vocabulary such as 'teacher education system overhaul' and 'paradigm shift' introduced by TESO towards effecting student-centered and democratic education which have been formalized in various documents (e.g. MoE, 2002, 2003) have resulted in several intractable situations. The most noticeable was, and still is, the enormity of the challenges and the overwhelming condition created following the introduction of the new practicum. In the place of student-centered and school-based educative opportunities sought by TESO, faculties all over Ethiopia have found the practicum insurmountable and, in some case, totally "unmanageable". It was widely felt the situation reached crisis. Then, the Ministry of Education commissioned a

national workshop of six teacher education faculties in Ethiopia which was held at Alemaya University from October 27-28, 2005. Although the workshop was intended as a forum where faculties would present each well researched proposals, the workshop was dominated by a purely administrability and manageability matters.

Moreover, the managerial approach was evident in this workshop. To illustrate with examples, I begin by mentioning the participants present in the workshop. Each university was represented by vice presidents, deans, and practicum coordinators. Besides, the host university, namely Alemaya University, invited all its heads of each department and administrative units. From the Ministry of Education, a vice minister and head of the Teacher Education Department were present.

The objective of the workshop was stated as follows:

Upon completion of the workshop activities the participating teacher education institutions (TEIs) shall develop a common understanding ... All TEIs shall operate in unison following uniform working guidelines. Significant changes shall be recommended towards improvement in the structure and content of the existing curricula (Faculty Archive, 2005, p.7).

The two-day workshop was dominated by managerial issues that have ramification for the practicum, which included student teacher transportation to partner schools, their subsistence and accommodation, the amount of credits/hours regarding the practicum , inconsistency among instructors concerning student teachers grading on their practicum activities, and assignment of advisors to student teachers. Each institution recommended a significant cut in the credit given to practicum by the Ministry of Education experts. The quantitatively focused recommendations never raised substantive matters that have pedagogical justifications. Reflective of the quantitatively-oriented arguments during the meeting was the final agreement reached

to cut practicum credits, i.e., practicum activities all together have been suggested to be limited to 13 credits. The Ministry of Education had strictly been sticking to 25 credits because practicum is one of the priorities in its reform process. Both in the proceeding as well as in the discussions during the two day workshop, there was nothing that amounted to debates or deliberations on pedagogical matters.

Another routinized practice which is worth-surfacing here as a managerial approach is the faculty-based problem solving meetings. According to my key self-narrator, the Academic Commission of the Faculty of Education, which mainly consists of chairs, often meets to deliberate on various academic issues. In the last two years, the most recurrent and dominant issue has been the practicum. Very often, the Commission has met to decide on school placement, assignment of faculty advisors, sizing up of activities for practicum, assessment procedures and financial support to student teachers. Oddly, such issues have never been considered as pedagogical agendas needing pedagogical deliberations. To date, I have not seen any significant and recognizably impacting faculty scheme that carries out research and dialogical inquiry to inform the faculty on issues spanning from curriculum to the practicum.

I was able to get other participants' reflected their views on the reform tasks. Seven of the current acting chairs of the departments at the Faculty of Education, Alemaya University, who participated in the four reform tasks partially or wholly, expressed largely consistent views with the stories of the key self-narrator when they responded to the explanatory statements I handed out to them (see Appendix).

Table 1.

Responses of *seven* chairs of departments at the Faculty of Education, Alemaya University (Instead of actual names, pseudonyms are used).

Response category	Textual evidence
Non-participatory Reform Tasks	<p>The reform process is largely orchestrated by the central government through the Ministry of Education. It is a top down approach, and the invitation of heads of departments on several occasions to Addis Ababa for consultative meetings is not genuinely intended to listen to what they would say. It is simply a publicity strategy to convince the public and donors that the reform is participatory. (Ibsa, Wasihun, and Moges)</p> <p>In addition to this [The above], stakeholders like teacher association, the community, the students, experts in the area were not participated/involved. (Alebachew)</p> <p>...the way the reform addressed was top to down. (Tesfaye)</p> <p>The reform process of Education in Ethiopia simply seems participatory on paper. But, it is not indeed. Rather it is a forced reform process by the central government through the Ministry of Education. (Hunegnaw)</p>
Participatory but Constrained Reform Tasks	<p>...the reform was conducted after carrying out several workshops or meetings. Therefore, it was participatory....I disagree with this statement [the quote in the above category], the Ministry's role was simply to give directions. Most of the reform was done by conducting consultative meetings. But this doesn't mean that the ideas forwarded by staff are accepted. Sometimes there was rigidity. (Abdulsemed)</p>

Two possible categories have emerged from the response the seven chairs accorded: non-participatory and constrained participatory. While most of the participant respondents hold unambiguous position that the reform tasks were non-participatory, one

person signaled a somewhat cautious approval of the Ministry's methodology. As far as the consequence of the reform tasks are concerned, one participant chair stated:

...the output of this reform process is just putting millions of school children in confusion. (Hunegnaw )

Two respondents, however, indicated practice has improved following the reform tasks. One of them directly accorded statements 3 as it is which is in the open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix):

The current teacher education program is better because it has moved forward by addressing teacher education problems such as classroom teacher authoritarianism, monocultural curriculum, assessment that encourages fact learning rather than critical reflection, centralized academic leadership, and lack of inquiry & research to improve instruction. (Tesfaye)

This respondent though seemed not totally happy with the reform approach when he added the statement: "However, the way the reform addressed was top to down." The second respondent, who observed improvements, stated his view as follows:

...the current teacher education program is better. It brought several changes. But it needs some improvements. (Abdulsemed)

The above categories and quotes signal in general how the participants of the reform view about the 'opportunities' the Ministry of Education created to involve the faculty leadership staff in the major reform tasks. Despite their presence in various consultative meetings and implementational activities, they feel they did not involve, at least genuinely, in the process. Their assessment at large is in harmony of the specific cases and experiences presented earlier.

Nevertheless, it is dangerous to ignore the minority view that lends some approval of the process. For example, the two participant respondents who stated above

improvements in the teacher education seem to be approving the new practices and changes which the state also boasts of. These state self-claimed changes include the implementation of on-the-job methodology course for all educators(HDP), the faculty wide module writing activities, student teachers deployment to secondary schools for an extended period of time for ‘school experience’, unprecedented enrollment increase and physical expansions of universities, etc. Such specifics are quite observable pieces of evidence that I could hardly deny. Part of the conceptual challenge, as far as assessing reform is concerned, the presence of changes which are concrete and appear to be positive. The views held by the two respondents, for example, though it is a minority view, often make me reconceptualize my reform assessment methodology. This is part of the reason why the views of seven chairs have become an element of the data for this paper. It is therefore possible to imagine the tension and harmony among various views of reform

### **Discussion**

The foregoing analysis of the four reform tasks and relevant matters with self-narrations and views of faculty chairs has surfaced a remarkable degree of indicators of the managerial approach which might possibly be identified with seven key *manifestations* and *characteristics*:

1. There is a focus on *instrumentality*—a narrow focus on the accomplishment of quantitative goals above all else (e.g. enrollment increase).
2. Activities are *manipulatively* directed by the will of individuals rather than by institutionalized pedagogical values (e.g. TESO task forces).

3. Decisions are usually made on the grounds of *administrability* (e.g. the decision by the Teacher Education National Workshop deliberations and faculty regular Academic Commission meetings).
4. Planning is remarkably carried out by a *centrally controlled* agents and disseminated downwards for implementation through *formalistic documents* and rhetoric (e.g. the curriculum guideline prepared by the MoE task forces and sent down for implementation).
5. There is a greater tendency to *act on the immediate* rather than on the long-term (e.g. the routinized activities in relation to the practicum at faculties).
6. Curricular and instructional changes are made without taking into account *multiple voices* through *top-down, linear, and hierarchical* routes and means (e.g. the homogeneity of the participants who participated in various meetings commissioned by the Ministry of Education).
7. The motivation for increased *control* from the center is often justified by *standardization* and *uniformity* (e.g. the insistence of the Ministry of Education on making all faculties of education in the country to adopt a uniform curriculum and schedule).

The managerial approach has vividly signaled the position of the reform planners and administrators concerning the often challenging dilemmas many countries encounter. Lessons from educational reforms carried out worldwide indicate that there are always dilemmas with regard to priority setting. On the one hand, there are global and national agendas such as access and equity. On the other hand, there are local needs and interests such as relevance, empowerment, and decision-making. So, issues of

decentralization versus centralization as well as bureaucracy versus professionalism are always intractable to politicians who design educational policies. According to Hargreaves (1997), there are four equally important dilemmas of structuring: vision vs. voice, mandates vs. menus, trust in people vs. trust in processes, and structure vs. culture.

The reform movement I am assessing has apparently signaled so far in effect, if not in intent, clinging to more of the central visions rather than the voices of various groups; more of trust in loyal reform planners and administrators rather than trust in processes; more of strengthening managerial structure rather than fostering an empowering culture of teacher education.

I intend to develop the vision vs. voice dilemma the state faced with and its position a bit further. Despite rhetorical improvements concerning the need to recognize those voices which were previously not heard, neglected, and rejected, the managerial approach has helped the system maintain the *status quo*. One of such voices is women's voice. Women are significantly and implicitly excluded from the change process. This is evident in the meeting stories and national workshop described earlier. In both the meetings and the workshop, women were rarely delegated. It was possibly so in the subcommittees nominated by the Ministry of Education. Their glaring absences were mainly due to the fact that there were (and still are) few women assuming managerial positions in the educational sector. Therefore, the managerial approach strengthens the traditional male and elite ownership, in which power is exercised over women. Moreover, other minorities and majorities whose voices were suppressed in the past, remain to be unrepresented in the change process. Managers are often individuals who



were mostly part of the mainstream culture and structure. Therefore, the curriculum that comes out from such a process often lack pluri-voice and authenticity. The curriculum is usually of monocultural which reflects the culture and interests of dominant groups and participants. According to Hargreaves (1997), in such cases, management becomes manipulation. Curriculum helps maintain the “monopoly of wisdom”.

The values and the ethical standards teacher education is encapsulated in are not recognized if the reform actors are only managers. If classroom teaching and pedagogical activities are not recognized as the primary agenda of the reform, everything boils down to cosmetic and structural reformulation. ‘Paradigm shift’ becomes a move to maintain *status quo*. The traditional conception of “knowledge” and “knowledge sharing” remains intact as the dictatorship of technical rationality is the ideology of the managers who are orchestrating the reform discourse. Any reform initiative, whether it is focused on the district, the nation, or the classroom it conveys certain values and world views (see Fullan, 1991; Haragreaves, 1994). Reform communicates a vision of what it means to be an educated person. It is based on a vision of what teachers (and other actors) are supposed to be doing. According to Little (1993), powerful reform ideas engage teachers in a broader consideration of the cultural foundations of the educational enterprise both in and outside of the classroom. The notion of “classroom activism” (see Anderson et al., 1994; Waff, 1994; Bell, 1996) is needed if change is really genuinely in the mind and heart of the reform administrators.

I now turn to explaining what I feel to be important components of a teacher education reform. My argument is that there must be a rethink of the current managerial approach. State actors must realize the immense professionalism teacher education

entails, and involve those who live in it, feel it better and have a close experience of it. Therefore, I would suggest the need to be inclusive and radical by focusing on teacher development, curriculum, assessment, school-faculty collaboration, system and administration, and interdisciplinary inquiry and research. Teacher development or professionalization of teacher educators is key to teacher education reform. One pathway to develop the confidence and ethical mission of teacher educators is teacher development schemes. Current schemes such as Higher Diploma Program simply maintain the status quo by consolidating the dictatorship of technical rationality and imposition. There is a need for a more participatory and relevant and owned schemes.

Another element of reform in teacher education is, by and large, the improvement of instruction. Because of the managerial trend in action, the Ministry of Education has sought to improve instruction only through the hegemonic on-the-job skills training model by designing a one-year Higher Diploma Program. It appears from such teaching conception that knowledge of predetermined technical procedures is all what teachers need to deliver meaningful lessons. However, Darling-Hammond (1997) argues that teaching is not routine implementation:

Such an approach[top-down determination of instructional components] can work when tasks are predictable and unvaried....teaching decisions are many; teaching strategies must be continually adapted to different subject areas, learning goals, and student approaches and needs. To teach successfully, teachers must have both the knowledge about teaching and learning needed to manage the complex process of getting diverse students to learn well and the discretion to practice variably rather than routinely (p. 334).

This is not the conception of teaching that has informed the reform movement I am assessing. Furthermore, a shift towards a more inquiry and research based activities is crucial to improve the pedagogy of teacher preparation. Improving teacher education needs both institution building as well as pedagogical improvements. Fullan (1993) states that change agency—being self-conscious about the nature of reform and the change process—is necessary to make change continual and institutionalized. He identifies four requirements to develop a “generative change capacity”. These are “personal vision building, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration” (p.12). Of these, I would see inquiry as the most important element in the process of change. According to Pascal (1990), “the essential activity for keeping our paradigm current is persistent questioning....Inquiry is the engine of vitality and self-renewal” (p.14). Inquiry is “internalizing norms, habits and techniques for continuous learning” (Fullan, 1993, p. 15). With regard to system reform, an ethical leadership and administration tends to be inclusive, and such a system must be institutionalized. The leadership structure must focus on the process of preparing teachers who have the knowledge base to self-educate and improve continually. One of the elements is the building of an ethical institution that fosters a developmental and democratic leadership process. An ethical and institutionalized leadership is based on key educational values, and such is trust-building. Hargreaves (1997) argues that the centre piece to reforming education is the establishment of trust. He elaborates:

Processes to be trusted...are ones that maximize the organization’s collective expertise and improve its problem solving capacities. These include improved communication, shared decision-making, creation of opportunities for collegial

learning, networking with outside environment, commitment to continuous inquiry and so on. Trust in people remains important, but trust in expertise and processes supersedes it. Trust in processes is open-ended and risky. But it is probably essential to learning and improvement (p. 349).

The Ministry develops a process that fosters a process of trust-building that operates with a spirit of collaboration and partnership with universities to create a sense of ownership by all participants. The central and the periphery can develop a sense of partnership and ownership in which the central acts as a facilitator and the periphery as a reform activist. The periphery sets reform priorities with the central in which the former's peculiarities and localities are respected in the process of accomplishing the reform tasks.

Sarson(1990) argues that if educational reform elements are addressed in isolation, while some are changed and others not, the success of the reform is almost undermined. He further states that, first, significant changes in curriculum, assessment or any other domain is unlikely to be successful unless serious attention is also paid to teacher development and the principles of professional judgment and discretion contained within it. Second, teacher development and enhanced professionalism must also be undertaken in conjunction with developments in curriculum, assessment, leadership and school organization (Cited in Hargreaves, 1997, p. 340)

### **Conclusion**

In Ethiopia, formal education began in a western-style schooling structure in 1908. It was only in 1950s and afterwards that national official reforming movements were initiated by the influence of western and modernizing forces. Three noticeable

reform initiatives seemed to have taken place in three successive governments. It seems that each reform movement takes about ten years for a full cycle reform activities which results in some saturation and provoke a national evaluation. In fact, the third reform movement is yet to be evaluated since the pressure for a rethink has not gained momentum. I hope this study, and possibly other papers, might contribute towards building a power base of a meaningful influence on policy makers to consider the inevitable rethink of the reform movement.

I have argued in this paper that the managerial approach has been pursued predominantly to 'reform' teacher education in Ethiopia. The pursuit of the managerial pathways has emanated partly from the behaviour of state actors and the influence of external forces. Political figures tend to largely prioritize the maintenance of the status quo. They usually seem to be more concerned with power and control. To this effect, loyal and obedient managers are given the task of reforming education by sidelining professional and non-professional practitioners. They tend to always operate on the principles of economic rationalism and ultimate full control of practitioners. As they also face and disentangle with various perplexing agendas and dilemmas, reform becomes intractable. Very often, they fail to reform beyond a mere massification or numerical increase that is seemingly resulting in little or no meaningful impacts on the life conditions of poverty stricken peoples of the country. Therefore, for a relevant and meaningful reform tasks to be planned and implemented, policy makers and implementers at various levels must engage in ways that foster ownership and partnership. Besides, there must be a rethink of the nature and route of educational

reform in Ethiopia which conceptualizes improvement as discursive and continually needed.

### Notes

[1] The key self-narrator was a teacher educator and chair of the Department of English Language at Alemaya University. As chair of a department he has participated in various reform tasks commissioned by the Ministry of Education. At Alemaya University, a higher learning institution which celebrated its jubilee (50<sup>th</sup> year) just one year ago, too, he has taken part in similar activities. Chairs of departments were often called to the Ministry of Education, in Addis Ababa, the capital, to prepare the syllabus, write modules, standardize, etc on the basis of pre-formulated criteria.

[2] Episodic narrative construction was carried to capture the key informant's encounters and experiences as representatively as possible. In order to increase the accuracy of the stories, I carried out a two-stage story authentication activities. In other words, the reconstruction of the self-narrator's lived stories was completed in two stages. The first stage involved a personal recalling and reconstituting of scattered records kept in various encounters deemed relevant. In the second stage, I circulated the reconstructed stories to individuals who had the same experiences in the encounters I was concerned with. My aim at this stage was to capture the scene as accurately as possible. My fascination with the focus on the personal stories as a basis of reform analysis emanates from methodological premises. It is the belief in the richness and authenticity of personal stories to understanding a situation. Stories are "pervasive in human and social experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 135). Stories offer insights that are replete with the language, values, prejudices and perceptions participants have about the situation. They provide a means of capturing the richness, intimacy and complexity of pedagogical improvement (Goodson, 1992).

[3] The last Ethiopian monarchy was headed by Haile Silassie. In 1974, students, workers, and soldiers began a series of strikes and demonstrations that culminated on September 12, 1974 with the deposition of Haile Selassie by members of the armed forces. Chief among the coup leader was Major Mengistu Hailemariam who stayed in power till 1991.

[4] The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) were the two major forces which emerged from the northern part of Ethiopia and mounted an armed struggle against the 17-year authoritarian (1974-1991) regime. In May 1991, the EPLF took control of Eritrea and the EPRDF occupied fully the remaining part of the country. The EPRDF, led by Meles Zenawi, set up a transitional government of Ethiopia, where other opposition groups were also embraced, while the EPLF established a provisional government in Eritrea. After a "referendum" in 1993, the EPLF declared independence with the support by EPRDF. In 1994, a Constituent Assembly was formed EPRDF winning 484 seats out of 547.

[5] As higher education kept expanding remarkably, the shortage of educators and instructors has constrained instructional activities. As a result, public officials secured the support of international financial and development institutions to recruit faculty from abroad. In each university, at present, there are over 50 Indian instructors. The salary of the expatriate instructors is four times higher than that of Ethiopian national instructors.

[6] Ethiopia has pledged Universal Primary Education (UPE) three times. The first was in 1961 at "Addis Ababa Conference on African Education" in which UPE was pledged to be reached in 1980. The second was in 1972 in which UPE was projected to be achieved before 2000 (Tekeste, 1990). The third promise was by the current government, and as stated before, UPE has been sought to be reached before 2015. This latest pledge which grew out of the 1990 Jomeitan meeting, with the agenda of 'Education for All' has become one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Goal 2 of MDG states: "to ensure that, boys and

girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling” (UNESCO, 2003, p.242).

[7] Candidates for First Cycle Primary school, teacher trainees are selected from those who have completed grade ten, but who are unable to pass the national exam for undergraduate college education. The candidates, once they have been selected by regional education bureaus, enroll in teacher education institutes and study for one year. This kind of teacher education program is known as Ten Plus One (10+1). The same procedure applies to train Second Cycle Primary school teachers, and this program is called Ten Plus Three (10+3).

[8] The Ministry of Education (MoE) is a government body that looks after federal educational functions. At present, there are ten functioning federal public universities that run under the auspices of the Ministry.

[9] TESO is Teacher Education System Overhaul. It consists of a set of reform tasks and various task forces enacted to carry out changes in teacher education activities. It has been more than two years since the modified national teacher education curriculum was officially launched. TESO has effected major changes such as the reduction of a secondary teacher education from four years to three years; a three-fold increase of enrollment every year, resulting in a total number of 3000 students at the Faculty of Education (the total number was less than 700 in 2002/03 academic year); the increase of field experience(the practicum--earlier it was simply Teaching Practice) from two credits to 25 credits, resulting in a deployment of thousands of teacher candidates to secondary schools every semester; and the parallel introduction of satellite educational television programs in every secondary classroom, almost replacing the school teacher by television lessons.

[10] The Department for International Development (DfID), Ireland Aid and Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO) are among the major international NGOs that play a significant role in Ethiopian education. In addition, Swedish International Development



Agency (SIDA), International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) and Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) are acknowledged as “partners” by the Ministry of Education.

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**Appendix .** *Reform Opinion Inventory Framework*

You have participated in teacher education *reform tasks* (curriculum development, module writing, etc.) commissioned by the Ministry of Education since 2003. Which of the following match(es) your personal opinion of the way improvement is intended in teacher education in Ethiopia. You can assess the reform tasks in any way possible. For example, restatement of the given ones, addition of more details, and writing of a new paragraph that fully catches your feelings.

1. The reform process is largely participatory because department heads have been invited from early on to shape teacher education in ways that reflect the critical needs of the country. It is a bottom up approach for the ministry has been able to involve educators from faculties in universities.

2. The reform process is largely orchestrated by the central government through the Ministry of Education. It is a top down approach, and the invitation of heads of departments on several occasions to Addis Ababa for consultative meetings is not genuinely intended to listen to what they would say. It is simply a publicity strategy to convince the public and donors that the reform is participatory.

3. The current teacher education program is better because it has moved forward by addressing teacher education problems such as classroom teacher authoritarian, monocultural curriculum, assessment that encourages fact learning rather than critical reflection, centralized academic leadership, and lack of inquiry & research to improve instruction.

**IF YOU WANT TO WRITE ANOTHER PARAGRAPH, PLEASE USE REVERSE FACE.**