



An Analysis of the Current Mother Tongue Instructional Language Policy in Ethiopia.

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Abstract

For the very first time, during the period of Haile Selase the first, language policy in written form was prepared. And there was an expectation of the Dergu's language policy for the making of many Ethiopian language development however, it continued on the usage of only one language. Right after the downfall of the Dergue, a shift towards using mother tongue instructional language policy seen in our country since 1994 with the reign of the former EPRDF (The present Prosperity Party). The purpose of this analysis is therefore to explain and present the current Ethiopian mother tongue instructional language formulation, implementation and outcomes.

To materialize the study, a contextual discourse analysis was applied. To this effect, after providing a brief background on the current Ethiopian mother tongue instructional language policy, an analysis of the formulation and implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy with its problems was discussed using document review and analysis. Finally, the findings indicated that the author of this analysis appreciated the merits of mother tongue instructional policy for the students however, the researcher argue that the quick change to formulate and implement the mother tongue instructional language policy without considering the existed unbalanced stage of development among different regions and with no or sufficient readiness to provide education using mother tongue instructional language seems to be more of political decision than a proper pedagogical shift.

It is recommended that an in depth feasibility research that focuses on the students pedagogical needs and the population distribution pattern in the country would support the proper monitoring of a genuine and applicable mother tongue instructional language policy.

Key words: Instructional Language, Mother Tongue, and Policy

Introduction

Right after the collapse of the Dergu regime, the former EPRDF and the current Prosperity Party made a policy change in Education. All over the country, during the reign of the Dergu, the only medium of primary education was Amharic, however when EPRDF took power a good number

of mother tongue instructional languages being introduced as media of primary education. It is hence the former EPRDF on the area of mother tongue instructional language usage in the primary schools made a revolutionary change. It is, yes, the major manifestation of the current instructional language policy is perhaps come to the system of education in Ethiopia than in any other places (Getachew and Dereb, 2006). As major focus given to education during 1994, in its education and training policy (1994) clearly stated as 1. Develop the physical, mental and problem solving capacity of individuals by expanding education in general and by providing basic education for all in particular. 2. Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely, and trained in various skills, by realizing private and social benefit of education. 3. Bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the wellbeing of people, equality, justice, and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline; 4. Bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in the society; and 5. Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive, and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs.

In order to make development in social, cultural political and economic activities of a country, education particularly modern education is the vital means. For doing so, our country, Ethiopia has been allocating the huge amount of its annual budget for the sector of education and hence expanding the sector at an alarming scale (Tekeste, 2006). By having strong belief that education can eradicate poverty, the expansion took such speed. Poverty minimization using education as weapon was aggressively preached and promoted by the government himself so as to ensure the development of Ethiopian society.

Actually, the poverty reduction strategy policy that the Ethiopian government was forced to submit to the World Bank as a must condition in order to receive progressive and continued

loans and aid lay behind the mass expansion the policy. The United Nations millennium development goals too was determined to help and provide support to the least developed nations, to provide universal primary education to their citizens and reduce by half the number of people that live below the poverty line of one dollar per day is another policy that has played a role in the rapid expansion of schools (Tekeste, 2006).

In various countries where their people speaks a number of languages, mother tongue instructional language policies were open to hot debates and arguments by deep looking the consequences of historical factors like colonization, war, multi ethnic nation building or the more recent phenomena of globalization immigration and the spread of Anglo –American cultural influences.

Methods and Procedures

Methodologically speaking, the writer of this mother tongue instructional language policy analysis has used a document analysis, which is under the category of qualitative inquiry method. Consequently, a number of related mother tongue instructional language documents were collected and right after making a deep reading of them, an analysis on the mother tongue instructional language policy issue definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation was professionally and objectively done. For making a comprehensive mother tongue instructional language policy analysis, 30 (thirty) published articles, which are written both by local and international researchers was used. By the same token, The Central Statistical Authority Annual Abstract, the famous 1994 Education and Training Policy Document, the 1999 and the 2003 annual abstract prepared by MoE used as a major policy document ground . Totally, while making this analysis, as it is presented in the reference part, 34 (Thirty Four) topical documents were utilized as secondary sources of data.

Theoretical Approach

A language in which children since from their early ages uses in day to day communication is called mother tongue language. Within it children get experiences, skills and knowledge from their family, surroundings and community at large. Children will be helped by the caliber and experiences that they received from their cultures and lessons learnt in the class room or school environment by making a logical link easily since the medium of communication is what they know called mother tongue (Kembo, 2000).

Children will be successful since they have strong foundations in their mother tongue languages. Cognitive and affective development of a student occurs most effectively in a language that the student knows best (May, 2001).

For the gain of dependable quality education, there is a need of educating both teachers and students by using their immediate mother tongue instructional languages (Poon, 2000). Bamagose (2007) also pointed out that using mother tongue instructional languages develops the teachers and students knowledge, attitude and skills. On top of that, the students will be able to have relatively better self confidences and they can easily understand concepts of the subject matters what they have received by using their mother tongue instructional languages ahead of introducing to learn using another second instructional language (Ricento, 2006).

Therefore, for the fruitful learning and sustainable development of the students, skill knowledge and attitude, an implementation of mother tongue instructional policy is vital. However, for having successful implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy, students and teachers need to be supported from the concerned stakeholders concerning the usage of mother tongue instructional language. For the better implementation, teachers mainly needs to play a major role and responsibility by making a sound participation in various educational reforms

activity at the class room level (Wright, 2000). Moreover, by teaching through mother tongue first language, concepts and contents of a given subject can easily understand by students. First, the language of instruction needs to be understood in order to conceptualize the content of a subject matter. But, understanding of concepts and ideas will be too small if the students are forced to learn such lessons through unfamiliar and second languages. Knowing the sounds meaning of words, expressions and cultural ideas used out of their mother tongue instructional language may be difficult and the quality of education will be definitely at question. As a result of it, the students will be unsuccessful in there learning and they will be victims of the consequence of the wrong instructional language usage policy.

Mother Tongue Instructional Language Policy

For the largest period of time, although Ethiopia is a country of more than 80 nations with their own various languages, only one language (Amharic) had been the medium of instruction throughout the country at all elementary school level.

In 1974, when the Derg government took power, the idea of using nationality language was discussed and planned to use for instructional medium though it failed to start it practically. And, the former EPRDF and the current Prosperity Party formally started to use the different nations and nationalities languages as mother tongue instructional languages as a medium of communication at primary school level. The simple question what it come to every once mind is why such long time took to start education using mother tongue? Why no multilingual mother tongue language policies for years back in Ethiopia?

It was clear that since Ethiopia was for longer years under the government system of feudal monarchy. And it was quite unlike to the empirical regime to address the ethnic language question, which needs a democratic thinking that was not the interest of feudal rulers. On top of it, the rulers also had an attitude of having a single language for the countries unity and

independence. They strongly believe that the countries long independence history is due to not using a divided language. Successive imperial regimes advocated the advantage of one national language as an instrument for maintaining the countries integrity. Trying to have various mother tongue instructional languages was considered as trying to collapse the countries into division which was as to the feudal leader a trial of national disintegration.

According to Seyoum, 1997, in all scenarios, the feudal rulers were not long sighted enough to understand and see in advance the very danger of imposing only one national language on the multiethnic nation which was purely considered as a “ defacto declaration of war on others” .

It seems that the Dergue regime by understanding the problem of the feudalist gap and by the need to get interest by the people, it tried to shift from promoting one single language as an instrument for national unity to encourage the use of the remaining language as per its political advantage. The policy decision to start an adult literacy program in fifteen mother tongue language was one of the exemplary efforts done by the Dergu period (Ayalew, 1999).

Until the downfall of the Dergu regime in 1991, the literacy campaign, which was started in 1979 using 15 mother tongue languages, was at work. The Dergu regime, on top of starting the campaign of literacy, did important policy decision on transcribed these languages in the Ethiopic script (traditionally used for Semitic Languages in the country). Most of which were un written before.

Although the socialist government did a good start of providing literacy campaign using various languages, the language usage was limited only to the non formal education sector and the government failed or had no interest to use these languages for formal school system mother tongue instructional languages (Ayalew, 1999). As a result of which, Amharic language continued as the only instructional language used as the medium of instruction at elementary school's regular education.

In 1991, when EPRDF took power, an interest of using the different ethnic group languages for instructional purpose by having a policy document of it. And for making the decision, two reasons were presented. The first was the political inclination of the EPRDF right after changing the Dergu regime the Western Democracy style was the stand of the front which force them to have the interest of various nations by including liberty, equality, truth justice and above all the respect of human right at their core believe(Seyoum , 1996).

Secondly, the formation of the party itself was by having various ethnic groups, which leads them show, the respect of their members' languages at its practical use. From the members of EPRDF, particularly the Tigraway ethnic group was labeled the Amharic ethnic group rulers as they were suppressing all the remaining Non -Amharic culture ,language and identity (Seyoum , 1996). Having this type of leveling and Attitude in mind, and written form of EPRDF, the ethnic language agenda took the top priority since 1991. As a result of the said attitude towards Amharic speaking earlier rulers, one can easily understand that speaking the value of difference nation and nationalities language and designing a policy framework was a blessing task and an easy issue to be addressed. What matters most was how this language policy agenda has been approached as a policy process.

Policy Formulation

In the history of Ethiopia, when the government brings any constructive policy issue, the failure of having a strong systematic approach and internal interest towards the making of fundamental policy process work leads not to make it happen. This failure was seen during 1970's when the promising education sector review program initiation aiming the making of radical educational reform in the country was failed ahead of implementation as a result of opposition by the opposite thinkers by having a different idea as if it was politically motivated which actually contributed to the collapse of the imperial regime in 19 74 (Country studies, 1991). By similar

fashion, while making the formation and implementation process of the current language policy, opposing views were seen. When the transitional government took power in 1991, according to Ayalew (1999), there was a conference for peace and democracy in Addis Ababa from July 2-6 1991. The major discussion agenda in this conference was preparing a policy guideline for the quick start of primary school instructional language policy by using five major ethnic languages (Ayalew, 1999). In this conference, parallel with discussing the preparation of policy guideline, the choice of script in which the language was to be written decided. To that effect, the ETHIOPIC ALPHABET reminds for SEMANTIC LANGUAGE group usage and the LATIN ALPHABET for the CUSHETIC LANGUAGE group which most of the minority language groups categorized (Tekeste, 1996).

Right after the decision on the alphabet usage made important questions were raised. The first one was, in the conferences, which were called to make such a major language policy decision. For one obvious reason, the good numbers of the participants definitely were various political parties that claimed to represent different ethnic groups. However, according to Ayalew (2000) and Tekeste (1996) arguments, regarding the interest to use either Ethiopic or Cushetic alphabet usage, there was no proof that whether the respective speakers of the language were deeply asked and considered their real interest or not. These two scholars strongly said that the decision made on that conference is highly politically motivated by showing the clear dislikes towards the Ethiopic alphabet due to its script of the so called the AMHARA ETHNIC group that had been in political ruling power for about over a century. By looking the economic and linguistic advantage of using the Ethiopic alphabet over the Cushitic alphabet, one logically may argue that the possibility of using Ethiopic could be easily and less costly to prepare the language material in it.

Involvement of major partners in the development of the policy

Top level officials were supporting the usage of mother tongue instructional language policy since from its inception time and they failed to take much time on agenda setting and allowing various development supporters for the enrichment of the policy details. In retrospect, it seems worth inquiring as to the constituencies who were involved in formulating the official document. According to Seyoum (1996), the delegation of five taskforces having 42 members was done for the duty of formulating the general education policy that had the mother tongue instructional language policy as a component in it. The good number of delegated taskforce for this policy formulation were from the ministry of education, Addis Ababa University, the Ministry of Health , the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Science and Technology etc (Ayalew, 1991) . Right after completing the first draft of the mother tongue instructional language policy review, the ministry of education has done different meetings and seminars with teachers. However, although teachers were asked to participate on the education policy in general and on mother tongue instructional language in particular, the constructive ideas given by them were not incorporated in the final policy document. To the worst of all, due to the absence of the comments given by the teachers to the policy document, the Ethiopian Teachers union had divided into two. The one supporting the completed policy and the other opposing and considering it as an imposed policy with the absence of any idea from the right professionals called teachers (Seyoum , 1996).

Table 1 below shows the involvement of major actors in the mother tongue instructional language policy process.

Constituency	Issue Definition	Agenda Setting	Policy formulation	Policy adoption	Implementation	Evaluation
Office of the Prime Minister		HDI		LDI		
Ethnic-based political parties	HDI	HDI				
Teachers' Union (government affiliated)			HDI	LDI		
Federal Ministry of Education			HDI	HDI		LDI
University professors			LDI			
Representatives of development ministries			LDI			
Multilateral and bilateral foreign agencies						LDI
Regional Educational Bureaus					LDI	
Teachers and school administrators					LDI	
Parents					LDI	

Table 1: The Involvement of Major Actors in the Policy Process

KEY: HDI - HIGH DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT. LDI-LOW DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

The table above, concerning policy process, clearly shows that there was a sudden shift of policy implementation from policy inception process without following the proper process of sufficient issue definition and agenda setting. Actually, by the then time, the initial agenda setting stage was articulated and discussed by only those who have had an ethnic focused political inclination which was also the interest of the then transitional government led by the late Prime Minister Melese Zenawi . Due to the ethnic mindset of the government, the agenda setting process of the mother tongue instructional language process organized in the presence of the then Ministers and other top officials at the office of the Prime Minister. As a result of the interest of the then ruling party, to make a quick instructional language policy change, the federal ministry of education ordered to implement the desired language policy change at rush without incorporating the valuable ideas of various language policy professionals plus a good number of academicians. Similarly, since the transitional governments have had a great desire of making a quick instructional language policy change, the assigned few ministers and other officials were not given chance to oppose any change made by the government.

By the same token, since the governments have had a fast instructional language policy change, those middle level professionals have had no power to stop the very implementation of the policy. However, such important language policy change was expected to incorporate the voice of parents, middle level and grass root level professionals who were the major beneficiaries and implementers of the changing mother tongue instructional language policy. However, none of them were called to have a single say regarding it, the then transitional government that was a disgusting act.

Major Actors and their Power Relationships

1. Major Actors

As far as policy process is concerned, although there are various cultural differences, there are some conventional approaches. For instance, we need to see policy adoption concept before we see the very idea of implementation of policy (Fowler 2004). Due to the much influence of politically injected lobby groups, it is quite true that here in Ethiopia the development of mother tongue instructional language policy failed to fully follow the scientific logical procedures and stages. Before the approval of education and training policy, having the issue of language policy in general and mother tongue instructional language policy in particular, different languages were already in use by getting their usage approval at 1991 meeting held by the council of representatives. Therefore, since before the official approval of the educational policy different mother tongue instructional language were at school usage, we can say that the 1994 policy did not bring something new mother tongue instructional language idea rather it did just an approval and continuation of what was already in place getting the green light by 1991 conference decision. Of course, we cannot deny that the 1994 education and training policy did relatively a compressive view in its legal document by providing due consideration to the pedagogical benefit of using mother tongue instructional language policies. At a clear statement, this policy stated that if we are in need of a change in the children learning capability, pedagogically, it is advisable to teach there by using mother tongue instructional language fully and this policy also underlined that the Ethiopian nation's nationalities and peoples have undeniable right to promote and well use their language without limit including in the formal school system. And, it is well stated that primary education will be provided using the nationality language (MoE, 1994).

2. Power relationships between the major actors in the policy process

For better understanding of the power relationship in the process of mother tongue instructional language policy, I have tried to adapt and use the PRINCE system of power analysis concept

which was initially modified and delivered by Fowler (2004) in order to map retrospectively and in a more comprehensive and meaningful manner.

To give an introductory idea on the issue of PRINCE, it needs to be known that the term is nothing new but it is an allusion to the politically field hand book of Machiavellian which Coplin and O' Leay (as cited in Fowler , 2004) referenced to develop a system of power analysis. Fowler, by using these writers background concept, he has done a great deal of work by modifying their work from having somehow five level scales. Here, in his three levels adjustment, he has leveled into strongly supportive (+3) to strongly opposed (-3) by nominating the zero value to the position indicator of neutral.

In the said PRINCE model, the probability of implementing a given policy idea is calculated by dividing the sum total of these who love the policy topic to the total number of those who failed to like the policy issue for instance just by not considering the negative sign if those who loved the policy topic are 89 and those who failed are 31, the general output according to the PRINCE model will be $(89+31)$ divided by 120 which is 74 % of it.

Policy Implementation

As it is clearly known that, although the background idea of using the mother tongue instructional language policy is written beautifully, the idea of trying to implement in to practice needs high care and wisdom since it means a lot to ethnically focused politicians. As a result of political sensitivity of the mother tongue instructional language issue, an adaption of it may have unique features that are worth to address it. To explain more on its special feature of policy implementation stage, the abruptness of the process needs to be considered well. In the trial of implementing the mother tongue instructional language policy, since it is awakened by the official provision of the policy, several ethnic group members and other concerned politicians' needs to be more involved. In our country's mother tongue instructional language policy

implementation period, though since this implementation is politically ethnically sensitive, sufficient time and due agreement with all concerned bodies were not done rather it was approved and implemented at an extremely rush manner (Ayalew , 1999, Wagaw , 1999) . It seems that while implementing and putting in practical work, this mother tongue instructional language policy, the regions failed to use various progressive and well directed policy implementation approach by perhaps the fear of their mother tongue language delay due to the professionals and politicians extra autocracy.

By keeping doing language implementation at rush, right after 1994, translation of a good number of Amharic language subject books changed into other Ethiopian ethnic languages quickly for all grade levels at similar time frame. Since, during implementation of written mother tongue instructional language in place introduced the use of new script of Cushitic Language, a short-term training for teachers who could speak the language with a different and a new type of script was a must. In trying to implement the mother tongue instructional in schools, since the good number of well experienced and qualified teachers and administrators were not speaking the intended local mother tongue language, they were removed and replaced by the local native language practitioners which purely seems political decision which needs to dominate the original language users without considering the content experience of those old and experienced professionals in doing so, the policy implementers purely compromised the expected quality of standards (Wagaw , 1999). For instance in Afar region, since they have also started to use there mother tongue instructional language policy, under qualified individuals like from grade 7 and 8 dropouts were being assigned to be teachers of the mother tongue instructional language subject and they have also assigned even to be Woreda's education office supervisors. More surprisingly, on top of using rush un- discussed mother tongue instructional language curriculum in use, there was no enough mother tongue instructional language materials at almost all

localities which affected the full-fledged usage of this language at schools. Surprisingly speaking, right after the unofficial and official implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy at curriculum, the national director of curriculum and instruction confessed that “the newly adopted media of instruction have little or no literacy stocks such as dictionaries, glossaries and other printed literature, (Dereje , 2001 P. 51). Having all these shortcomings and demerits, the mother tongue instructional language policy continued to be at work by being the regions instructional language curriculum in more than 25 local languages.

Material and Human Resources for the current Mother Tongue Instructional Policy

As it is obvious, for the proper implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy both human and material resources are vital. Well trained and motivated teachers as well as school administrators who can understand and speak the regional instructional language well are equally important for the proper implementation of the needed mother tongue instructional language policy in the selected regional areas. On top of this, since contemporary instructional materials prepared by considering the society's cultural make up are mandatory for the holistic implementation of mother tongue instructional language at primary school level.

Generally speaking, having sufficient human and material resources, as an educational input the implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy will definitely be effective. So, before going to any step, the availability of these resources need to be at hand so as to make a professional shift to use mother tongue instructional language at its proper place called primary schools. Similarly, the availability of well prepared reference books with supplementary enriching further reading materials which are prepared in the students mother tongue language is useful for making better teaching and learning process and get the needed academic achievement with a least cost.

As it is also clear that, since teachers are models of their students, they need to be well prepared and trained on their mother tongue language caliber which can be enriched through proper and quality preparation. At the mean time, teachers also need to address well their mother tongue teaching so as to be achieved easily. As a result of which, much effort and careful selection has to be given for the selection of mother tongue language teachers. Above all, the selected teachers need to have a good sense of interest towards the usage and teaching of the language. Right after the selection of teachers, sufficient pedagogical training has to be given by providing due time. Here, during the preparation of mother tongue instructional language teachers, the training has to be supported with practical on job training which is so vital for the mastery of the desired knowledge attitude and skills. Similarly, in-depth awareness and training has to be given for the practitioners concerning the diversity and different social groups of the society with variety of cultural backgrounds. One thing that needs to be underlined is that before just selecting individuals to be mother tongue local language teachers, they have to get enough awareness regarding the merits and scientific opportunities of teaching and learning by mother tongue.

Community Involvement for the Current Mother Tongue Instructional Policy

According to Ball (2010), providing education by using the local mother tongue language can support for the better understanding of technical, political and ideological for parents, communities and even for individuals themselves. However, though making teaching and learning process using mother tongue instructional language has greater importance for sustainable continuation of the language usage, the parents and communities' engagement and participation has a lot to do. With a strong support and involvement of parents and communities, the fruit of using the language can be seen vividly. If schools do have a strong parental involvement, they can support by building schools, supply resources from locally available things and help on selecting appropriate teachers for training.

Mother Tongue Language Awareness and Attitudes

The very implementation of mother tongue instructional language at school level can be affected both positively and negatively by the attitude and awareness of the given local communities. What so ever piece of cake idea and strong commitment is stated by the government, it cannot get comprehensive coverage and implementation without equally getting sufficient support and commitment by the local society at bottom level too. If the community failed to like the project, they can definitely affect it negatively. Therefore, government and other concerned stakeholders should do more on awareness creation and attitude change work, which is vital for the continual implementation of the mother tongue instructional language. One thing that needs to be understood is that if this mother tongue instructional language is going to be used as a medium of instruction for the very first time, people may not have an interest to use it fully since the old one already got economic, social and political roots. As a result of which, due time needs to be given for the gradual divorce from the already existed language. At this stage, continual involvement of local government bodies, the native language speakers and religious leaders are so fundamental for creating awareness on societies.

Problems in Implementing the Language Policy

As we equally know that for a proper implementation of mother tongue instructional language, proper and well designed planning is a must. And, without preparing a full-fledged and well-designed plan, the proper implementation of the mother tongue instructional language will definitely be at question. In this very section the three apparent problems emanate from the failure of proper planning presented as follows:

The first problem is the issue of having mixed communities. In line with this problem, in 1953, UNESCO recommended that if mixed groups are unavoidable, instruction should be in the language which gives the least hardship to the bulk of the pupils and special help should be given

for those who do not speak the language of instruction (UNESCO, 2003). Similarly, since the settlement of Ethiopian people are just living the dominant with the less dominant together, the problem mentioned by UNESCO can be seen if not well planned ahead of time. Such problem will definitely be worsened particularly in urban and sub urban areas. As per the decision of the political parties, in 1991 when the new policy was implemented, there was a problem of planning and no arrangement was done for children in these communities.

Right after looking the problems of various places, the Ministry of Education sent an urgent circular to various regions (Ref no .15 /1-94/19334/11) in November 1992 (Ayalew ,1999). In this circular, the Ministry of Education ordered to provide education to this problem provoked areas and communities using the previous AMHARIC language. In doing so, applying shift system or any other flexible strategy forwarded. However, the given exit strategy idea given by the Ministry of Education was not fully accepted till to the very near past. Rather, a good number of parents changed their children school to core areas where mixed communities are learning. (Hoben 1995).

The forced usage of mother tongue instructional language was the second problem that was seen while trying to implement the language policy. Here, the problem was despite the government suddenly changed the instructional language policy, the children who were not speaking this language due to the mixed nature of the communities creates another deep problem. The implementation of the mother tongue language failed to give the whom of that communities rather the ethnic mother tongue priority had got the primary selection, which made another mess on the age and learning interests of the children. Although a good numbers of studies have shown that children can learn better using their mother tongue as well as the UN (1989) *Convention on the right of the child* states that children shall not be denied to use their own language. However, the mixed nature of the communities has to be treated carefully (Hobben,

1995). By the same taken, another group of parents whose real need for language choice have been down played by political authorities. Dawro, Goffa, Gamo and Wolita were the special four ethnic groups whose mother tongue dialectics were forgotten and a new politically prepared language named by WOGAGODA was given to use it as a mother tongue instructional language against the interest of those four ethnic groups which again counted as the major problem seen during an introduction of mother tongue instructional language at southern nations of Ethiopia. The reason behind the policy makers probably was the shortage of sufficient resources for making instructional materials to each ethnic group whose dialectics are dynamic. The new politically created language lacked to be claimed by any groups and the very implementation had strong oppositions (Ayalew 1999).

As Ayalew well stated in his study, the interest and appeals of parents and community members were finally asked and the decision was reversed, but only after lives were lost and property was damaged (Ayalew 1999).

The failure of WAGAGODA clearly indicated that there was weakness at the sides of policy makers on understanding the multiple realities of people who were the major actors of implementing the language change (Fullan , 2000). In the cases of WAGADOGA , the policy makers not only missed and undermined the local realities and value systems of the communities but also the displaced the very goal of language of instruction that is the right of people for economic reasons .

The absence of local people caliber and capacity to practice decentralization was the third problem observed while implementing the mother tongue instructional language in Ethiopia. As Fowler (2000) clearly presented in his study that introducing a number of changes at the same time reduce the potential benefit of the policy endeavor.

When we see from the Fowler's point of view, a good number of policy initiatives in Ethiopia had similar mistakes of changing everything at rash. It needs to be clear that the new government not only changed the instructional language policy but also almost all text books, syllabus, and systems changed at an alarming rate in line with introduction of instructional language with no or sufficient time taken. Decentralization of educational organization and management, the introduction of new teachers career ladder, the adoption of new curriculum, and the development of a new system of financing public higher education are among the new policies that were adopted parallel to the mother tongue instructional language policy (MoE, 1994). Consequently, various education educational changes were done at early 1990s here in Ethiopia. However since it was far beyond the scope of this analysis, much will not be discussed. The writer's major intention here is to show that an inevitable problem of implementing mother tongue instructional language policy due to doing much fundamental educational changes as a result of political shift in the country which affected the very practicality of instructional language policy change.

Decentralization will be much more fruitful when it gets the will and capacity of various stakeholders. Trying to make several political changes using a top down approach will not be only practically weak but also suffers on acceptance as their own. (Ayalew, 2000). On top of it, lack of nexus between regional and local constituencies is also the problem emanated from decentralization. As a good number of researchers like Swanson, 2000, Gibton, Sabar and Goldering 2000 said that for the success of any country's decentralization act, well integrated efforts from all social groups and regions has to be given. If not, if we continue like having excessive regional variations in implementing the language policy at primary school level, the curriculum output will be below the expectation. To see it more, for example, our policy stated English language to be used as a medium of instruction for secondary and higher education.

However, some regions used it as a medium of instruction for grade 5, 7 or 9 which affect the equal regional language proficiency negatively and it create unfair variations across the country's students.

Conclusions

According to Hoben (1995) for promoting minority self-determination and empowerment, assigning decision-making about language use to respective ethnicity is the better way. It would be also important for making a number of opportunities of making their own relevant choices. Added to that, exercising similar language both at home and school minimized the difference between school language and home language (Krashe , 1997 & Rothstein 1990). Similarly, using similar mother tongue instructional language increases the commitment of parents to school issues promptly which help parents to make /get better information regarding their children (Rothstein 1998). Above all it will improve the learning performances of the students (Rodriguez, 1998). However, the above merits will be achieved if and only if when suitable conditions prevail.

The responsible policy makes underlined that the instructional mother tongue policy has proven to be a good tool for improving students learning. Above all , the policy has promoted a sense of realizing a sense of ethnic identity and community culture (MoE, 1991). The Ministry of Education also strongly believed that this mother tongue instructional policy has increased public awareness and participation in educational matters.

Even though the mother tongue instructional policy has brought a good trial for various regions, the low educational achievement of language minority students for whom the policy advocated was the big problem encountered. For instance, if we see the 2003 annual abstract of the MoE , regional disparities by primary school net enrollment rate range from the lowest 10 % to the highest 91.5 % . As we see from the data, the good numbers of language minority regional

groups show very low performance that is far down of the national average. To explain it more, for example in 2002/03 from the total students who took Ethiopian Higher Education Certificate Examination (EHECE) , no student from Afar and Gambella scored above 250 out of 400 (MoE). This data clearly shows to what extent the regional difference is too wide. Still, although a bit difference is seen between different regions, the policy failed to improve such big gaps for a number of years. In connection with this, one can ask very important question by saying for a number of years if we have such difference between regions, **what is the role of having such a policy?** This question is quite relevant for the betterment of such gaps and problems. To answer this important question, researchers and policy makers should revisit starting from the very language policy inception stage. In a situation where the most important stakeholders such as educators, parents, students and the entire regional peoples are excluded from the policy making process it is difficult to get and expect success and improvement from the instructional language policy even in the near futures too. Of course politicians may say we did this and we did that on mother tongue instructional language policy since they are the external policy agents orchestrated by themselves only.

Future Action

Honestly speaking, introducing mother tongue instructional language policy in the multicultural country's education system is too much vital and logical in pedagogical thinking too. However, making such instructional change activity has to be done by considering the local, the global and the stakeholders' reality as it is discussed briefly below.

1. For the better implementation of a given language policy issue, by learning from what we missed at least sufficient participation and dialogue has to be taken at large. The current mother tongue instructional language policy was assigned by the former EPRDF for the very purpose of political interest without sufficient stakeholders' involvement. Genuine

attention would be given to the students learning and for the national economic advancements if professionals were discussed on it. In the participation process, all concerned individuals including rival political parties, civic organizations, parents, students' teachers, educational administrator's religious leaders etc. has to be incorporated truly. In doing so, not only the quality of the policy improved but also the principle of democratic participation will be fulfilled and the outcome of the policy will be much better.

2. Before trying to implement mother tongue instructional policy, educational materials which are vital for the policy application (i.e. Students text book, teachers guide, syllabus, listening materials and other supplementary reading materials has to be prepared ahead of time.
3. It was also recommended that efficient and well trained mother tongue instructional language teachers has to be assigned to the schools and capacity building work has to be given to the already assigned once too so as to improve their knowledge of subject matter , teaching methods skill and continuous assessment techniques as well.
4. Since we are in an area of globalization, an educational activity and thinking has to be investigated from the perspective of beyond local thoughts. Now days, attention should not be given to mother tongue instructional language only without providing equal opportunity to English language and other global languages since in the 21 century the world is considered as single village using core languages like English. So, it is wise to incorporate international language variables for a better communication and computation with the entire globe.

5. Since our mother country is a country of more than 80 ethnic groups, the implementation of the current mother tongue instructional language were situated at a limited locality only, others were forced to receive a fabricated political language without considering their current local reality. And, failure result shown that making any educational activity leads to failure for a continual period of time. Therefore, for a better implementation of the policy agenda, by making detail feasibility study of localities a well-discussed local language usage has to be started.

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