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**Policy gaps which contribute to the low quality of education in Ethiopia**

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## **Abstract**

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This research aims to bring a better understanding on the challenges of the current education policy in Ethiopia. The current education policy in Ethiopia has been developed to bring a desirable quality education, yet education quality in Ethiopia is getting worse. Here one can assume that there are several factors contributing to the education policy gaps which consequently end up in low education quality in Ethiopia. This thesis attempted to see the problem of low quality education in Ethiopia in the light of the concept of institutional monocropping. The concept of institutional monocropping is all about imposing the blueprint of international donors without considering the local situation and context. Accordingly, this thesis has tried to answer the following question. "How does the institutional monocropping affect the current education policy which consequently contributes to the low quality of education in Ethiopia?" Finding of this thesis shows that internationalization of education policy particularly through the push to meet the MDG affects quality education. Since the MDGs provides uniform policy to all developing countries, it is likely to overlook the local need. For instance, the movement given to all developing countries to achieve UPE out of 100% is focused on quantity while the local need of the desirable education quality is overlooked. Moreover, finding of this thesis noted that, institutional monocropping is affecting the current education policy in Ethiopia by taking much its attention towards the supply side, which advocates having more teachers, schools and school materials, while neglecting the demand side which involves the real need of students, parents and the community. That is, however the demand side has mentioned in the policy, it remained as a paper value since it doesn't get enough attention. Hence result of the study show that there is a big policy gap between the demand and supply side. Particularly the demand side should come to the fore in order to bring the desirable quality education in Ethiopia.

**Keywords:** Education Policy, Ethiopia, quality, demand side, supply side, ESDP IV

## **Abbreviations**

EAS – Ethiopian academy of science

EFA- Education for All

ESDP- Education Sector Development Program

FTI - Fast track initiative

GEQIP – general education quality improvement package

GOE – Government of Ethiopia

ICT – Information and communication technology

MDGs - Millennium Development Goals

OECD –Organization for economic cooperation and development

TVTE – Technical, vocational, education and training

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UPE- Universal Primary Education

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## 1. Introduction

Education is a very important tool for development, and it is instrumental to reduce poverty and promote growth in a country. Children are expected to transform their lives and the society at large, as part of the outcome of their education. Bartlett and Burton noted that Education is a central force within society and is likely to play a significant part in shaping future generations (Bartlett and Burton, 2007). This means that education has a power to the extent that it decides the future socio-economical well being of a society. Ethiopia is one of the developing countries running to meet the universal primary education goal (UPE) by 2015. In this regard, over the past 15 years, the government of Ethiopia (GOE) has achieved unprecedented growth in universal primary enrollment, reaching up to a 95% national gross enrollment ratio. (USAID, 2012:45). Despite the impressive expansion in education provision over the past decade, many challenges such as early dropout of school and low education quality remained as a main problems. (<http://country.globalpartnership.org/ethiopia>) Particularly, the problem of a low-quality education has a high link to the early dropping out of school. For instance, the poor quality of education being delivered in the classroom, along with a variety of other social and economic factors, the primary education system as of 2009 experienced dropout rates at an average of 15% (23% in grade one, 15% in grade two, 11% in grade three) and repetition rates on average of 7% (USAID, 2012:45). Hence, in Ethiopia, from the pre-primary levels up to tertiary education, quality is the single biggest challenge and priority of the ministry of education (MOE), as well as for all donors and other stakeholders (USAID, 2012:45). Low-quality education is problematic because it is not accompanied by a learning outcome which can help students to come up with problem solving skills for themselves and the well-being of their community at large. In the case of Ethiopia, during the last decade, much has been done for education coverage while the issue of quality has been overlooked for a long time. As a result, though the numbers of those enrolled in primary schools is very high, the education students receive remains at a very low quality, making the increase in enrollment pointless, and keeping the dropout rates high (<http://capitalethiopia.com>). To keep the balance between access to education and its quality is the key. Hence, in basic education, Ethiopia's sector plan seeks a balance between providing access to the approximately 3 million children who remain out of

school and improving quality for the more than 15.8 million children enrolled in the 8-year primary cycle (<http://country.globalpartnership.org/ethiopia>).

On one side, the push by external blueprint to achieve UPE by 2015 advocates access and on the other side the decline in the education quality is a main challenge of the country. This paper takes the case of the current education policy in Ethiopia (ESDP IV), to investigate its tension between access to education and its quality. As indicated above, it is important to note that much has been done and tremendous progress has been shown in access to education yet it is still far to meet the target of UPE by 2015. Therefore the current education policy is in charge of achieving UPE and quality education. Here the dilemma is that even though the current education policy in Ethiopia is advocating quality, several studies are still showing that education quality in Ethiopia is getting worse. A workshop on quality of Primary Education in Ethiopia was recently organized by the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS). The workshop has underlined that ensuring quality at lower stages helps produce skilled human resources at higher levels. The former is the very basis for all progress and enables the laying of a solid foundation for the future (<http://www.ethpress.gov.et/>). The research paper presented in the workshop has shown that there is a great fall in education quality and it warns that the present scenario of declining quality in Ethiopian education will continue unless serious and urgent attention is given and measures are taken by all concerned bodies (<http://www.ethpress.gov.et/>). Where does the problem lay? Why does the education quality in Ethiopia getting worse and worse while the current education policy in the country has designed to ensure quality? What are the underline policy gaps which contribute to the low quality of education in Ethiopia?

In this thesis the researcher will going to investigate what factors are responsible for the current education policy gaps which are responsible for the current fall of education quality in Ethiopia. To do so, the researcher has intended to take the case of the current Ethiopian education policy (ESDP IV) and investigate it in the light of the concept of institutional mono-cropping theoretical framework which says that, institutional blueprints are being implemented without the contextual considerations of the recipient countries.

## **1.1 Aim of The Thesis**

This research aims at bringing a better understanding of the challenges of the current education policy in Ethiopia. In particular, this paper asks what factors are responsible for the policy gaps which contribute to the low quality of education in Ethiopia. The scope of the study has focused on the current Ethiopian education policy (ESDP IV), which lasts from 2011 -2015. This thesis chooses to focus on the current education policy because it has a dilemma that shows that it has designed to achieve quality, yet education quality in the country is getting worse. Hence, the objective of the research is based on the assumption that there are policy gaps which contributes to the low quality of education in Ethiopia. To investigate this objective, the researcher employs the perspective of institutional mono-cropping which says that, institutional blueprints are being implemented without the contextual considerations of the recipient countries. Furthermore, this thesis aims at bringing a fresh perspective on education quality in Ethiopia, for further studies and future policy development.

## **1.2 Research questions**

This research is framed by the following research questions.

How does the institutional mono cropping affect the current education policy which consequently contributes to the low quality of education in Ethiopia?

## **1.3 Definitions**

### **1.3.1 Defining Education Quality**

There is no one definition of the term quality. Dr. Mulu Nega noted that there is no universally agreed definition of the term quality which consequently different interpretations of stakeholders may diverse conceptualizations and approaches towards what constitutes quality education.

(<http://www.ethpress.gov.et/>). In this paper, the definition of quality education will be referring to that of the UNICEF declaration on quality education. The researcher chooses this definition, because it covers broaden point which allow for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context. (UNICEF, 2000)

According to the UNICEF declaration, quality education involves. Learners are healthy, well-nourished, ready to participate, and are supported in learning by their families and communities

(UNICEF, 2000). In this case it is important to note that student's health and their motivation to study is a vital part of quality education. In line with this argument, parents, family architecture and the community are the main factors affecting the student motivation. Moreover Gender-sensitive safe environment is vital to motivate girls in particular. From the school side content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas are the important part quality education (UNICEF, 2000). This means that outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (UNICEF, 2000).

#### **1.4 Disposition of The Thesis**

The first part of this thesis contains an introduction in which introduction to the area of research, aim of the thesis and the research question. In the following chapter the methodology employed to answer the research question has presented. In the methodology data sources and their reliability, their advantages and disadvantages and their strength and weakness are discussed. The third chapter presents the theoretical framework and the fourth chapter will provide with the analysis, which will investigate what factors in the education policy of Ethiopia might explain the low quality of education. Finally in the fifth chapter, this thesis will end with a conclusion by which summaries of the main points and arguments of the paper will be presented.

#### **1.5 Delimitations**

In the process of data collection it is very important to think about the boundaries of the study. Particularly, if the researcher is using secondary data, he/she has to be selective and prevent confusions which may appear as a result of trying to collect everything seems important. Bryman noted that, it is impossible to cover everything that has been written or said on the topic, therefore doing one's own research subjective in what is chosen relevant to one's own research (Bryman 2012: 544,551). There are many things to be discussed in relation to quality education; however, for this thesis, the researcher will only be focused on the case of the current education policy (ESDP IV) and its gaps to investigate the problem of low education quality in Ethiopia. More specifically, the researcher has intended to employ the concept of institutional monocropping to investigate the current education policy gaps which contributes to the low quality of

education in Ethiopia. This means that, since there might be other reasons for the current education policy gaps in Ethiopia, the researcher wants to delimit the thesis by choosing to discuss the problem of low quality education in Ethiopia from the perspective of the concept of institutional mono-cropping alone. Hence, it is important to note that one has to be very care full not to generalize that the institutional mono-cropping is the only reason for the education policy gaps which consequently contribute to the low quality education in Ethiopia.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Research method**

To answer the research question posed in this thesis, case study method has employed. According to Bryman, the case can be anything including school, family, organization, projects, policies etc. (Bryman 2008: 52). In line with this argument, this thesis will take the cause of the current Ethiopian education policy to investigate the policy gapes which contributes to the low quality education in the country. Bryman also argued that, what distinguishes a case study is that the researcher is usually concerned to elucidate the unique features of the case. (Bryman 2008: 54). Hence, this thesis will try to indicate specific features of the current education policy (ESDP IV) how it has influenced by external donors blueprint (institiutional mono-cropping).

### **2.2 Limitation and reliability of the Method**

Most case study has limitations on their external validity. External validity is the mesure to see if a single case has generalized beyond the text of the study. It is important to note that it is hard to generalize other countries education quality from the case of the current education policy in Ethiopia. There might be similar problem of education qulity in other countries as well but the way it happens may differ from country to country. Since countries have different context it is difficult to generalize (Bryman 2008: 52). Hence in this thesis the researcher recognizes this limitation to avoid generalization.

### **2.3 Data collection**

Secondary data will be used as a source in this study. In the process of data collection, education policy documents, different reports from the Ministry of Education and multilateral organizations, articles, books, journals and other relevant literatures are used. This technique is different from other techniques. Many of the research technics like: questioner, structured or

semi structured interview, structured observation and content analysis are extremely time consuming and expensive while the secondary analysis technique does not (Bryman 2008: 54). This means that, when the secondary analysis compared to other research methods, it is advantageous for it does not need much cost and time (Bryman 2008: 297). Apart from its advantage, the secondary analysis approach has limitation and question of reliability both in the process of data collection and analysis.

## **2.4 Limitation and Reliability of data**

Since the researcher has intended to use data collected by others, on one hand it is likely to face challenges such as lack of familiarity with data and no control over data quality in the process of data collection and on the other hand ethical problems and difficulty of reclaiming are big challenges in the analysis side. This means that, since the data is obtained from others, it is difficult for this thesis to hold on to various aspects of the data because of how it is coded and how it is organized. Bryman noted that a period of familiarization is necessary (Bryman 2008: 300). On the other hand, data quality control is the other challenge in the process of data collection. There is an argument that secondary analysis offers an opportunity for researchers to get far higher quality data than they could collect themselves (Bryman 2008: 300). However, the quality of secondary data needs to be checked since these data are used for the other purpose before the researcher intended to work with it. In line with this argument, Bryman noted that, data may not have been collected on an aspect of a topic that would have been of considerable interest (Bryman 2008: 300). Similarly lack of control over the quality of the secondary data may affect this thesis since it hinders the wide insight of the thesis and push the thesis to the interest of the data which might be driven by political or any other agenda. Hence the researcher should be very care full when it comes to the choice of genuine and relevant secondary data. From the analytical point of view, the reclaiming of qualitative data may be hindered by the secondary analysis's lack of insider's understanding of the social context within which the data are produced (Bryman 2008: 561). Hence, this research has to take a heed on secondary data claiming and interpretations since it might affect the research by leading to a wrong analysis and conclusion.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

This chapter will display the institutional mono-cropping theoretical framework used as a reference while doing the research.

#### **3.1 Institutional mono-cropping**

This thesis is based on the reference of institutional mono-cropping theory, which says that, institutional blueprints are being implemented without the contextual considerations of the recipient countries. According to (Evans, 2002), the dominant implementation of this insight, which has been trying to impose uniform institutional blueprints on the countries of the South – called as “institutional mono-cropping”.

The situation in which half the population of Sub-Sahara Africans (SSA) are still living below the poverty line shows the grief part of the continent. Who is responsible for this current situation in African? Some blame the governments in Africa. According to Bayart et.al, 1999, Fukuyama, 2004, Herbst, 2000 and Lockwood, 2005, governments in Africa are generally considered too weak, corrupt, or disinterested to take the lead in a development process (Holmén, 2010:11). Others have strong critics on the northern donors and INGOs that they impose their way of development through conditional aid. Holmén noted that the sad thing about development aid is that it is almost never given without string attached. (Holmén, 2010:221).

Here it can be argued that both the above arguments are contributory to the current situation in SSA. This means that, the weak stand and corrupt feature of SSA governments together with the “do what I say” approach of international donor make the situation in the region wors. Similarly one can understand the concept of institutional monocropping as it doesn't consider the contextual demand of the local situation. Holmén claimed the idea of (Borgin and Corbett, 1982,) that all the difficulties Africa is encountering stem from the fact that Africans have been forced in to a development that is not of their own choice and conclude that Africa should be left alone to find its own viable solution to their problem (Holmén, 2010:221). In this case it can be argued that the problem in SSA Africa may persist as it is unless the supply side of donors consider the real demand at the local context.

Ethiopia is the beneficiary of aid funds from intergovernmental donor organizations such as USAID, DFID and CIDA as well as IFIs and international NGOs (Pillay, 2010). Particularly in the Ethiopian education sector, NGOs are seen as service providers whose main role is the

modernizing of the Ethiopian education system in order to ensure economic and social development. Pilly as he continue his argument, he noted that in reality NGOs are not simply just service providers (Pillay, 2010). They work with government officials and play a major role in policy making, thereby having an impact on millions of Ethiopians who are attending government schools and who are learning a curriculum that has been influenced and often created by foreign “experts” (Pillay, 2010). Here one can argue that the policy provision forms the supply side of the international donors may harm the country since it doesn’t consider the context of the local people which reflects the concept of the institutional mono-cropping. In the current era, MDGs are the dominant development mainstreams. The current Ethiopian education policy underlined that the central objectives of the national strategies are to address the human development needs and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 (ESDP IV, 2010). However, the main critique on MDG is that it gives uniform development assignment to all the developing nations despite their local differences. Again one can see that there is still problem of overlooking the contextual demand of the nation while striving to meet the goal set by the external donors. Easterly argues that the MDGs are poor and arbitrarily designed to measure progress against poverty and deprivation in which their design makes Africa look worse than it really is (Easterly, 2007). Easterly, as he continues his argument, stated that he is not arguing that Africa’s performance is good in all areas; only that its relative performance looks worse because of the particular way in which the MDG targets are set. Moreover, setting targets in a particular way will make some regions look better and others look worse depending on a number of choices that any target-setting exercise must make (Easterly, 2007). In line with Evans argument one can say that development goals which are designed by externals without any consideration of the local situation fail in its evaluation. Evans also noted that, institutional mono-cropping rests on both the general premise that institutional effectiveness does not depend on fitting with the local socio-cultural environment, and the more specific premise that idealized versions of Anglo-American institutions are optimal developmental instruments, regardless of level of development or position in the global economy (Evans, 2004). This means that instead of looking for their own way of development, developing countries are taking the western patterns of development idea. That is, international organizations, local policy makers, and private consultants combine to enforce the presumption that the most advanced countries have already discovered the one best institutional blueprint for development and that its applicability

transcends national cultures and circumstances (Evans, 2004). For instance, the Ethiopian government is willing to simply continue the modernizing education programs which have been convinced by the international community that only “modern” education is the answer to the problems facing sub-Saharan African nations (Pillay, 2010). If poor countries were able to simply start using the stock of ideas that rich countries have already accumulated, their growth rates would skyrocket in theory; However in practice, taking advantages of other people’s ideas turns out to be anything but simple (Evans, 2002:5). Overall, Evans noted that there are strong analytical arguments why institutional mono-cropping is unlikely to improve the developmental performance of the individual countries on which it is imposed; A broader critique argues that, even if institutional mono-cropping were to improve performance in individual countries, global uniformity in the organization of national political economies would still be a risky proposition (Evans, 2004: 4).

This theoretical framework is relevant to answer the research question of this paper. Since the researcher wants to see how donors blueprint influence the local education policy, it may expose some of the reasons why the current education policy in Ethiopia end up in poor quality. As indicated in the theoretical framework, the main challenge is a perspective difference between the international donors and the local contextual situation. Hence this thesis aimed at investigating the education sector policy gaps in Ethiopia, in the light of the concept of institutional mono-cropping.

### **3.2 Institutional mono-cropping and The Demand-Supply side policy**

In this theoretical framework, the researcher also wants to present the link between institutional mono-cropping and demand-supply side of the current education policy in Ethiopia. The Supply side of the education policy refers to the school supplies such as more trained teachers, more school buildings, school materials and infrastructures. On the other hand the demand side implies the demands of students, parents and the community at large.

As indicated previously, the situation in which developing countries are striving to meet the targets of the MDGs and education for all (EFA), can be mentioned as an evident for the external blueprint implementation in all developing countries despite their contextual difference. The concern of MDG in the education sector is to insure universal primary education (UPE) by 2015.

Based on this frame work international donors gave much emphasis on the supply side to meet the goal. In Ethiopia the general education quality improvement program (GEQIP) is the integral part of the current education policy; which has a strong focus on improving equity and access to meet the agenda of the MDGs (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>). Under this agenda, the program mainly seeks to increase investment in key inputs, such as textbooks, teacher training and development, and school infrastructure improvements; which implies the supply side. The hegemony supply side is clear on the current education policy in Ethiopia. The main reason behind this hegemony steams from the fact that international donors are imposing their approach to meet the MDG target out of 100%. Hence, the supply side stands for the interest of external donors without much consideration on the local context. Such institutional mono-cropping approach puts many developing countries in competition to meet the MDG without considering their own agenda at local level. Without questioning the supply, developing countries are in race to report their achievement in percentage; increasing schools, teachers and school materials. This thesis is not denying the importance of supply side in the policy. However it is important to note that the supply side is only a part of the battle to improve the education sector in Ethiopia. The demand side of the policy is the other part which plays a key role to improve the education sector in Ethiopia. The main point here is that a country may have mere schools, teachers and school materials from the supply side which is good; however if these supplies are not accompanied by the demand side (students, parents and communities motivation), it may result in low quality of learning outcomes and early drop outs. In Ethiopia, notwithstanding major investments in improving the numbers and the qualifications of teachers and the availability of equipment, student achievement has not sufficiently improved (ESDP IV, 2010). Hence, in contrary to the line of institutional mono-cropping, the demand side of a policy underlines the importance of contextualization and it works on the real needs of the community at local level. Quality education, should involve, learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities (UNICEF, 2000).

## **4. Background and Context**

### **4.1 Background**

#### **4.1.1 Current education policy in Ethiopia (ESDP IV)**

It was in 1997 Ethiopia came up with new education policy. This policy is called as: Education sector development program (ESDP). During the last decade, Ethiopia had passed through (ESDP I), (ESDP II), and (ESDP III). During those times much has been done on the education coverage which is highly backed by the MDGs to meet the universal primary education by 2015. Although in the last 15 years Ethiopia has shown tremendous progress in school enrollment, children drop out of school early, and low quality learning outcomes remain the main problems. Particularly the lack of quality education considered to be the major problem which contributes to the early drop and make the enrollment meaning. This means that, enrollment without quality education may pull the people back to the illiterate ring in terms of their contribution to their own life wellbeing and their nation development at large. According to a fast track initiative (FTI), in many low-income countries students learn virtually nothing and end up functionally illiterate (<http://www.globalpartnership.org>).

In Ethiopia, the current education policy (ESDP IV) which lasts between 2010/11 – 2014/15 has intended to bring the desirable education quality. Accordingly, the main targets of ESDP IV to improve student achievement through a consistent motivational and child-friendly learning environment (ESDP IV, 2010). Preventing early dropout of school is also another aim of ESDP IV. This includes development of programs which help attract the unreached and the disadvantaged into school and ensure that they complete a basic education (ESDP IV, 2010). In the current education policy Ethiopia is also working on adult literacy improvement. Despite the fact that Ethiopia is doing on adult literacy through the program functional adult literacy (FAL), the number of illiterates has remained high and, for reasons of justice as well as economic and social development, efforts need to be strengthened to build partnerships against illiteracy. (ESDP IV, 2010) To improve access to technological vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education without sacrificing quality is another target for the current education policy in Ethiopia. The strengthening of the capacity for knowledge creation, in particular in the domain of science and technology which takes 70% portion is the guideline for the TVET and higher educational students (ESDP IV, 2010) Moreover ESDP IV aimed at improving educational administration at all levels. In this case the policy is intended to bring

further improvement on the effectiveness of the educational administration at all levels, through capacity development and the creation of motivational work environments. (ESDP IV, 2010)

According to the above points, ESDP IV divides the Ethiopian education system as general education, TVET and higher education level, and adult trainings.

The general education includes: early childhood, primary, secondary education and adult literacy. Concerning the early childhood stage, the policy put forward the importance of establishing early child care and education (ECCE). At the primary/elementary level the focus of the policy is to overcome problems of student repetition and drop-out and to make sure that access to primary education universalized by 2015. At the secondary education level the number of secondary schools and classrooms will be increased with special attention to rural, pastureland, underserved areas in order to decrease distance between schools and homes (ESDP IV, 2010). In the expansion of preparatory secondary schools, the principle that one preparatory secondary school will be at the center of three general secondary schools will be followed (ESDP IV, 2010).

For TVET level, the goal is to create a competent, motivated, adaptable and innovative workforce and to transfer accumulated and demanded technologies in Ethiopia, thus contributing to poverty reduction and social and economic development through facilitating demand-driven, high quality technical and vocational education and training, relevant to all sectors of the economy, at all levels and for all people. A number of rich/advanced Medium and small enterprises created through the transferred technologies (ESDP IV, 2010).

For higher education, the goal is to develop highly qualified, motivated and innovative human resources and produce and transfer advanced and relevant knowledge for socioeconomic development and poverty reduction with a view to turning Ethiopia into a middle-income country by the year 2025. Here, the student learning, personal growth and employability through high quality higher education and relevant professional mix in particular in science and technology is the key. (ESDP IV, 2010)

Concerning adult literacy, the policy pointed out that, without a significant increase in the adult literacy rate, Ethiopia will not be able to achieve a middle-level income status within a foreseeable time. (ESDP IV, 2010) Many illiterate adults are living in the rural area where agriculture is the base of their living. In this case, education plays a very important role in

uplifting their economy through a better yield in their agriculture and more importantly it helps their children to stay in school longer and achieve more. (ESDP IV, 2010)

For the current education policy in Ethiopia, general education quality improvement Package (GEQIP) is an integral part. Pillay noted that, this package which was developed in 2007, comprised six pillars like: Civics and Ethical education, Curriculum, Information Communications Technology, Management and Leadership, School Improvement Program and Teacher Development (Pillay, 2010). The current policy itself also noted that development of teachers and leaders; curriculum, textbooks and assessment; planning of school improvement and of resource use by schools; the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), school infrastructure and management of the educational system are the main components of GEQIP. (ESDP IV, 2010) In this case one can argue that, the current education policy in Ethiopia is highly working on providing imputes to the education sector, expecting more access to education with its desirable quality.

The policy objective and the education system mentioned above show how Ethiopia is trying to improve the education quality at all levels. In the policy one can also understand that Ethiopia is still struggling to meet universal primary education by 2015, which is designed by the MDGs. For instance, the fact GEQIP has strongly focused on improving equity and access so as to improve completion is an evident that the current education policy has influenced by the agenda of the MDGs (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>). Under this agenda, the program mainly seeks to increase investment in key inputs, such as textbooks, teacher training and development, and school infrastructure improvements. However, education quality in Ethiopia is getting worse despite the significant investment in those inputs. That is, deteriorating trends in student achievement is the main challenge in the current education policy in Ethiopia.

## **4.2 The context of Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is a large landlocked country, located in the horn of Africa. In the country there are about 85 ethnic groups which make the country home for very diverse ethnic and linguistic people. Ethiopia is the second largest populous country next to Nigeria with the total population of 86 million (<http://www.undp.org/ethiopia>). As other countries in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the country is combating against poverty. Recently Ethiopia has considered as

fastest growing country with its non oil producing economies in Africa. The agricultural sector accounts for 80% of employment and remains the major source and the focus of the country's growth but other sectors, such as service and industry, are increasingly gaining importance. (<http://www.undp.org/ethiopia>).

Among others the education sector is one of the development tools in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia modern education has a long history. It introduced a century ago, during king Minelik II. In the Ethiopian education sector history, 'Menelik II School' was the first school. This first school was remarkable for it brought the beginning of modern education with about 100 students. However, by then the children of farmers, poor nations and nationalities were not allowed to access education. That is education was accessible only by the higher class people. This system had also persisted in the following rule of emperor Hilesilase. That is, most people were marginalized not to access education. Access to education had been relatively improved after the rule of emperor Hilesilase; during the Derg regime. It was during that time most Ethiopians could get the access to education due to the action taken by the state to eliminate illiteracy. However, the problem with the Derg regime was that the structure of the education system was totally designed to advocate the socialist philosophy and communist ideology which in turn resulted in poor quality non-relevant education. The current government came to power after the downfall of the Derg regime, in 1991. Since then major reforms have been taken on the education sector which education and training considered as key to a rapid socioeconomic growth of the country. The current structure of the educational system includes: pre- primary, primary, secondary and tertiary educations. The pre-primary period is a period of preparation for formal education. Both primary and secondary educations incorporate two cycles. Primary education the first cycle from grade 1 - 4 aimed at basic education while the second cycle from 5 - 8 focusing on general primary education and trainings. At the high school level the first cycle includes grades 9 - 10 which enable students identify their interest in their future education while the second cycle from grade 11 – 12 help students to choose subjects or area of study for their higher education and future job. After high school students may join higher institutions or technical and vocational schools (TVET) according to their competency and interest. Today the number of colleges universities and TVETs all together account over 155 all over the country owned by both the state and privet sectors.

## **5. Analyses**

While doing the analysis, the researcher has considered using the concept of institutional monocropping, the definition of quality education employed in this paper and the back ground given above. In the light of the concept of institutional monocropping, the researcher assumed and analyzed that there are a policy gaps between the demand and supply sides of the current education policy in Ethiopia. Moreover, the impacts of internationalizing education policy and the local need are also analyzed as a policy gap and factor which contributes to the low quality of education in Ethiopia.

### **5.1 Demand and Supply sides**

#### **5.1.1 The Supply Side**

According to the definition given in section (1.3.1), quality education should involve the demand, supply and outcome sides in balance. The supply side includes: providing more trained teachers, more schools and infrastructures, more books and other school materials. The ministry of education (MOE) noted that under ESDP IV, more attention has given to the quality of facilities (ESDP IV, 2010). This means that the current policy tends to have more investment on the supply side. Notwithstanding major investments in improving the numbers and the qualifications of teachers and the availability of equipment, student achievement has not sufficiently improved (ESDP IV, 2010). In most cases improving the supply side leads to the achievement in access to education. However, the gains in access are of little meaning if they are not accompanied by improving student learning (ESDP IV, 2010). In this case, it can be argued that the push to insure access to education, which is the main agenda of the MDGs, is still influencing the current education policy mostly from the supply side. Though Ethiopia believed that the current policy should turn its focus on educational quality, the central objectives of these national strategies still hold on the agenda to address the human development needs and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 (ESDP IV, 2010). That is, the Ethiopian government, in partnership with donors, is heavily investing in improving access to education (<http://www.developmentprogress.org>). Critiques on the MDGs show that it has a uniform approach to all the developing countries, even though they are different in their

contextual status. In the case of Ethiopia, because of the push to the universal primary education goal for 2015, access to education rose to 95% while problems early dropout and low quality of education remain high. In this case since the goal the same for all developing countries, they are in competition to meet 100% in their universal primary education. Universal Primary education is still central to the current education policy in Ethiopia. The current policy underlined that the central objectives of these national strategies are to address the human development needs and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 (ESDP IV, 2010). In line with this point, the development progress organization also underlined that the key measures in the Ethiopian current education policy include: abolishing school fees, increasing expenditure on school construction and maintenance and hiring and training thousands of new teachers, administrators and officials. (<http://www.developmentprogress.org>) This study is not denying that investment on the supply side is contributory; however, it is important to note that the supply side is just a part of the battle to achieve quality education. The supply of more teachers, schools and school materials is important but it can't be equated with quality education. In this case the current policy itself noted that the major investments in improving the numbers and the qualifications of teachers and the availability of equipment couldn't sufficiently improved student achievement (ESDP IV, 2010). As noted above, the problem with the policy of most developing countries is that it is too much focused to meet the MDGs by 2015. This means that Ethiopia has to be very careful not to give over emphasis on the supply side to meet the MDGs 100% which may achieved at the expense of quality.

In order for the supply side to play its role in quality education, it has to be provided according to the need of different regions, taking their context into consideration. For instance the need in the urban area is different from the rural areas. Particularly books and curriculum provision need to concede the context of the recipients. (Pillay, 2010), argued that, the education system that has come into being in Ethiopia is a Westernized system not suited to the ways of the majority of Ethiopians. Pilly as he continues his argument, he noted that, the Ethiopian government is willing to simply continue the modernizing education program of previous governments, having been convinced by the international community that only "modern" education is the answer to the problems facing sub Saharan African nations (Pillay, 2010) It is difficult to achieve a quality education, unless those trained teachers, books and school materials are contextualized. This

means that what matters for quality education is not what we supply but how that supply be used in contextual level.

### **5.1.2 The Demand Side**

The demand side education policy is a policy that gives much attention to the real demand of students, parents and the community at large in their day to day lives. Student achievement can be determined by in school and out of school factors. The in school factors can be explained from supply side perspectives such as: increasing the number of, and upgrading, school buildings, enough books, eliminating school fees and providing well equipped teachers. This paper in part (5.1.1) argued that the supply side has a dominant position in the policy. And as a result of this hegemony during the last decade Ethiopia has highly progressed in access to education, while early drop out of school and low quality of education are the main challenges remained in the country. Counting number of enrolled students without considering their full enrollment with the desirable luring outcome (quality education) is meaningless for the individual and the country at large. So to meet the desirable quality, it is important to give attention to those factors affecting student motivation out of their school. This means that beside the supply provided in school, it is also important to see the demand side which fills the gap that affect students not to use the supply provided.

The demand side believes that active participation of students, parents, families and communities are vital to meet quality education. In line with this argument this paper claims the definition of UNICEF, which underlines that quality education, should involve, learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities (UNICEF, 2000). In this case, students should get health service and be well-nourished so that they can be ready to participate and learn. When it comes to the family, household income, parents' educational level, household composition are some of the factors that affect the student achievement. Moreover, values and cultures of the community are other factors that determine student achievement.

An income poverty is the first determinant factor which pool students back from using their full potential in their study for a qualification learning outcome. Income poverty occurs in the family, who has a low income. Though it differs from urban to rural poverty is a main challenge in

Ethiopia. To combat this poverty, poor households in the rural and urban areas involve their children in the process of income generation. For such family, sending their children to school has considered as loss of children's wages, or the loss of children's unpaid labor on the family farm or doing household chores (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>). There are students both in the urban and rural areas who are working to help their family and try to learn at the same time. Since these students are not doing out of their best, their learning outcome is very low and they are likely to drop out early. In this case, the strength of the challenges differs from household to household according to the number and structure of the family. In the Ethiopian context, it has been argued that, the greater the number of children within a family taken as the greater availability of labor in the household for agricultural and domestic work; which means that children with older siblings are less likely to drop out of school, as labor burdens are shared among other family members (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>). Here it is important to note children are still sharing the burden of the family. Hence as long as children are not free to focus on their education it is difficult to see their achievement. Though the current education policy proclaimed free fee schooling, still there are indirect costs like clothing, feeding and loss of payable jobs for the children. This clearly indicates that students and their family are demanding support in different ways to send their children to school and achieve the desirable learning outcomes.

To set free students from the burden they have among their family, introducing school meal, cash and in kind transfers are some of the solutions. Cash and/or in-kind transfers to poor households can be conditional on school attendance; that is, donors and the government have recently launched a safety net initiative in food insecure areas which provides food or cash transfers as long as children are sent to school (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>). Here it is important to note that, the desirable learning outcome cannot be achieved if this aid is given for the purpose of attendance alone. Hence, following up their achievements in the class should be included in the children's bright future. Apart from the direct support in cash or in kind, it is important to fill the gap in the demand side by working on adult literacy programs and technological assistances to the community.

Concerning the adult literacy program, it is good that the current education policy pointed out that, children with literate parents stay in school longer and achieve more (ESDP IV, 2010).

Adult literacy programs, with more emphasis to mothers can be associated with a significant decline in infant mortality and improved child health, reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS (ESDP IV, 2010). Educated parents also expected to have better life skills to manage their wealth. That is they have a knowledge, how to generate income, how to spend and save their money. Here it can be claimed that, there are clear connections between literacy levels and both economic output and GDP capital growth(ESDP IV, 2010). Hence, the current policy tends to focus towards functional adult literacy (FAL) to ensure the active participation of the newly literate population into social and economic development, within an overall framework to promote adult education with special focus on women(ESDP IV, 2010). Particularly, in the rural area, however this program is responsible to change the lives of children, it is not progressing in the country in such an expected pace. That is, it can be argued that lack of attention to such demand side can be mentioned as one of the reasons for the current deterioration of education quality in Ethiopia.

Concerning the awareness and technical assistance to the community, the current policy indicated that more emphasis should be given to the science and technology. The 70% and 30% policy has adopted with the placement objective for sciences & technology (S&T) and social/human sciences (SHS) respectively (ESDP IV, 2010). In this case one can argue that this policy may lead Ethiopia to education quality target, particularly through providing technical assistance to the family who are struggling with labor intensive farming which needed their child labor at home. The young life organization noted that, Labor-intensive activities which are the basis of the increase in the incomes and assets of poor households should explicitly consider their impact on child wellbeing and new agricultural technologies must be promoted to enable children to attend and achieve in school (<http://www.younglives.org.uk>). Here it is important to note that , such technological provision has two fold benefit for countries like Ethiopia where 80% of its population are living based on agriculture in the rural area. On one hand this scientific way filling the demand side may help the household to get more production and increase their income. On the other hand, it has a great role in breaking the poverty cycle. Anneka Knutsson, underlined the importance of education for breaking the cycle of poverty and stressed the need to fight poverty with education. (<http://capitalethiopia.com/>) That is, at first, this technological provision makes the children free from their burdens at home and they will have more time to attend and achieve in their education. And then, since these children can give attention to their education

they will come up with their learning outcomes which may impact the well being of their children and the generation to come.

## **5.2. Internationalizing education policy**

Baker and Wiseman, noted that the education model which is highly dominated by the western policy discourse, is prevalently exported to less developed societies via international aid organizations, including the IMF and World Bank (Baker and Wiseman, 2005) 261 In the case of Ethiopia, the current guidelines for educational policy is defined in the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP), which was first formulated by federal education officials including foreign experts working with World Bank officials before being sent to regional and local area (woreda)officials for comments (World Bank, 2008). Here it is important to note that foreign experts have a great role in policy making to push developing countries to achieve the MDGs set by the international aid organizations like the World Bank and IMF. According to MDGs target #2 every developing countries should meet universal primary education by 2015.

Internationalizing education policy creates a policy gap in the current education policy of Ethiopia. It is disadvantageous in two ways.

On the one hand it neglects quality since its focus is on quantity. Easterly noted that, the main problem with MDGs is that it doesn't set the goals in terms of absolute changes rather it evaluates its achievement in terms of percentage of (Easterly, 2009) This means that, since governments in developing countries are running to meet the MDGs out of 100%, they are trying to increase the percentage or the quantity while quality is neglected. This is what exactly happened in Ethiopia; using number of student enrollment just for the purpose of report in percentage, while quality is over looked. When the focus on enrollment overwhelms the concern of quality, it may harm the individual and the nation development at large, since enrollment without learning outcomes is meaningless.

On the other hand internationalizing education policy doesn't consider the contextual need of the country.( Pillay 2010), argued that the education system that has come into being in Ethiopia is a Westernized system and not suited to the ways of the majority of Ethiopians. Internationalizing policy is characterized by implementing one kind of policy in different countries regardless of

their contextual position. Given these patterns of global educational standardization, convergence, and wholesale lending and borrowing of policy reform ingredients, a family of universal reform targets appears on the reform agendas of countries worldwide, whatever their level of development (Baker and Wiseman, 2005). According to (Evans, 2002), the dominant implementation of this insight, which has been trying to impose uniform institutional blueprints on the countries of the South –called as “institutional mono-cropping”. Pillay in Escobar, 1995, also mentioned that, this externally imposed and constructed homogeneity-project denies the “capacity of people to model their own behavior and reproduce forms of discourse that contribute to the social and cultural domination” (Pillay 2010). In this case it is important to note that a policy which doesn’t consider the cultural context and capacity of the local people will fall in its implementation. In the Ethiopian case, at primary school level the current education policy is still focused on expansion, because of the push to meet UPE by 2015. At the high school level introduction of the plasma TV program is affecting the education quality since it is out of the context which students couldn’t observe enough skill from it and the sad part is that it makes the teacher passive. At the TVET and higher education level the 70:30 strategy which aims to equip more students in science and technology is a good plan but since 80% of the population of Ethiopia is living in rural area with the base of agriculture as their livelihood, the program still has to be contextualized in such a way. In line with this argument, this paper claims the definition of UNICEF which underlines that quality education should involve: outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. This means that quality education equip students with problem solving skills and knowledge among their society.

## **5. Conclusion**

This researcher has raised the following questions at the beginning of this paper: “How does the institutional mono cropping affect the current education policy which consequently contributes to the low quality of education in Ethiopia?” The main problem with the current education policy in Ethiopia is that it is gating worse despite being designed to ensure quality. The reseracher first tried to identify some policy gaps in the light of the concept of institutional mono-cropping. And proceed to investigate how the identified policy gaps contribute to the low quality of education in Ethiopia. Finding of this thesis show that institutional monocropping affects the

current education quality in Ethiopia by creating policy gaps between the demand and supply side as well as between the international donors and the contextual needs.

It has been noted that overemphasis on the supply side is one of the reasons for the low quality of education in Ethiopia. This paper underlined that this supply side is just a part of the battle in order to achieve quality education. This means that though the supply side of the policy has provided with more teachers, school buildings, books and other school materials; it is not enough and it cannot be equated with quality education. Since the current education policy ESDP IV is set to expire in two years, this paper strongly highlights the importance of the demand side to use education as a tool to break the poverty cycle. The demand side gives much more attention to the real situation and needs of the students, parents, family and the community at large. Particularly, freeing children from any burden in their family is key. Adult education for parents and technical support, like introducing technologies which may replace the child labor, are two demand perspectives which need to be done to get children to school and allow their full attention to be used for better learning outcomes.

Moreover, it was noted that the theory of institutional mono-cropping is responsible for the low quality of education in Ethiopia. As assumed in the theory, the analysis show that international donors are implementing their policies without considering local contextual need. Given that the majority of the population of Ethiopia are living in rural area, the question should be raised to realize which kind of education is relevant to the country. MDGs which pushes all developing countries to meet the target by 2015, regardless of contextual difference and its consequential local policy twists, shape the local policy in the donor's interest are the main points to take a hold on. The research also shows that the rush to meet the MDGs goals 100% , and its focus on quantitative attainment, led to the quality of education being neglected.

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