

# Education Projects in Ethiopia: are they democratic?

A case study on Official Development Assistance



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# Abstract

It would be difficult to argue that an uneducated society in today's world would persevere beyond that of an educated; education has become an essential key to survival. It has been considered "a foundational driver of development which furthermore helps create self-reliance, economic growth, direction to better health and even democratic societies" (Usaid.gov, 2019). If one considers that claim alone, it is no wonder the developing world's education system lives in such peril. So, where is the helping hand and what is being done? Having become a top priority amongst international donor agencies in development projects, achieving quality education is officially the next step after increasing access to education. As a curious student in development studies, I am taking this opportunity to research one of the widely mentioned nations, Ethiopia, to discover the democratic extent of development projects and what the goal of achieving quality education has become in the arena of foreign aid and education projects. I have chosen to appeal through a democratic lens, and qualitatively analyzed education projects implemented by JICA and DFID in such a manner.

*Key words:* Ethiopia, Education Projects, Democratic Theory, International Organizations, Official Development Assistance

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## List of Abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
IO	International Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MoE	Ministry of Education
ODA	Official Development Assistance

# 1. Introduction

It would be difficult to argue that an uneducated society in today's world would persevere beyond that of an educated; education has become an essential key to survival. Education has been considered "a foundational driver of development which furthermore helps create self-reliance, economic growth, direction to better health and even democratic societies" (Usaid.gov, 2019). If one considers that claim alone, it is no wonder the developing world's education system lives in such peril. So, where is the helping hand and what is being done? Having become a top priority in development projects amongst international donor agencies, achieving quality education is officially the next step after increasing access to education. As a curious student in development studies, I am taking this opportunity to research one of the widely mentioned nations, Ethiopia, to discover the democratic extent of education development projects and what the goal of achieving quality education has become in the arena of foreign aid and development assistance. I have chosen to appeal through a democratic lens, and will analyze education projects implemented by donor agencies in a qualitative manner. The following text in this section will introduce the background, the purpose of conducting this research, the specific aims and furthermore my research questions.

## 1.1 The case of Ethiopia

While not overly divulging into Ethiopia's past governments, this section will explain the current government in Ethiopia and the relationship it has with the education system. Through the provision of a general background, this section will also go into exactly from where Ethiopia's education system receives foreign aid. It will provide the reasoning behind why I have chosen to analyze education projects in democratic terms and why it is an exemplary case for the future of the nation and solidifying a democracy.

In 2018, for the first time in 28 years, Ethiopia experienced a game changing coup d'état of the long reigning Trigrayan group (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018). After years of political corruption, ethnic tensions and violence the people of Ethiopia rallied together and elected a new prime minister: Abiy Ahmed. A few critical points should be made in order to understand

the importance of this regime change and why it is believed to promote progress in the nation's development towards democracy. First, a deep rooted problem in Ethiopia's government, aside from corruption, has come simply from the size of the country itself. Since Ethiopia has a federal structure made up of 9 regional states and two city administrations, it would be an understatement to state ethnic tensions exist amongst these regions. The ethnic tensions alone are believed to stem much of the political disparities (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018). However, such contentions have been the source of many regime transitions in Africa. If the contending groups make use of the structure of opportunities and constraints embedded in the inherited political institutions and cohere around a single leader, the solidification of a transition is more likely to occur (Bratten & van de Walle 2002, p. 272). The second point worth mentioning is Abiy Ahmed's meritable background, both ethnically and personal. Representing the already dominating allied ethnic groups, the Prime Minister has had the ability to both unify the country in an unimaginable way and mature the state's ethnic federalism (ibid.). This accomplishment extends beyond the borders of Ethiopia as he continues to nullify conflict in neighboring nations as well. In addition, his personal merits alone have proven him an exemplary candidate: from being formally educated to the extent of having completed a Ph. D in peace and security to now being awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. In this light the road to democracy, could be argued, has never been more clear. Hence my growing curiosity on the up-looking prospects of the nation, it has hopefully been made apparent Ethiopia is facing an opportunistic transition that makes it a case worth researching further.

Experiencing such a transition means change, and one of the most noteworthy changes is the government's relationship to the education sector. With the vision to become a middle-income country by 2025, Ethiopia is undergoing its fourth macro-economic development program. In pursuit to achieving this transformation, included in the program is a central objective that wishes to expand access to high-quality basic education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). Two main goals were thereafter identified to accomplish said vision: the first was to improve quality primary education to ensure all children, youth and adults acquire the competencies, skills and values needed to fully participate in the nations development; the second goal was to sustain equitable access to such education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). However, as Ethiopia is a diverse nation made up of over 95 million inhabitants, spreading education and ensuring equitable access has presented a number of challenges (Fiseha 2018). The projected costs for this program has produced a funding gap that cannot be afforded by the government alone. Therefore the government together with help from the

Ministry of Education (MoE) has sanctioned in the development plan (ESDP V), to improve this sector, an alignment between donor agency partners and non-governmental organizations to aid in reducing the financing gap (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015).

To reiterate, the case I have presented on Ethiopia should now indicate the current political environment and the relationship it has with the education sector. As stated, the government has agreed to work with donor agencies for the sake of improving basic education in the nation. The following discussion, therefore, introduces and defines the type of foreign aid as well as the two contributing agencies of which will be the basis of this research. To begin, it is necessary to elaborate the form of foreign aid on which I will focus. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries. The DAC adopted ODA as the standard of foreign aid in 1969 and it has since remained the main source of financing for development aid (Oecd.org, 2019). According to Riddell (2007), since the early 2000's the DAC has made very specific reforms to their process of aid-giving with respect to achieving greater impact. Such reforms include ensuring aid is better aligned to that of recipient priorities, channelling aid to where it is most needed and can be best used, reducing conditionalities attached to aid-giving and ensuring aid is provided within a longer time frame (Riddell 2007, p. 45). Included in ODA are both loans and grants, of which is received depends on the financial situation of the nation. Ethiopia is, as of 2016, the largest recipient of ODA; extending to roughly 4.1 billion U.S dollars (Oecd.org, 2019). Some of the top countries contributing to the development of Ethiopia's primary education system are Japan and the UK. I have chosen these countries because they are each members of DAC, provide bilateral aid and have agencies working with education projects in Ethiopia. More on the actual donor agencies and their efforts will be discussed later preceding the analysis. However, from this discussion sprouts the wonder of ODA's intentions and the goals of the aid. While ODA claims to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries, how does it fare in the case of Ethiopia? Existing research has emphasized the importance of this acknowledgement and how the failure to do so not only leads to inaccurate predictions about the impact of aid but also fails to understand its pervasiveness (Meyer 2013; Riddell 2007). The coming sections will thus dissect this ponder.

## 1.2 Scope

Before introducing the scope of this thesis and why I have chosen such a topic to research, it must first be clarified that there is a great lack of prior research involving any democratic analysis of education projects in developing countries. The mass majority of research is limited to project evaluations and outcomes or the democratic legitimacy of the agencies, neither of which consider the democratic nature of such efforts. Therefore to fill this gap, and out of academic interest, I have chosen to attempt such an analysis; an analysis that takes into consideration the democratic qualities and morals we in the western world hold so dearly.

When considering the western world, it can be stated that democracy has thus far been a model of government that has proven socially, economically and politically fruitful— even with its shortcomings. It is a concept that dates back to ancient times, but to an extent remains a political system of which members regard one another as political equals that are collectively sovereign and possess all the capacities, resources and institutions necessary to govern themselves (Dahl 1989, p. 1). In light of this, when considering the developing world from a western perspective, democracy has been the obvious choice and recommendation for sustaining development. And it is with this presumption the international arena embarked on its path towards developing the underdeveloped. However, the realities of this power can render democracy's edges elusive, meaning the international forces— the agencies under research— can end up trumping the national politics (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999, p. 2). So, if democracy has been the end goal, shouldn't the process to achieving it follow the same democratic morals? It is from this question I will narrow the scope of this research.

As mentioned in the introduction, education is recognized as a key factor in a democracy, so it could be hypothesized an educated society should aid the formation and solidification of a democracy. But where does this process start and how can it be accomplished in a nation lacking the means? With this prospect having been a top priority in international organizations, achieving universal primary education has, until the end of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, been the focal point (Un.org, 2019). However, since then and with the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals the focus has shifted to increasing primary education's quality. Since quality remains the biggest struggle in the Ethiopian education system today, it is the obvious point of departure.



Several donor agencies around the world have given precedence to the country's education system. Agencies such as Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Department for International Development (DFID), also known as UK aid, have devoted a range of time and resources to improving the quality of primary education. The main purpose of most ODA-funded development projects is to fill a gap and provide resources, skills and systems which the country needs or is lacking— which in this case is better education (Riddell 2007, p. 180). While both of these organizations focus specifically on different areas in the education system, they have each employed projects at the primary education level and deem it as of the highest concern. By sticking to projects that strictly aim at improving education quality, the research scope reduces and feasibility remains in tact. Linearity will also be upheld by having already limited the donor agencies to the type of aid they provide to Ethiopia and ensuring it is bilateral. Both Japan and the United Kingdom are also amongst the top three bilateral ODA organizations supplying aid to Africa. As each of these agencies originate in different countries, the analysis can be strengthened by representing different regions in the world. This aspect can also provide information on how different donor agencies interpret and make use of democratic qualities.

### 1.3 Research Questions and Aims

The following research questions will be used to guide the rest of the study and illuminate the overall aim. They have been carefully formulated to consider the theoretical framework and the concepts employed therein.

1. *“Do the education projects employed by donor agencies in Ethiopia conform to the qualities of democracy?”*

2. *“How do the projects lead up to the prescribed democratic criteria?”*

In answering these questions, my foremost aim is to determine whether the projects respect or conform to the democratic qualities embedded in the theoretical framework. I will have attempted to analyze the education project documents to determine whether or not they fulfil the chosen democratic criteria. By doing so, the research outcome can hopefully shed light on

the ongoing debate regarding foreign aid in general and the democratic legitimacy of international organizations. Moreover, I seek to find out if these projects are written in a democratic fashion. A subquestion that comes out of this thought is whether or not the documents take into consideration Ethiopia's politics, social norms and governance. If the donor agencies produce projects that are democratic, the results could be far more successful than when reforms are forced on a country that does not conform to said western ideals. Additionally, post analysis, during the discussion I would like to interpret the results to determine any underlying conclusions that would lead to suggesting the projects do contribute to democratization. This will, however, be a stretch as no prior research explicitly declares any evidence supporting democracy as a direct outcome of international donor agencies investing in quality education (Feng & Zac 1999; Sanborn & Thyne 2013). It is also for this reason much of the research thus far has discussed democracy and the possibility of Ethiopia achieving such a government. I will also motivate the overall focus on democracy by making clear how globalization has and continues to affect the concept of democracy in the international arena. It remains an increasingly researched and debated topic today. Furthermore, the findings of this study aims at creating a picture of donor agency education projects with hopes to shed light on what is morally acceptable and even what could be improved in the future of development projects.

## 1.4 Delimitations

As I have previously touched upon, Ethiopia is a large, diverse nation that would under many circumstances need to be regionally narrowed down and focused before making any generalizations. However, there are a few reasons I have chosen to focus specifically on Ethiopia as a whole. First and foremost, the narrowing down of regions would render this research nearly impossible. Because this thesis focuses primarily on the education projects' documents published by donor agencies, which I should add are already scarce, any further narrowing down to any one specific region would leave this thesis without data. The aid in the sector is dispersed throughout Ethiopia's regions and rather unequally. In this case, a red thread could not be established due to the fact that all donor agencies have not, themselves, limited their efforts to one region. Each individual project focuses on different regions and different areas of primary education development. To combat this issue, I have delimited the donor agencies by choosing those who have existing published documents, focus on primary

education and aim specifically at improving education quality. By recognizing these shortcomings and adjusting the scope, it is hoped the internal validity will remain in tact. A second delimitation of this research is the concentration on Official Development Assistance. This thesis is wrapped around the idea of foreign aid and the developmental work enacted in the international arena. However, the concept of foreign aid comes in many forms and interpretations, so by identifying the type of aid as bilateral ODA I have allowed the research to remain within one niche. It is therefore the selected development projects aiding the education system fall under the definition of ODA and the donor agencies work in development cooperation. A final aspect that has allowed me to delimit this research is my choice of lens. By appealing through a democratic lens, I have minimized the scope to analyze only the democratic aspects in the documents. Unfortunately, by doing so it is possible the analysis will miss underlying aspects that, according to different democratic theories, can help measure democratic qualities. This downfall will be acknowledged and handled appropriately later during the analysis.

## 2. Literature Review

Due to the utter lack of existing research on analyzing democratic credentials/qualities of education project documents, this literature will instead reveal what academia has to say about the democratic legitimacy of international organizations (IO's) themselves. Considering the chosen projects are employed by international organizations that follow ODA's intentions to promote greater transparency and heightened accountability, this review should be complementary to this case study as it also appeals through a democratic lens. This literature review will therefore present the popular arguments on IO democratic legitimacy held by renowned authors and theorists regarding democratic credentials such as the issues of power delegation and demos or citizenry rights at a global level. The first section will discuss the issue of delegating power across state borders, while the second section will be a discussion regarding the issue of demos and citizenry on this same level. Finally, the third section will present what these theorists have to propose as an alternative for making democracy work on a global scale through the promotion of international organizations. By doing so, this literature review should also reveal how democratic theory is applicable to the study of IO's and their empirical work and efforts.

### 2.1 National autonomy

When considering democracy, whether it be conceptual or as a conceptualization, the understandings of the idea are most often bound to a singular state or nation. A direct consensus has only started to arise agreeing the successful possibility of democratic governance transnationally or, in other words, across borders. The resonation of national autonomy, amongst other reasons, always seems to divide any agreement. If we now consider this perspective in regards to international organizations, many questions and concerns arise. With this being said, how are IO's democratic if they function and govern across borders?

I will begin with the thoughts of Robert Dahl as he is both a renowned author and democratic theorist who adamantly denies the notion that IO's have the right to democratic legitimacy. One of Dahl's strongest arguments for this is the issue of delegating power and the erosion of national autonomy that occurs when functioning outside of state boundaries (Dahl

1989, p. 319). He raises questions about what happens to the political life and who will hold the power to make decisions, which leads us to the later discussion regarding demos. When extending power outside of one government's own nation, the political scale is widely altered. Dahl argues there is no longer the opportunity for direct participation, which is a cherished quality of democracy. However, many of the points raised by Dahl, such as the change in political life, have been largely critiqued. For example, David Held argues the political life and delegation of power in a national democracy has for a long time been tainted since the balance of power has shifted in favor of capital. In other words, the autonomy of democratically elected governments have already been coerced by sources of unrepresented economic power (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999, p. 98). National states' economies have long been interconnected but now, with increasing globalization, have an order based on the principles of free trade and minimum regulation which guarantees liberty, efficiency and effective government (ibid.). In addition, viewing international organizations as an 'erosion' of national autonomy is rather difficult to fathom when democratic states have never truly been able to act autonomously. Contradicting his own argument, Dahl admittedly states how trade, wars and finance have been enmeshed in democratic societies from the beginning through the use of examples from Ancient Greece and the first 'democracies' (Dahl 1989, p. 319). So how then can IO's be rendered democratically illegitimate due to their lack of autonomy?

Also argued by Held is the idea that democracy beyond borders can be an enrichment of democratic life and far from the end of the nation state. By strengthening democracy within and across states, the accountability of power will only be strengthened in the sense that it is formed by a basic democratic law and only has the power to promulgate, implement and enforce that law (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999, p. 84). While a transnational or cosmopolitan view of democracy can be accused of being too optimistic, it strengthens the position of IO's by viewing them as communicators. As I have emphasized, IO's democratic legitimacy are questioned due to their delegation of power. When viewed as communicators, however, they play a vital role in democratization beyond the state as they have the ability to express local stakeholder concerns (Erman & Uhlin 2010, p. 178). This role alone refutes the mass of claims denying the democratic legitimacy of IO's since a global public sphere emerges from such communications. Having now reached the topic of public spheres this discussion will move on to the issue of demos or citizenry and rights beyond the state.

## 2.2 Demos, Citizenry and Human Rights

Beside the issue of autonomy and delegating power, international organizations can also raise a red flag when it comes to human rights, citizenry or—considered by some theorists—demos. A recurring theme to be noticed is that IO's are large bodies which hold a power that threatens many democratic values and rights at a personal level that the world is only newly adjusting to. While these IO's delegate across borders following polity unknown to the average citizen, when do 'we' the people come into consideration? Leading to where I left off, IO's and their umbrella organizations hold the role of being communicators which has in turn created a global public sphere; hence exactly where the people, citizens or demos come in (Erman & Uhlin 2010, p. 178). International organizations have the ability to extend through all areas of human activity, which is far from discrete civilizations (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999, p. 95). In other words, while Dahl discusses the implications of human rights, or lack thereof, he fails to consider how values and judgements are now formed in a complex web of national, international and global exchange. Held, an optimist towards their democratic standing, believes this web weaves together the fate of households, communities, and peoples in all distant regions of the globe (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999, p. 100). Governments have not, for a while now, simply considered their own citizens; decisions made at a national level have impacted those in the surrounding regions and states. Due to the many critics, international law has adjusted to the concerns of human rights so even at the individual level they are respected. Take for example the different international declaration of human rights. These human rights regimes have taken over in the international arena to specifically accommodate the individual and have created a plethora of transnational groups, movements and agencies engaged in re-working the nature of national politics, sovereignty and accountability (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999, p. 103). David Held states how in this sense effective power is now shared, bartered and struggled by all levels.

More on the issue of rights, Erman and Uhlin (2010) argue the debate even further with their understanding of a demos. If a demos consists of free and equal members participating in egalitarian decision making protected by a system of rights, they are in that sense bounded. But this kind of boundary should not be premised in a territorial sense, instead it should be interpreted that they are bound via self governing with political equality supported by a system of rights (Erman & Uhlin 2010, p. 184). Whether self-government is best determined at a national, regional or global demos is not the question, it is an empirical, not conceptual matter (*ibid.*). Trying to follow a definition of a demos, per Dahl's thought, only creates unnecessary

implications with evaluating democratic legitimacy at such a scale. They argue not all international organizations need to meet the same democratic qualities. The issue lies in the continuation of political equality and the task of IO's and transnational civil society is to do exactly that by giving a voice to citizens affected by regulations made at a global level that do not have equal access (ibid., 185).

## 2.3 Democratic legitimacy

Having now gone through the dominating issues when considering the democratic legitimacy of IO's, the varying perspectives should be rather clear. Democratic theory is greatly put into question when determining democratic qualities which proves problematic for traditional theorists. Understanding how to interpret power, delegation, peoples and rights on a global scale is no easy task, hence the ongoing debate. Through one lens, in this case the thought of Robert Dahl, it is fathomable how IO's defy many of the democratic qualities enmeshed in today's society. When operating beyond national borders, the line of democracy blurs and abiding to the concept of democracy becomes increasingly difficult. The people come into question and representative democracy faces challenges like never before. Consequently, it must also be realized the globalized world is only increasing and a new understanding of democracy may be necessary. The theorists in support of this notion believe it a possibility and even necessity for the future of international organizations (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999; Erman & Uhlin 2010). By arguing the efforts having already been made toward a public global democratic law, they view IO's as opportunities to overcoming the aforementioned 'issues' of international order. IO's have the role of communicating the concerns of citizens. They can increase accountability by intertwining states' knowledge, communication, politics and people. Agreed by each of these theorists is the fact that nations have never been able to act autonomously and now even less so, therefore if a democratic world is to persevere a new conceptualization of democracy and democratic values will need to be adopted at a global level. Suggestions presented by some of these theorists, in light of this, have thus suggested transnational democracy, cosmopolitan democracy or deliberative global governance. Each of these alternatives suggest adopting a type of public global democratic law that will help in the alleviation of the former concerns discussed in this literature review and the legitimation of international organizations. While a precise consensus amongst democratic theorists has yet to arise, they have been able to agree on these prospects for the future of democracy. The adequate

formulation of laws for such a global, transnational or cosmopolitan democracy in which IO's can democratically function is currently far from mature and even idealistic, but the future can be seen as favorable (Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999; Erman & Uhlin 2010; Dahl 1989).

Limited in this research was the theorists focus on the role of IO's in action. The mass of the discussion disregards the role these organizations play on the ground in other countries. They debate how they presently govern, how they should govern and the concerns resulting from this power and delegation but fail to research deeper into the empirical evidence or actions played out. From this information gap, I found further reason to research the IO's projects since they can reveal evidence of the action made in practice. Perhaps by looking into the empirical part, as Erman and Uhlin (2010) suggest, the debate around a global democratic law could come closer to a consensus and international organizations could work at a more effective rate while conforming to an agreed upon set of democratic qualities.



### 3. Theoretical Framework

In finding a suitable theory, becoming accustomed with the research field was imperative and as demonstrated above the debate falls roughly into two categories. With the intention of analyzing democratic qualities, I will align this thesis to the position of Erman and Uhlin (2010). The proceeding theoretical framework suggests international agencies can in fact be democratic. Thus, I have chosen to look through a democratic lens to examine the published education projects' nature by looking at the references in the texts for different themes and features that align to this theory of democracy— which will be further elaborated in the methodology section. In order to do so, I have adapted the framework to permit an analysis of the democratic qualities applicable to the projects' texts versus the agencies themselves. As I have hopefully made clear, the legitimacy of the actors involved in foreign aid contributions or as this research will consider it, Official Development Assistance, is often put into question. In spite of this, I have chosen to look at the empirical evidence published by the agencies in hopes of either alleviating a degree of doubt or revealing the opposite. Analyzing the democratic qualities of these actors is essential when playing a role and holding influence in global governance (Erman and Uhlin 2010, p. 9). On this note, analyzing the documents they produce should prove rewarding as it may show if they actually adhere to the following democratic qualities. The proceeding framework will therefore allow the legitimacy to be analyzed in terms of democratic credentials or qualities. Since I have found little research on the matter of analyzing democracy beyond the state in this degree, I will adhere to the work of Erman and Uhlin (2010) for guidance.

#### 3.1 Democratic qualities

Erman's and Uhlin's (2010) theory and research bridges the normative thought of democratic theory and empirical work rather than focusing on historical developments of democratic theory. The aim for presenting these democratic qualities is to introduce concepts and general perspectives that can be used as a point of departure for empirical research and theoretical elaboration (Erman & Uhlin 2010, p. 17). By employing such a theoretical framework, I can examine the empirical work of these donor agencies while remaining grounded to the normative aspects of democratic theory. Some of the defining factors that are

included in traditional democratic theories that were noticed in my preliminary research are deliberation, participation, openness, and accountability which usually make up the ‘moral foundations’ of a democracy (Dahl 1989; Shapiro & Hacker-Cordon 1999). With these in mind, I skewed the research towards similar qualities that could be measured until coming across Anders Uhlin’s (2010) framework. The democratic qualities that make up the basis of his framework are representation, transparency, accountability, participation and deliberation. Included below is a replicated table from their book to illustrate what framework will be followed and to exactly what extent. The highlighted row, labeled as ‘throughput democracy’, holds the most applicability and relevance for this thesis’s analysis and will thus be implemented. The remaining concepts they use for distinguishing democratic legitimacy, input and output legitimacy, will not be applied as they do not deal with procedural decision making *within* the actor or in this case the donor agency implementing the education project.

*Table 3.1* Democratic legitimacy of transnational actors: Key democratic values

<b>Input legitimacy</b>	<b>Throughput legitimacy</b>	<b>Output legitimacy</b>
Representation	Transparency	Democratic consequences
Inclusion	Accountability	
	Participation	
	Deliberation	

Source: Anders Uhlin 2010, p. 24.

### 3.2 Measuring throughput legitimacy in donor organizations

Throughput legitimacy is defined as the actual procedures for decision making within the collective actor (Uhlin 2010, p. 23). Analyzing the education project documents through this conception of democratic legitimacy therefore allows for interpretation of the relevant aspects of democracy by keeping the focus on themes in the text. It highlights transparency, accountability, participation and deliberation as key democratic qualities which are also mentioned in most research on democracy beyond the nation state. While these are generally

accepted qualities embedded in the discussion around democracy, they also come with several interpretations and usages. To provide clarification as to how these democratic qualities will be of use and measured, I will describe their meaning as defined by Erman and Uhlin (2010).

Transparency will be measured in terms of “*fullness* (i.e., no or few and specified exceptions to public disclosure), *accessibility* (ideally at many sites, in different languages and free of charge), and *timeliness* (i.e., information should be made available well before a decision is taken in order for stakeholders to have a chance to influence the decision)” (Uhlin 2010, p. 27). By viewing the documents texts with this understanding of fullness, accessibility and timeliness— or transparency— should allow the research questions to be adequately tested and upheld. Accountability is viewed in this context as political due to the involvement of stakeholders on both ends of the spectrum: the donor agencies and the receivers. Do the agencies refer to standards or codes of conduct? Does the document state who the agency will be accountable to? Are the plans voluntary or control driven? The third quality included in this framework is participation. Participation, as considered by Uhlin, is understood in relation to the decision making process and activities taking place in the organization, for example protest activities. Since this thesis is concerned primarily with the education project documents, not the actions of the donor agency, I will instead seek out whether or not the constituents are included or even considered in the text and plan making. Last but not least, the process of deliberation will be the final democratic quality to be measured in the education projects. Deliberation in a democracy is often taking into account debate and discussion to produce well informed, rational opinions in which participants are then willing to adjust views to accommodate fellow participants (Uhlin 2010, p. 31). This process must be non-coercive and reflective, meaning when considering deliberation in the analysis, Uhlin suggests thinking to what extent is the deliberation reflective.

## 4. Methodology

Before explaining the methodological components, I would like to introduce the overall approach to my research. This research sprouted from personal curiosity about the developing world's education systems. It began with investigating education systems in need of aid which then lead to the case of Ethiopia and its shift in regime. As a result of this, I came to learn the nation elected a PM striving for democracy, willing to change and invest in improving its quality of institutions— furthermore invest in the future of education (Fisher & Gebrewahd op. cit.). After discovering the amount of foreign aid the nation receives and the general emphasis on improving education quality I decided the most suitable design would be a case study. Looking into a research problem of this specificity, a case study would allow the research to elucidate the unique features of Ethiopia's case (Bryman 2012, p. 69). The outcome of this design lead to research questions that would accomplish exactly that. Therefore I ask: "*Do the education projects employed by donor agencies in Ethiopia conform to the qualities of democracy?*" and "*How do the projects lead up to the prescribed democratic criteria?*". I knew such questions would require qualitative methods as they are best for describing, interpreting and gaining in-depth insight into specific concepts or phenomenon (Bryman 2012). So for the sake of gaining in-depth insight, the case examines two different donor agency's primary education project documents that have been implemented in Ethiopia. I will perform a qualitative content analysis of the documents to determine if they conform to the democratic qualities specified in the above section. Following in this section are the methodological components in greater detail.

### 4.1 Qualitative content analysis with thematic approach

The purpose of performing a qualitative content analysis for this case study on Ethiopia is to best fulfil the aim of this thesis. In Bryman (2012), he states a qualitative content analysis is comprised of a searching out of underlying themes in the material being analyzed. Since the materials to be analyzed are project documents, I deem thematic analysis approach the most sufficient for working through the texts while applying the theoretical framework. Using a thematic analysis will not only simplify the process which is ideal given

the time frame provided, but it will still allow for a thorough interpretation. Bryman (2012) recommends using a framework when attempting a thematic analysis, so to accomplish such an approach, I will apply the aforementioned theoretical framework but will incorporate the following questions to realize any underlying themes in the documents. These questions are recommended by Uhlin (2010) when making use of his theoretical framework.

<p><i>Table 4.1</i> Questions for evaluating democratic legitimacy</p>
<p><b>Throughput Legitimacy</b></p> <p><i>Transparency</i></p> <p>To what extent are decision-making processes and other activities open and transparent?</p> <p><i>Accountability*</i></p> <p>According to what principles is the actor accountable?          To which stakeholders is the actor accountable?          Does accountability involve control and sanctions of voluntary responsiveness?</p> <p><i>Participation</i></p> <p>What are the forms and quality of participation?</p> <p><i>Deliberation</i></p> <p>To what extent is deliberation characterized by critical reflection?</p>

Source: Anders Uhlin 2010, p. 33

Like the theoretical framework, these questions will be adapted to suit the analysis of the project documents rather than agencies. Instead of using any coding technique for this content analysis, I will manually go through each document using these questions to gather qualitative data for the analysis. This should make up for any generalizations or misinterpretations of what is actually being said in the documents in which coding can often result (Bryman 2012, p. 578). The questions that will be adapted fall under the *accountability* category and will generally change the term ‘actor’ to ‘document’. For example, instead of looking for what principles the actor is accountable for, I will ask “what principles are accentuated in the document that show accountability?” and so on. By doing so, the data should be sorted into themes relating to transparency, accountability, participation and deliberation.

## 4.2 Empirical material

This thesis has taken the form of a desk study and will therefore consist of secondary data such as prior research, academic articles, and project documents published by donor agencies such as JICA and DFID. I have currently found official documents published by each of these agencies that write out the strategy and goals of the intended education projects for Ethiopia. In this process of finding these documents, I faced a few difficulties due to the lack of specificity. Each project document differs greatly from agency to agency which will have to be accounted for when analyzing. It should also be restated here that when analyzing ODA the accuracy of the data can be questioned and is often recorded differently from the side of the donor nation or ODA organization itself (Riddell 2007, p. 166). After continuous research to find both these documents and unofficial sources, I came across Ethiopia's official education development plan that supplied me with several answers relating to these difficulties. In the document, which is published by the nation's MoE, it is explicitly stated that donor partners and NGOs have the right to employ projects in regions without the need to obtain permission from the central government (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). In other words, this explains the limited data published by the donor agencies to an extent. However, a large blame can simply be laid on the agencies as they fail to report plans at a project level (Riddell 2007, p 186). Despite this, these official documents will be the basis of empirical material used for the analysis and discussion. The documents are either policy papers or operational plans found in the agencies archives. To defend my choice of material, I argue that little to no prior research has looked into the democratic credentials of actual education projects and thus can contribute to new knowledge and understanding of foreign aid in developing countries. Additional documents found in the agencies archives will be taken into account during the analysis to support any missing information in the actual project documents. Such documents provide ex-ante and ex-post project evaluation guidelines. The remaining material will come from sources used to provide the background and theoretical portions of the study. This consists of academic articles, books and webpages from the donor agencies.

## 5. Analysis

This section will include the qualitative data extracted from the education projects' documents. It has employed the theoretical framework and its questions previously described. Each subsection is dedicated to the different donor agencies and will begin with introductions of the agencies position and their contributions in Ethiopia. Subsections are therein separated into the themes that have been realized from the analysis. The project documents will be referenced at the end of this thesis to provide easy accessibility and reliability.

### 5.1 JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency

JICA is a bilateral cooperation organization of the Government of Japan. Japan ODA has a core objective of contributing to the peace and development of the international community to thereby help ensure their own security and prosperity (Riddell 2007, p. 59). Unlike other ODA organizations, the agency's objective is not specifically the eradication of poverty nor economic growth, rather it is encompassed by a more political nature. It does, however, address poverty reduction in the form of education, health etc.; sustainable growth; global issues; and peace building (Riddell 2007, p. 60). When it comes to Ethiopia, JICA is primarily focused on agriculture and rural development, industrial promotion, infrastructure development and education. JICA provides support to education in order to ensure learning continuity for all, putting development of the individual at the forefront. JICA aims to ensure the provision of quality learning regardless of education or country situations (JICA, 2015). The agency implements cooperation in education with guiding principles such as trust, knowledge creation through mutual learning and equity and inclusion. From afar, the agency itself appears to conform to democratic qualities by respecting many of the key morals described earlier. But, does the actual project hold to such values?

The first document under analysis is a project completion report that has been published by JICA which has authorized full public disclosure. It is a project for capacity development for improving learning achievement in mathematics and science education in Ethiopia at the primary level which took place over the span of three years. Because the document is comprised of nearly 200 pages and due to time limitations, I have only analyzed relevant sections. Following are the themes that came out of the analyzation.

### 5.1.1 Transparency

When analyzing this document and considering the interpretation of transparency I realized it is revealed in quite literal terms. The document is open to the public and published on JICA's website. While finding this particular project document took time, it is accessible to anyone willing to dig deep enough in the websites archives. It is only offered in English and Japanese which, to a certain degree, defeats the purpose of being transparent as Ethiopian natives may struggle with the translation. Like many projects, this document has gone through several revisions but it is not possible to say how early the information was available to the public.

### 5.1.2 Accountability

A theme I came across in the principles was the concern of not forcing change on the people from the outside; the approach is very much Ethiopia-driven. The document explicitly states the principles it will uphold and goes into great detail explaining the meaning behind each principle. The principles it claims to abide by are remaining Ethiopia-driven, being gradually implemented into the system and only using Japanese experiences as a reference. The project is purely driven by the Ethiopian stakeholders in hopes they will experience a shift in perception when regarding capacity development. A perceptual shift is argued to not be successful when imposed from the outside. As it works in cooperation with Ethiopia's government and the MoE, the stakeholders are willing participants. It aims to strengthen both horizontal and vertical linkages among the stakeholders. Horizontal linkages are the number of Ethiopian agencies already working in the education fields that will help execute the project, of which are 5 different agencies that are claimed to specialize in such work. The vertical linkages are those grouped together for the purpose of structuring and steering the implementation process. This group is comprised of stakeholders at the policy level, executive level and practitioner level. In other words, stakeholders are well represented in this document and JICA is held accountable by a number of them.



### 5.1.3 Participation

The tactic for involving constituents was taken out in the form of workshops. These workshops, or project activities, included the involvement of MoE related agencies, regional education bureaus and primary school teachers. The participation of these workshops can be considered of high quality because participants are adequately represented at all levels. From the quantitative data included in the document on how many participants took part and how often they took part, it appears the majority attended and continued to attend until the end. It is written that each workshop consisted of several activities that make use of the participants' own interests and questions meaning their concerns are being heard and taken into account. Many of these questions and concerns are even made part of the curriculum. The empirical evidence of such is backed up in the document in forms of success rates and achievements. To conclude, the forms of participation and even quality of such participation fulfil the theoretical framework's interpretation of *participation*.

### 5.1.4 Deliberation

Deliberation is clearly characterized by critical reflection in the document. As previously mentioned, the participants take part in various workshops where they work individually and in groups to come up with the best solutions and alternatives for developing the curriculum. This is explicitly stated several times in the document and could even be viewed as a recurring theme. Since the participants are represented at different levels in the Ethiopian society, the debates, discussions and opinions formed are accommodating to fellow participants. In addition, the workshops employ the same tactics each time there is a meeting so critical reflection is prioritized. Making use of repetition often leads to improvement—practice makes perfect.

All in all, JICA's project document checks the majority of democratic qualities deemed necessary for considering it democratic, aside from the mentioned limitations of transparency. Each quality, to the best of my analyzation capabilities, is adequately recognized and even accentuated in the project. The present themes identified are JICA's focus on inclusion, being internally driven and implemented, accommodating to participants and being held accountable in the eyes of the stakeholders. Even though the agency makes no claim for being democratic nor its aims at democratizing through development cooperation, the procedures taken

accommodate the moral compass of democracy (JICA, 2015). This document leads up to the democratic qualities in its analysis as well. By first conducting an ex-ante evaluation from the perspective of DAC criteria, JICA confirms the need and priority of the project, creates a project outline that anticipates outcomes and establishes indicators for measuring such outcomes. This process particularly includes field work, surveys and discussion. By following such procedures, the project further takes into consideration the democratic qualities being measured here.

## 5.2 DFID: Department for International Development

Unlike Japan, UK ODA is keen on poverty eradication and takes a multi-faceted approach. The organization provides direct assistance to the poor, incorporates wider efforts to stimulate economic growth and development, has increased attention on capacity building and governance assistance, and supplies aid where it will make the most difference (Riddell 2007, p. 60). Within UK aid's organization exists the Department for International Development. DFID is another development cooperation agency that invests in the development of Ethiopia. The vision of the agency is to protect the most vulnerable Ethiopians, consolidate development gains, help achieve development goals through innovative approaches and invest in public services (Operational Plan, 2014). DFID is committed to increasing access of the poor, women, and girls to good quality education and skills for employment (GOV.UK, 2019). Made clear in their operational plan, DFID also prides itself for being transparent and delivering value for money, or maximizing the impact of every pound spent. The question is now whether or not they hold up in practice.

Since I was unable to locate the original project document, the analysis of this text proved rather difficult. The document published by DFID is an evaluation of a pilot project of results-based aid. It presents the results of a 3 year project intended to improve access to and the quality of education in Ethiopia. In the former text it is mentioned DFID attempts innovative approaches to development, this document is an example of such. This innovative attempt is called results-based aid which means the disbursement of aid is tied to results achieved rather than activities completed or outputs produced. In other words, donors take a hands off approach and allow the recipients to make the decisions. Unlike JICA's project document, this pilot project is in collaboration with Ethiopia's MoE on an incentivised basis.

### 5.2.1 Transparency

Having been mentioned on DFID's website and as one of the UK government's top priorities, transparency should be clear in this document. However, the document has only been published on the DFID website with free access in English. It is not made clear if the project was published on any platform in Ethiopia. This evaluation of the project relays the project was not well communicated to the regions in Ethiopia in a timely fashion. While there must have been a dialogue between DFID and Ethiopia's MoE, no information in the document indicates an opportunity for stakeholders to influence any decisions. In the project outcome, it is even mentioned that this type of project, results-based aid, aspires for better dialogue between DFID and the MoE but it has yet to be realized. The existing dialogue between the two revolved around money and rewards rather than project aims. Therefore, the transparency in this project is rather lacking and not remotely conforming to the operational plan set in 2014.

### 5.2.2 Accountability

The principles this document reveals accountability to are mostly in the form of incentives. The project was left in the hands of education officials and meant to be implemented how they decide and in return a financial reward was to be given. Following this approach lead to accountability issues due to the officials choice of implementation. Initially, structures were put into place to ensure accountability of the results-based aid approach. It was meant by the regional education bureaus to report the action plans they had with the financial rewards, but little was reported resulting in weak accountability. According to the project document, when evaluators from DFID arrived in some of the regions, many of the education officials were even unaware of the project at all. It appears the only stakeholders this project was held accountable by were the MoE, regional education bureaus and primary schools. Because this project attempted an innovative approach to development, the accountability was drastically weakened and involved little control by the agency itself. Therefore DFID's ambivalence about its role and responsibility weakened the project in this aspect.

### 5.2.3 Participation

Analyzing the forms of participation in this document was rather straightforward; included in the project are the 'participants' and the 'sitters and passers'. The participants, or

each participating region's education bureau, were given the task of planning and implementing a project that would increase the amount of children sitting in and passing an exam. There were no predetermined activities for participating prescribed by DFID which can lead to the conclusion that the quality of activities was substantially low. The project evaluation later sheds light on how impacting incentives were and the prioritizing concern Ethiopia's MoE had on the rewards. Apart from these constituents were the student sitters and passers in the regions' schools. Now that those participating have been established, how have they been considered in this project? For one, the regional education bureaus have been given the task of planning and implementing a project that should increase the number of students attending and passing school in their region. Considering those in the bureaus are aware of their duty and role, the text reveals they are taken into account and properly acknowledged by DFID. However, the bureaus implementing the projects can hardly be considered the actual participants as they are not the ones sitting in the schools being impacted. From a democratic perspective, those truly participating—the students—should be considered the participants. Through this light, it is apparent that they are merely a form of quantitative data being measured to see which region's will receive the reward. Moreover, the students are not included and do not have a say in the project planning thus not conforming to this analysis's interpretation of participation.

#### 5.2.4 Deliberation

On the other hand, the evaluation of the project took into consideration the views of the participants post implementation. Through the collection of interviews, all stakeholders in the MoE and regional education bureaus as well as school teachers were given the opportunity to address individual concerns. In regards to deliberation occurring while the project was active, the extent of critical reflection was left to the stakeholders. Analyzing this through a democratic lens did not fare well. The document specifies the poor coordination and spread of information between stakeholders, so it would have likely been beneficial for some form of action to be taken or advice been given. The results-based aid approach again affects the project's ability to conform to the democratic qualities.

Before summarizing the findings of this project document analysis, I must mention that the theoretical framework was not easily applied. Being an evaluation of the project limited the ability to measure the democratic qualities of the text. From what I was able to identify, the project did not conform to the democratic criteria and cannot, from this analyzation, be considered democratically legitimate. Themes brought up in the document did not align with

that of those of the 2014 Operational Plan. Rather, consistent themes that appeared were the issues presented with the approach taken by the agency. It was made clear that results-based aid would only work in a government equipped to proceed in a democratic fashion. The approach itself could align to the democratic qualities as it seems to call for internally driven projects, accountability of stakeholders and the coordination of participants. In this project, however, it simply was not feasible. The document made claims that should have led up to the democratic criteria but fell short in every theme.

## 6. Discussion

This research began by asking the questions “*Do the education projects employed by donor agencies in Ethiopia conform to the qualities of democracy?*” and “*How do the projects lead up to the prescribed democratic criteria?*”. While these questions proved useful in examining democratic qualities in a textual form, better availability of data would have strengthened the findings. Before elaborating more on this I would like to draw some general conclusions in regards to development project documents published by ODA organizations. Whether the focus be on education or any other area of development, it must be made abundantly clear the project documents are severely lacking in data. Besides the fact that they are already a scarcity, the inconsistencies of what is reported between recipient countries and organizations are aplenty. While having only personally analyzed two project documents, other sources contend to this shortcoming on a larger scale (Riddell 2007, p. 51-53). Project level data gaps are an apparent issue with ODA, which in this case was inherently problematic. When beginning the research it quickly became obvious the quest to finding project documents would not be easy, but such an obstacle as this was not expected. On the one hand, it was also for this reason I wished to focus at a project level—to try and fill the gap. However, in retrospect I have come to realize that time, accessibility and other constraints render the aim too optimistic for this capacity. Consequently, such limitations of lacking existing documents and the differences in the type of documents directly impacts the reliability of this research.

Without further ado, this discussion will now divulge what resulted from this qualitative content analysis. The project documents published by donor agencies JICA and DFID have presented a variation of results. By analyzing the documents in terms of democratic qualities, presented in the theoretical framework by Erman and Uhlin (2010), it was made apparent that generalizations cannot be made from the analyzation of project documents alone. In order to make any reliable conclusions a content analysis of all documents leading up to the project and post project would be necessary. Consequently, this brings the discussion back to the former paragraph since these specific documents are next to impossible to locate. What this analysis was able to bring forth are some of the themes represented in education project documents. Having focused on ODA and donor agencies therein, it was clear from the start that the projects had to follow or respect to certain rules. As mentioned earlier in this research, the DAC has a very specific framework with which the donor agencies must comply; ODA emphasizes its being transparent, accountable and it providing aid where it will have the greatest development

impact. This factor can be noticed immediately in the written manner of the documents and in the areas under focus. In the document published by JICA, the agency that claims no ties to democracy promotion, conformed to basically every democratic quality. The project considered democratic aspects that were not even part of the framework, but are definitely part of the morals that make up democratic governance. Differing quite drastically in the analysis were the findings in the DFID project document. Previously mentioned, DFID is an agency that publicizes its ability to be transparent, but it was this quality that lacked the most. In an agency that focuses on peace building, one would believe they would work better together with the MoE and follow the operational plan designed for these matters. In summarization, the analysis did not prove nearly as fruitful and illuminating as hoped but it did reveal what should be complemented in the future.

I would now like to touch on the post-analysis hypothesis mentioned in section 1.3 of this research. By asking such research questions, this thesis dove into several arenas: foreign aid, democratic legitimacy and education. So how, after performing the research and analysis have they become interrelated? In the introduction, education was recognized as a key factor in a democracy which lead me to hypothesize that an educated society could aid the formation and solidification of a democracy. Having now completed the research, I am able to deny this hypothesis due to the fact that there is no overarching theoretical or practical explanation that bridges the divide between regime transition and regime consolidation, while simultaneously explaining both (Bratton & van de Walle 2002, p. 274). Education can aid democracy, but there is no evidence of it consolidating the transition; neither can the role of international donor agencies bind this. While the agencies can aid the process, “successful intervention requires favorable conditions” (Dahl 1989, p. 317). It has thus been made clear that donor agencies contribute to the democratization of nations, but the solidification of a democracy is up to the nation and its people.

If I am to now recommend directions for future research, I would like to begin by pointing in the direction of the national efforts being made by the Ethiopian government and Ministry of Education. During the research process I discovered there are many efforts aimed at improving the education system already being done within the state. An evaluation or analysis of such efforts would probably reveal far more about the democratic state the nation is actually in. Non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations are working tirelessly to improve the quality of education provided to their citizens. While such data could

also be difficult to gain access to in the form of a desk study, performing a field study would definitely shed light on the political situation the nation is positioned in. By narrowing the scope to an on-ground level, interviews could be made and the research gathered could be put to better, more accurate use. Regarding any future research of project documents or even education project documents in this form, outside sources evaluating the agencies must be taken into consideration due to biases and even falsifications. It has now been made apparent that the donor agencies present their organization in an idealistic picture that appease to a specific type of reader. Since this analysis was not aimed at evaluating the education projects, but rather the text itself, it was not overly detrimental to the analysis. However, a more in depth analysis or evaluation would require such sources.

To formally conclude this research I would like to end the discussion with a quote by Robert Dahl. “In the actual world... ‘democracies’ are never fully democratic: they invariably fall short of democratic criteria in some respects. (Dahl 1989, p. 177). This quote not only puts this thesis into perspective, but it embodies research on democratic practices. Whether it be implementing policies, analyzing project outcomes or, as this thesis does, analyzing the democratic qualities of education project documents— it all depends on how well the democratic process functions in practice. Democracies are inevitably imperfect constructions that have yet to find a worthy competitor (ibid.).



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