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Crises in EFL Proficiency and Teacher Development in the Context of International Donation and Transformation Discourses

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Abstract: *Since 2000, Ethiopia has been working to come out of social crises, modernise itself and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Although provided with billions of dollars by the West and their international agents, little has been changed and the crises seem never to abate, especially in the educational system. This study, thus, critically analysed a paradox of Ethiopia's educational problems: the crisis in teachers' EFL proficiency, on the one hand, and the discourses of international aids and transformation of her educational system, on the other. The main participants are 25 randomly selected EFL teachers and teacher educators from all corners of the country. Qualitative data were collected through questionnaire and participant observation. Reflective constant-comparative method of data analysis was employed. The results show that the problem of 'poor' English proficiency is the effect of poor living and working conditions arising from dictatorial policy-practices spearheaded by agents of the local state and, partly, of the donor states themselves.*

Background

Quite (perhaps over-) ambitiously, Ethiopia has been working hard since 2000 to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 with the help from international donors, which an Ethiopian government document calls 'Pooled Fund Partners' (PFP) (MOE, 2008). The first and second stages of the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) were phased out over 2000-2005 and 2005-2009. Consequently, since 2010, what is called the 'Growth and Transformation Plan' (GTP) was set by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED, 2010a) to guide the country's Five-Year Plan (2010-2015) for 'extricating itself from poverty and [becoming] a middle-income economy' and 'a country where democratic rule, good-governance and social justice reigns [sic]' but also achieving the Millennium Development Goal which one? (MOFED, 2010a, 4-7). Central to the GTP objectives is to 'expand and ensure the qualities [sic]of education' (MOFED, 2010a, 7; 2010b, 18-20). The Ethiopian government regularly expresses, on the state controlled media, its full confidence that the country is one of the few in Africa that will achieve the Millennium Goal.

The role of international aid and intervention in supporting Ethiopia's educational 'transformation plans' has been considerably significant. In 2002, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MOE), pointed to weaknesses in teacher performance as a principal factor, and the Teacher Development Program (TDP) was developed in response, at a cost of €60 million (FDRE, 2008, 15; MOE, 2002). The TDP was funded by PFPs like Belgium, Finland, Ireland,

the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2010, 2). The TDP consisted of three main programs: the Teacher Education System Overhaul included the professional development of teacher educators, pre-service teacher education and continuous professional development for serving teachers. The Leadership and Management Program aimed at training for school principals, deputies and supervisors. And the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) was a training program to upgrade the English language competence of all serving teachers. In mid-2009, the MOE launched what it calls the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) with similar aims to the TDP (MOE 2008), but with, according the British Council Ethiopia (BC) website, enormous funding - approximately $1 billion (http://www.britishcouncil.org/africa-ds-about.htm). The program includes Teacher Development, Material Development (Curriculum, Textbooks and Assessment), the School Improvement Program, the Management and Administration Program and Program Coordination. It is supported by a donor fund managed by the World Bank, as well as bilateral donations from the US, Italy, Finland, the Netherlands and the UK. The World Bank reports donor statistics: Education Sector Development Project (US $100m), Post-Secondary Education Project (US $41.5m); USAID-funded Basic Education Program (US$15 m); UNICEF-funded Basic Education Program (2007-2011), focusing on universal primary education and gender equality (US $17m). According to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), from 2007 to 2015 the UK-based DFID's actual and planned aid to Ethiopia's educational transformation plan is almost £120million (ICAI, 2012).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education plays a key role in the GEQIP. The British Council website states that it has been conducting ELIP and English Language Teaching Improvement Program (ELTIP) consultancies since 2009 at the value of £0.5m and £40,000, respectively. A US Embassy sponsored workshop document (2012) shows that under ELIP, more than 150,000 teachers have already benefitted, while English Language Improvement Centers were set up at most teacher training colleges and universities. As a part of the new ELIP, 45,000 English teachers are provided with training to improve their English proficiency in a tailor-made process known by MOE as the 'Cascade Model' (reconstructed and displayed in Figure 1).

However, despite all these programs and enormous amounts of donor funds, researchers (Negash, 2006; Heugh, et.al 2007) and discussions at various workshops (Ethiopian Academy of Science, 2012) show that the general education is still in crisis and EFL teachers and students' English proficiency, from primary through secondary to tertiary levels, is still 'poor', 'extremely disappointing' or 'declining'. The latest available National Learning Assessment indicates that the vast majority of Grade 10 and Grade 12 students score below 50 per cent, the minimum proficiency benchmark established by MOE in English, i.e. 82.2 per cent and 74.1 per cent, respectively (NEAEA, 2010). In recognition of the seriousness of the problem, the MOE and US Embassy organised a conference entitled 'Enhancing the Quality of English Language Education in Ethiopia' (US Embassy, 2012). The amount of money spent directly on addressing the plight of English language education is unclear, but, what is obvious is that the huge amount of national and international donors' money being spent is not alleviating the socio- educational evils - the deterioration of the bed-rock of literacy at large and EFL proficiency in particular.

Thus, the general aim of this study was to gain a contextual and critical understanding of the crisis in Ethiopian teachers' EFL proficiency in the context of international donation and intervention on the one hand, and socio-educational transformation discourse on the other. The following specific questions were formulated:

1. What is the role of the ELTIP-ELIP in bringing Ethiopia's EFL proficiency crisis to an end? What the challenge role of ELTIP-ELIP in the EFL proficiency development? What role ought ELTIP-ELIP to play?

2. What are the urgent concerns for Ethiopian EFL teachers/educators: English competence? Pedagogical competence? Freedom to exercise their professional rights?
3. Who are the appropriate agents for addressing the crisis in Ethiopia's EFL education: international agents? National agents? Higher education institutions? School and teachers themselves?
4. Who should do what in order for Ethiopian EFL teachers' proficiency levels to improve? Who should get into direct involvement with schools, teachers and students? Who are desirable and who are not desirable?
5. What is the most propitious approach to changing Ethiopian EFL teachers' poor EFL proficiency?

Review of Related Literature

The Cascade Model and its Impacts

According to the Cascade Model, the MOE and the Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) supervise from above and determine everything pertaining to the EFL proficiency training (ELIP, ELTIP, etc.) as well as who are to be selected as trainers or as trainees. The assumption is that 'Super-trainers' (agents of international donors/intervention groups and MOE staff, usually as contractors) will train selected school, college and university EFL educators (called 'Master Trainers') who will, in turn, train selected secondary school teachers as Trainers of Trainers (TOTs). The latter will train other secondary English teachers. Ultimately, the training program echelon will improve the ever- deteriorating English proficiency of teachers, effecting, in the process, the improvement of the poor English competence of students.

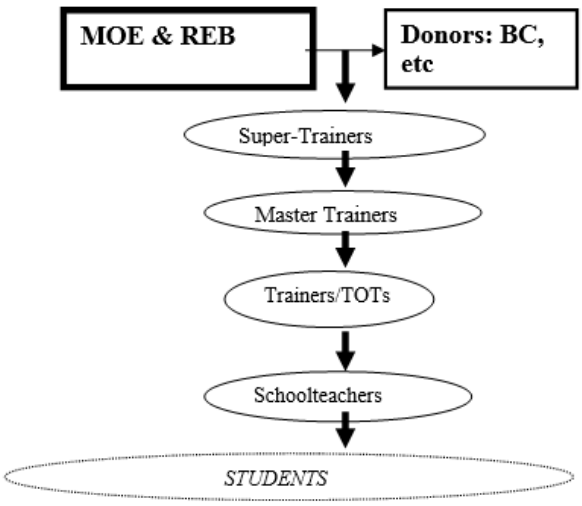


Figure 1: The Cascade Model of ELTIP-ELIP (reconstruction)

No empirical studies could be found of the process and impacts of international intervention or donation on Ethiopian EFL education. The study conducted by Heugh et.al (2007) was not limited to EFL but sought to generally 'explore the existing models of language acquisition and learning in Ethiopia and determine which are more effective' and 'to identify

which language/s should be used as medium of instruction (MOI) and at which level/s of the school system' (2007, 10). It is important to note here that the study was commissioned by the MOE its purpose was constrained by terms of reference set by the same Ministry, a fact that obliged Heugh et al. to begin by acknowledging and thanking 'the senior officials in the federal Ministry of Education' (2007, 4). They adopted a qualitative approach and obtained field data across Ethiopian federal states. Using techniques similar to those employed in this study, they also collected data from participants/teachers in such events as workshops, training programs and informal group discussions. Their data analysis and findings (2007, 107) indicated not only 'strong evidence' about teachers' 'lack of English competence', but also that the causes were a 'lack of appropriate training… [or] exposure to English, since, unlike many African countries, English is 'a foreign language and used in few functional domains in Ethiopia'. They also found that the ELIP program was a failure. They stated:

> *No 200-hour English language programme delivered via a cascade model, across the entire system, within a short period, could possibly facilitate more than an elementary to medium level upgrading of English proficiency. This is particularly the case in contexts where English remains a foreign language and is not in widespread community use (Heugh et.al 2007, 109).*

Opposed to the use of English as a medium of instruction, but significant for our understanding of literacy conditions in the country, Heugh et al. (2007,107) even went on to argue that ELIP-ELTIP promoted the linguistic imperialism of English and criticised 'the failure of REB educators and other leaders to stop this process' of 'public pressure to bring English MOI [Medium of Instruction] into lower levels of primary schooling', arguing that 'the use of English as MOI is seriously eroding the quality of education at all levels in Ethiopia' (we shall see around the final sections of this paper that this reflects the ideology of the ruling party, namely Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF). The more interesting finding of their study, however, is the 'unintended consequences' of the ELIP-ELTIP, namely:

- Teachers used ELIP- ELTIP training for instrumental purposes--it gave them an opportunity to study further, perhaps get a university degree and hence better employment.
- The value in terms of improved teaching of English in the classroom appeared to be of secondary importance.
- Whereas officials in the REBs and district education bureaus held very positive views about the effects of ELIP, informants in schools were less supportive.
- Directors and teachers indicated that teachers' improved English language skills dissipated within a few months of having completed ELIP, and a number of teachers felt that they had been 'dropped' and wondered what had become of the program.
- There was an escalation in unrealistic aspirations about English in the country (Heugh et al. 2007, 107).

The 'unintended consequences' are, indeed, indicative of the fact that the researchers could not explain the socio-educational-political mechanism that engendered and shaped the situation of their findings, i.e., failures. This is partly because their approach was too positivist and separated language from power from knowledge (or knowing/learning), a fact which is clear at many places in their report (for example, 2007, 107). More to the point, Heugh et al. ignore the empirically and critically argued (e.g. Brookfield, 2005; Apple, 2000) fact/possibility that teachers might not be ideological dupes or cultural dopes working uncritically unreflectively within an educational-ideological state apparatus. Their conclusion becomes even more implausible given the dictatorial socio-politico-educational history of Ethiopia since her

formation in the last decade(s) of the 19th century up to the contemporary times (Negash, 1990, 1996, 2006; Lata, 1999; ICG, 2012).

Socio-Educational Change and Teacher Development: Two Sides of Same Coin

Much as we believe that poor countries like Ethiopia have to effect social change from within, we logically also expect 'outside-in' change, i.e., social transformation effected with the help of international donors. Scholars have indicated clearly that neither bottom-up, nor top-down approach alone is sufficient to transform educational systems (Fullan, 1993). Michael Fullan, a prolific writer on educational change, supports the reciprocity/dialectic of both approaches: parallel and in combination. Another critical writer on the Third World educational change, Bruce Fuller, has shown that neither donating enormous amounts nor building up schools massively grows the fragile state in Western terms (Fuller, 1991). It is only with the democratisation of the fragile state's dictatorial and corrupted bureaucracies, with who some actors of the global states and their donor agencies illicitly collaborate, that the poor children become beneficiary of the fruits of donation: good schools and a better life.

Similarly, philosophers on (language) learning and general literacy development have articulated that transformative learning cannot be achieved in a de-contextualised, campaign-like, tailor-made fashion of training or teaching (Freire, 1984; Mezirow, 1991). Freire and Mezirow have postulated that transformative and effective literacy/learning takes shape when the learner engages in reading and writing the words and engages with the world in a constant and lifelong reflective process of 'world-making'. This, however, requires, both as a condition and object of reflection and change, the socio-educational context. In the view of these scholars, language proficiency/knowledge (construction) is shaped by (and shapes) the social context (of power, economy, freedom), which enables or constrains the learning/learner. The same reciprocal/dialectic relationship is true of teachers' professional development as well as their teaching behaviour under the ideological-educational state apparatus (Brookfield, 2005; Apple, 2000). It is this theoretical framework that guided this study.

Methods of Data collection and Analysis

Qualitative data were collected when the author participated in an ELTIP-ELIP training workshop organized and certified by the MOE and the BC on 9-23, July 2012 (first phase) and 27 August- 6 September, 2012 (second phase). This Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop, called 'Master Trainers Specialist Development', brought together about 80 English teachers and teacher educators selected from various universities, teacher education colleges and secondary schools (referred to herein after as 'Master Trainers'). In actuality, the aim was to induct the EFL educators/teachers to an ELTIP training manual called *Refresh Your English*, designed by BC staffs among who were some professors of English and applied linguistics from UK universities. These authors are also the ToT trainers (referred to herein after as 'Super Trainers', for reasons to be explained ahead). A number of the Master Trainers had previous experience of participating in ELIP-ELTIP or similar programs sponsored by the BC or USAID jointly with the MOE. The author played the roles of both trainee and researcher, adopting the participant observation method of data collection: 'a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection' (Denzin, 1989, cited by Flick, 2002, 139).

The key data collection method, an unstructured questionnaire, was designed with the intention of obtaining context-sensitive data from the Master Trainers (see Appendix): items were informed, generated and framed while the researcher was taking part in the training workshop. For instance, Item 6 was deliberately designed to address the category *lacks* under four themes: English proficiency, awareness of academic knowledge about English teaching, professional autonomy and basic conditions for living as a professional. Due to the time constraints, the questionnaire was distributed to the randomly-selected (from the list of names on registration) 30 participants (out of 80 Master Trainers), of which 25 returned it. Narrative accounts or field notes ('FN' in Results and Discussion) of what was heard and seen were taken, sometimes 'provoking' more reflections on some points when necessary (Holliday, 2002). On some of the FN data obtained, experts' insights were sought, not only as additional but also as 'validational' data (documented as 'Personal communication' in the Results and Discussion section). Also, relevant official and policy documents were collected. The names of all the informants/participants were kept confidential (anonymized) based on their request.

To analyse the qualitative data, a reflective and reflective-comparative analysis procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was adopted to inductively generate themes and categories while remaining open to both the theoretical frame work adopted and the possible emergence of new, alternative themes from the analysis. For this reason, the collected data were read with reflective-comparative question such as:

- 'What is the main issue or problem with which this/these EFL educator(s)/teacher(s) seem(s) to be grappling?'
- 'What keeps salient in the mind(s) of these EFL educator(s)/teacher(s)?'

In so doing, themes, categories (group of interrelated themes making an EFL issue) and models (group of interrelated categories) assumed to offer clues to the research questions, were generated.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the participants

Of the 25 participants, six were from different secondary schools, nine from different colleges of teacher education and 10 from universities' English departments. Most had more than ten years experience (with a range of five to 29 years) as EFL teachers and/or EFL teacher educators. All had had secondary school experience, either as EFL teachers or as college/university EFL teacher educators/instructors.

ELTIP-ELIP: Roles, Concerns and Challenges

The Condition of English Proficiency

Item 2of the questionnaire asked the Master Trainers to describe the contemporary situation or level of English proficiency among secondary school teachers. The two categories of responses generated are described as *leveling* and *locating* (contextually). Some of the respondents leveled the condition as *poor*, while others leveled it as *medium*. Only one respondent described the teachers' proficiency level as 'very good'. Some of the respondents, however, *located* the bad condition of their professional competence in their general social context: '[They are] hopeless and worried about their teaching profession' far beyond the issue of English proficiency.

Likewise, in response to the question that asked them to describe their views on the relevance or importance of the Master Specialist Training (Item3), all responded: *(very) good/helpful*. The implication is that none of the respondents, appropriately, considered English proficiency as *endism (*something that is unconditional, static and 'is'), rather, it is always 'becoming'.

What is the Most Urgent Need of Ethiopian EFL Teachers?

Item 6 asked the Master Trainers to state the relative importance of various factors in contributing to poor proficiency levels among secondary English teachers.

Need	High%	Medium%	Never %
English proficiency/competence	82.6%	17.3%	0%
Academic/scientific knowledge	47.8%	43.4%	8.6%
Professional autonomy	69.5%	26%	8.6%
Life conditions	82.6%	8.6%	8.6%

Table1: The urgent needs of secondary EFL teachers

The data show that a lack of English proficiency is almost as critical as a lack of basic life conditions. Given the dominant discourse is about poor English proficiency and that to speak of 'lack of professional autonomy' or 'lack of basic life conditions' is to violate the usual political taboos, it is likely that the latter two are the most burning issues. The average monthly salary of an Ethiopian secondary school teacher is $US 110. According to 'Dr Matcha', a colleague professor of economics, this is far below the market standards: 'only one-fifth of monthly income that could have fairly sustained a teacher, his wife and his single child, given the soaring inflation' (personal communication, 29 September 2012). As if this is not enough, one of the participant teachers said—and all agreed—'the government, inundated with the rising costs of the overambitious mega- projects, levies a series of overlapping and endless taxes on the already meager salaries' (FN, 27 August 2012).

Challenges to ELIP-ELTIP Effectiveness

Item 5 asked the Master Trainers to describe two big fears about the whole ELTIP program's 'cascade model' (Figure1). The purpose was to probe their thoughts regarding factors that would hinder *success* in improving English proficiency levels. The data show that the

respondents were extremely apathetic about the effectiveness of the program:

- *Resistance*: Schoolteachers have no incentives; hence have negative attitudes and no-change-as-usual syndrome.
- *State agents' interference*: Local state agents of the ruling party will be recruited to take part in the training and praised, instead of English teachers; few or no women are selected as participants.
- *Time/timing:* inappropriate timing (winter), hence shortage of time because teachers are already occupied with regular classroom work.
- *Corruption of funds/resources:* inadequate resources (professional fees, per diems, stationery, ICT, etc.) due to mismanagement, embezzlement of donors' funds.
- The *fragility syndrome:* as usual, it will go a discontinuous, appear-and-disappear campaign, instead of continuous professional development.

Critical educational theories explain the apathy and loss of control. When teachers lose control over their practices due to state (agents') interference, they consider themselves as factory employees. Consequently, as Apple (2000, 116) warns, 'the skills that they have developed over the years atrophy…because the skills of planning and controlling it [themselves] are no longer available'.

One of the recurrent issues confronting the respondents was the 'inauthenticity' of the ELTIP-ELIP training manual, a theme that requires detailed explanation. The respondents repeatedly stated that it was 'beyond the level', 'below the level', 'not suitable' or simply 'not good'. What they meant by this was later pinpointed by the additional participant observation (discussion) methods discussed above.

The respondents were concerned about 'inauthenticity' in two senses: 'in-text' and 'outer-text' factors. 'In-text' factors refer to what the manual required the teachers to think, read, write, speak or listen about. The contents or tasks were far removed from the current reality of the teachers; nowhere did it inspire them to, in Freire's terms, *read-and-write about* their actual life, about educational, social and ecological issues circumscribing them. The outer-text involved both heuristic and pedagogic elements. These teachers needed to have access to knowledge of inquiry—the type of knowledge and skills that would enable them to intellectually challenge, interrogate and research their own practices in their social context.

An even more 'inauthenticating' factor is the pedagogic one. Considered a parallel solution to the EFL proficiency crisis, the government introduced to secondary education in 2006 a new mode of pedagogy whereby lessons are 'beamed from South Africa' (Negash, 2006, 32) via the hi-tech Panasonic flat plasma screen. The distant 'plasma' teacher almost completely replaced the classroom teachers (Birbirso, 2012) and the learners are seriously negatively affected as Heugh, et.al (2007, 59) also observed:

For example, we observed a Grade 9 plasma lesson where no one (including a member of our team) could take down the notes at the speed required by the plasma timer. Attempting to help the students, the live teacher was talking more slowly than the plasma teacher and both voices became difficult to hear and therefore difficult to understand.

Negash (2006, 32-36) also registered some 'hazards' of the 'plasma education' some of which are:

- A 30-minute lesson is beamed only once and is not repeated or repeatable; hence, students who miss it have no opportunity of listening to it.
- Already confronted by the 'extremely low' English proficiency problem, the students have great difficulties to read, write and above all to listen to spoken English.

- Disaffected by the expropriation of their professional role, teachers would prefer if this mode of pedagogy had not been introduced or would have gone.
- Frequent power-cut which lays teachers and students off consuming the, otherwise, invaluable educational time.

Who are Appropriate Agents and What Should They Do?

Item 4 asked the Master Trainers to suggest what should to be done in order for the ELTIP- ELIP to improve, particularly by the major agents, the MOE, the BC and the Super-Trainers of the Master Trainers, i.e. the contractors of the ELTIP- ELIP.

The Ministry of Education

The following are the most salient suggestions about what the MOE should do or be according to the Master Trainers (the author's additions in parentheses):

- be transparent about NGO funds for training;
- provide the necessary resources, logistics (i.e. invest in education);
- pay appropriately (i.e., adequate salaries, per diems for EFL teachers andeducators);
- be fair to teachers;
- be visionary (i.e. address the fundamentals rather than superficial issues);
- accommodate our views and rights (i.e. voices);
- improve its own ways of planning and organizing training (i.e., continuous and fundamental transformation rather than sporadic, shallow campaigns);
- leave roles to the professionals (i.e. decentralise power); and
- do not 'let us down' (i.e., we must take over our lost professional roles and responsibilities).

The theme, 'be transparent about NGO funds for training' needs to be singled out. At the very beginning of the Masters Specialist Training course, the participants complained about some sources of confusion, including whether the hosting institution was the MOE or the BC. This was an important question to them as it had not only logistical implications but also symbolic significance. The general assumption was the BC was the host, mainly because it was seen as the more powerful and appropriate agent for English than the usual 'irresponsible' MOE that 'never cares for teachers'. The most important issue was, however, that against their 'normal' expectations, they were provided with neither accommodation nor stationary materials. The per diem, which was paid only at the end of the whole program (totally 28 days of intensive engagement), was, on average, 200 birr ($US20 at the time of course, falling to US$10 in October 2013). This could not buy a single hotel-room a day due to skyrocketing prices. To ask for a professional fee for the intensive task of editing, revising and re-contextualising the *Refresh Your English* material designed by the BC staff was regarded as simply 'lavish'. The BC representative claimed: 'We are simply contractors. Our mandate is only to ensure the quality of the course materials. We are not allowed to intervene in managerial issues….We must abide by the code of conduct set by your government' (FN, 27September 2012).These further eroded the Master Trainers' trust in the MOE-BC relationship and roles.

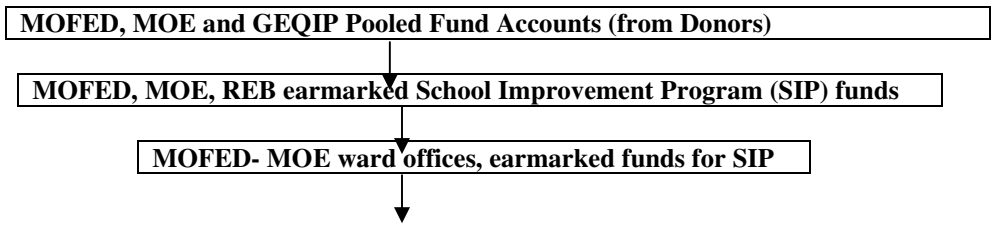
The author sought additional data on this issue. The MOE's 'Invitation for English Language Improvement Program Consultancy Services', posted on 23 May 2011 was obtained (www.2merkato.com) and inquiries were made of Addis Ababa University's English Department, which is known for its TEF PhD staff and role in conducting MA and PhD programs to find out whether it applied for the competition. 'Dr Booran', an EFL educator, said that the Department 'competed, designing 4 million birr proposal. Other competitors were the British Council and an Austrian group. However, it was unfortunate that the British Council, which offered a 6-million birr proposal, was made to win' (Personal communication, 28 September 2012). Dr Booran added that 'it is commonplace in Ethiopia that the donor shows up as bidder with clandestine agreement with clandestine agreement with the government or its agents'. In sharp contrast, the MOE's call for consultancy services claims that 'a consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines.' The fundamental theme underlying the respondents' views is the totalitarian practice of the central government, spearheaded by the MOE.

The British Council and International Agents

The noticeable message in the data as to what the BC should do for the Master Trainers Specialist Development training to improve it in the future is to stop its nontransparent 'middleman' role:

- care for us participants as much as you do for 'quality of the training manuals' (i.e. do not dehumanise us);
- prepare full materials for training (i.e. texts, technologies);
- work directly with teachers;
- come and read our feelings on the actual workplace; and
- directly pay more incentives to boost teachers' motivation.

In particular, the theme, 'care for us participants as much as you do for quality of the training manuals', needs further elaboration. As was mentioned above, the BC representative reasonably chose to abide by the 'code of conduct' set by the Ethiopian government. He is referring to the so-called 'Proclamation for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies' (FDRE, 2009a), which many international NGOs frequently describe as 'constraining' and 'suppressive' (ICNL, 2009). According to the Proclamation, an institution called the Charities and Societies Agency, which 'its own legal personality and as an institution of the Federal Government', has virtually unlimited authority to exercise control over the operations of a charity or society (Articles 84-94). From this control system arises a cascade model of 'Financial Disbursement' (MOE, 2008, 47), the counterpart of the GEQIP-ELTIP Cascade Model (see Figure 2). According to this model, the PFPs/donors grant funds to the MOFED, which hands them out to the MOE, which, in turn, allocates it to the GEQIP contractors. It is possible to infer that PFPs/donors are excluded from actively participating in the educational system, no matter how the contractors might be fairly/competitively drawn from actors/agents of the latter.



Schools

Figure 2: The Cascade Model: Funds disbursement for GEQIP-ELTIP (based on MOE 2008, 47)

The consequence of this Cascade Model is detrimental when it comes to effective, accurate and appropriate use of the donors' funds. 'Mr Tulama', one of the MOE 'supervisors' of the GEQIP, explained:

> *According to the new Code of Conduct international NGOs cannot have direct access to the fund it requests for training. The government receives the fund from the donors in foreign currency, drops it in its own account and then disburses itself from center down until its local agents Ethiopianizing both the currency and payment scale for Ethiopian staffs. This, however, does not apply to the foreign contractors and staffs like the BC* (FN, 28 September 2012).

This should remind us of the Ethiopian universities case, wherein an expatriate staff member (especially from India) is paid over 50,000 birr per month, while a counterpart Ethiopian professor is paid on average 5,000 birr. According to the government, the difference is due to 'the fact' that the former are sponsored by the World Bank. Whatever the truth might be, this sharp contrast erodes the identity of the Ethiopian professor and gives him/her professional anomie. This may be one of the fundamental causes of Ethiopia's high and ever increasing brain drain. Scholars argue that the extent to which the social context flourishes or demolishes the moral consciousness of the professional is far more decisive than instrumental motivation such as high salary (Walker, 1996). Nevertheless, these are highly intertwined.

The Super-Trainers

According to the MOE consultancy invitation announcement (www.2merkato.com), the overall objective of the consultancy is to:

- work as part of the Teachers and Educational Leaders Development Core Process;
- review the pedagogic design of the ELTIP cascade model to ensure quality training;
- enable teacher educators to develop training materials which meet the needs of the target groups; and
- train Master Trainers, who are at the top of the Cascade Model (Figure 1) being used to train TOTs..

Accordingly, the consultant's 'major tasks and responsibilities' are:

- conduct a desk review of ELTIP work plan, design and documents;
- select competent Master Trainers;
- prescribe training facilities;
- facilitate a first workshop to train Master Trainers;
- design *Refresh Your English* modules and conduct editing
- facilitate workshops to train Master Trainers;
- conduct a validation of modules workshop; and
- capacity building program.

Nevertheless, as was also indicated in the official letters to each Master Trainer, the tasks/responsibilities ascribed to the latter only include 'editing' of the *Refresh Your English* modules.

The participant Master Trainers have an essential message for the BC contractors, whom the author calls 'Super-Trainers' (due to the hierarchically higher role they play):

- be directly collaborative to us (i.e. work with us rather than through the MOE or its staff);
- facilitate things in consultation with us;
- involve college and university EFL educators in designing training programs and materials for ELIP/ELTIP; and
- we are tired of being let down (i.e. due to the prescriptive 'slave-master' relationship).

Who Should do What for English Proficiency to Improve?

Given the quite interesting information generated by the respondents, it was relevant to ask them to provide their insights as to who should carry out concrete responsibilities and tasks so that the English proficiency level they described as a mixture of poor-medium (see above). The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) of Ethiopia's 'general education objectives' involves expanding 'quality secondary education that will serve as a basis and bridge to produce a middle and higher level workforce' and 'expanding access to functional adult literacy (FAL) to enhance the country's all round development endeavours': a key to 'quality and efficiency' is 'providing special training to English teachers to raise their proficiency at each level per the standard set, assessment tool and skills gaps identified' (MOFED, 2010a, 50-52).

Item 7 of the questionnaire generated significant data about six agents and their respective responsibilities

The Ministry of Education

The GEQIP document (MOE, 2008, 69) lists the roles of MOE:

- provide overall strategic guidance for the GEQIP implementation;
- oversee the equitable distribution of the budget;
- ensure that agreed performance targets and timelines for activities are met; and
- ensure effective program implementation.

However, the more recent Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) document allocates exclusive power to the MOE in its 'Education and Training' section of the Policy Matrix (MOFED, 2010b, 18-20) as follows: the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus (to be discussed in the section that follows) are described as the 'Implementing Agency[ies]' and the 'Ministry of Education annual report' as 'means of verification' of achievement, or otherwise, of the Goals and Objectives.

In sharp contrast to the policy discourse, the Master Trainers' views indicate opposition to the MOE's authoritarian role and an emphasis on investing more on continuous professional development programs. The following are indicators of the Master Trainers' alternative perspective:

- we know our own problematic situations more than anyone from the MOE (i.e. from outside, externally);
- allow English teachers to be involved in designing syllabuses/curricula and classroom texts/lessons;
- allow professionals/teachers to re-own their roles rather than impose them from above;
- work closely with universities and colleges (i.e. instead of external MOE-BC élite, expatriate 'Super-Trainers').

The need for more investment is indicated:

- improve salaries of teachers;
- provide teachers with means of living, i.e., salary, professional fees, per diems that are commensurate with their demanding work;
- arrange opportunities for travel, workshops, scholarships for EFL teachers to share experiences;
- be committed to arranging consistent and continuous professional in-service training;
- do not obstruct NGOs' and contractors' plans to invest directly in or sponsor EFL education, workshops, training, etc.

The Master Trainers believe that the MOE or the state has to let NGOs have control over their money, knowledge and relationships with teachers and schools, without the need for a mediating role by MOE, and to cease to monopolise classroom pedagogy.

Regional Education Bureaus

Regional Education Bureaus (REB) are the agents within each federal state whose major role is preparing and distributing student textbooks and teacher guides, which determine a teacher's classroom methodology, lesson contents or tasks and assessment. According to the GEQIP document, the REBs are 'responsible for the overall quality and timeliness of project implementation in their respective jurisdictions, and for allocation of program resources (i.e. school grants)' (MOE, 2008, 70).

REBs have no significant role in the Master Trainers Specialist Development training but they become more influential when the allocation of resources, selection of the TOTs and teacher-trainees for *Refresh Your English* course begins in schools, following the 'cascade model'.

The Master Trainers frequently mentioned the following responsibilities or tasks for REBs:

- collaborate with the nearest higher education institution (HEI) rather than the MOE, which controls from Addis Ababa;
- listen to teachers' voices about their profession (i.e. content, methodology and skills self-development) and life conditions (i.e. freedom, poverty, salary, etc.); and
- be fair in selecting teachers for training programs (i.e. instead of political affiliation criteria).

Central to the above views is autonomy (preferential right of interpretation) over classroom practices and reflection on policy discourse practices.

Higher Education Institutions

For HEID, the data suggest alternative roles for them to play in ELTP/ELTIP and similar programs:

- arrange continuous professional development training programs so that EFL educators and teachers collaboratively inquire on/in their practices;
- mobilise EFL educators to actively take part in the development of training manuals/texts (i.e. instead of external contractors only) because they have rich experience in and with Ethiopian EFL secondary schools contexts;

- instead of corporate-like 'contractors') HEIs take over the role of designing, coordinating and offering ELTIP courses as in-service continuous professional development programs (it was noted above that one of the concerns is *timing*); and
- those who become EFL teachers (i.e. in the pre-service preparation) must be those who choose (by their own interest) to become English teachers (rather than the usual placement by MOE and the HEI under its control).

From the data it is obvious that the Master Trainers are disappointed with the present campaign-like, intermittent or crisis management approach to training. Far beyond so-called 'language proficiency training', Ethiopian EFL teachers require reflective, life-long and empowering education that scholars like Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire teach us. For this reason, as the data suggest, HEIs and EFL educators should take an active part in the process of dealing with the EFL crisis instead of few MOE élites and external contractors.

Teachers

The following are the most salient reflections of the Master Trainers regarding the roles and responsibilities of teachers so that not only English proficiency but also general English teaching-learning problems are addressed. Teachers should:

- re-own the right to take part in describing, talking about, explaining and researching the accurate status of English proficiency levels in Ethiopia;
- take responsibility for improving their own proficiency;
- design and administer classroom lessons and texts; and
- create their own EFL forum (networks, journals, magazines, etc.).

The participants' underlying aim is the re-owning of discourses, voices and control over their problems, pedagogy, syllabuses and classroom lessons

Schools

The central idea of the respondents pertaining to schools' responsibility is to 'allow teachers and students to form English language and literature clubs directly pertinent to their careers' (i.e., rather than being used for political purposes). Indeed, the same question is central to university English and vernacular languages students (especially Oromo and other minority nations and nationalities). Against its own *Higher Education Proclamation* 4/3 which states that one of the key objectives of Ethiopia's Higher Education Institutions is 'to ensure that education and research promote freedom of expression" (FDRE, 2009b, 4979), the government fears that if free expression is allowed, the status quo will be challenged, so the current control of students, teachers and educators' voices (e.g., banning literature or any social clubs, disallowing any free teacher or student association, closing down Internet information providers like Facebook, jamming the VOA Amharic and Afan Oromo programmes, etc.) is no different from the ongoing suppression of any dissidence (ICG, 2012).

Donors

Although the context of this study presupposes the BC or the UK government as the chief donor, the respondents repeatedly mentioned also USAID, due to their prior experience with it. Respondents advocated active and direct involvement (instead of through the government's impenetrable bureaucratic system), with schools being approached by academic agents instead of corporate- or charity-minded donors.

What is the Most Propitious Approach to Transforming the Unfading Problem?

One of the aims of this study was to explore alternative perspectives so that the problem could be minimised, if not totally removed. The above data analysis has more or less spotlighted the problem: the unyielding policy attempts to transform the chaos of Ethiopia's EFL education despite the huge amount of national and international donors' funds invested. One might well find it embarrassing that the billions of dollars allegedly spent on a single sector—education—failed to bring about meaningful change. In order to have a deeper understanding and formulate explanatory critique, it is necessary to put the expenditure on education into wider comparative perspective.

Various scholars and researchers have consistently pointed out that the relentless proselytizing-autocratic (one language/Amharic, one religion/Orthodox Christianity, one identity/Amharisation or Semiticisation) and militaristic-totalitarian nature of Ethiopian regimes has been the stumbling blocks to her socio-educational development throughout her history (Shack, 1959; Negash, 1990, 1996, 2006; Lata, 1999). According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (http://web.sipri.org), Ethiopia's expenditures on the military, health and education sectors as percentages of the country's gross domestic product from 1998-2001 were, respectively, 6.9, 1.5 and unknown. Another report indicates that Ethiopia's military expenditure in 2003 as 3 billion birr, which was 4.3 per cent of GDP (Adejumobi & Binega, 2006, 54). The recent SIPRI database discloses that it is the leading among the East African countries recording US$ 308 million in 2010. Besides, a UNDP report (2011, 12) Ethiopia is one of the top ten least developed countries, experienced US$8.4 billion illicit financial capital outflows between 1990 and 2008. Another report by researchers at the Political Economy Research Institute showed total capital flight from 1970 to 2010 as US$ 24.9 billion (constant $US 2010), which was an 83.8 per cent ratio to GDP in 2010 (Boyce & Ndikumana, 2012, 9). Critics of Ethiopian regimes argue that the official annual budget for military and intelligence is notoriously secretive and erratic. Uniformly, the successive autocratic-revolutionary Ethiopian regimes have always been justifying their militaristic behaviors with the pretext that 'her bitter enemies' surround this 'Christian island'.

Nonetheless, Ethiopia has alternative policy perspectives for transformation. The Master Trainers' alternative perspective for better relationships among International donors and the EFL agents listed above is re-constructed based on the results of data analysis and displayed in Figure 3.

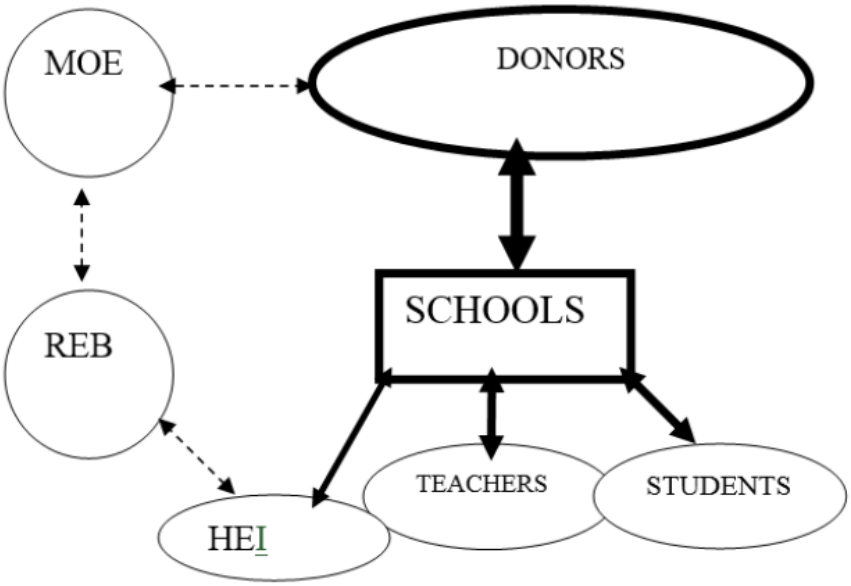


Figure 3: The Propitious Model for EFL Practice

The re-constructed model shows that the Master Trainers want the MOE and the REBs to remove their strict control over pedagogy and relationships among the donors, schools, teachers and students (marked by the broken lines and isolation towards the left-hand side in Figure 3). They also want unrestricted, direct and reciprocal relationships among the donors, schools and HIEs and teachers, teacher educators, students and the academic staffs of donor agents such as those of the British Council (marked by bi-directional and bold arrows toward the right-hand side). The EFL teachers and educators want higher levels of English proficiency as much as the government does. So paradoxical, the latter wants, simultaneously, both the EFL teachers/educators and the international EFL groups/donors to have no significant role in schools and classrooms. EFL teachers/educators not only want international EFL intervention groups, they want to get down to working with them directly. They also need ownership of their professional practice, including their 'poor' EFL proficiency and the task of improving it.

The 'Cascade Model' in use pays for the perpetuation of the past top-down, one-directional educational system wherein relation among the agents of education is closed or any condition for free communicative action/forum among the agents is vehemently insulated. So symptomatic of the autocratic-dictatorial political history of the country, this Model evidently emanates from the ruling party's *Revolutionary Democracy* ideology, a "Leninist" ideology fancy of teaching a "rank-and-file" formula, "feeding" a "single….established…'scientific' truth" and impatient to any reflective question as to "Why a change is needed and how it does not constitute a departure from the truths originally established as scientific…[or] introducing a new idea" results in being identified as " 'reactionary'" (Lata, 1999, 91) or, nowadays, "terrorist". The consequence is, among others, donors and important agents such as the British Council are squeezed out of the educational system. Ultimately, the central state tightens up its strict control over policies, syllabuses, schools and HIEs while it deprives the (EFL) teachers/educators of not only the opportunity to exercise their knowledge and skills in school classrooms, but also blocks any chance to reflect, research and know the existing condition, generative/causal factors or alternative perspectives/solutions to their problems.

Conclusion and Implications

The intention of this study was to examine the EFL proficiency problem of teachers in the Ethiopian socio-educational context of international donation and discourse about social transformation. As the data revealed, for EFL teachers and educators what is at stake is their holistic development: the right to a relatively fair standard of living (enough to buy the basics, such as food, housing and clothing as well as books for themselves and their children) and treatment as free and social-critical citizens (to freely inquire, teach, write, speak in whichever language). Indeed, no matter how many 'transformation' plans or 'training' programs are promoted, in a social context, which suppresses these fundamental conditions, neither effective level of EFL proficiency, nor professional competence can be realised.

No surprise, despite the fact that the English language has been declared in policy as medium of instruction in junior/secondary and tertiary levels, as well as accorded a 'prestigious' attitude by Ethiopian students, currently, it is forced to appear 'difficult', 'not-my-language', 'is foreign' and, hence, it is okay to go along with 'broken English' (these are confirmed by Heugh et.al, 2007). Indeed, under such conditions, Ethiopian English learners and teachers have neither opportunity nor authentic purpose for 'target language use' (Bachman & Palmer 1996), which, nevertheless, is one of the fundamental preconditions for language proficiency/competence development. Therefore, the idea that Ethiopian teachers are poor in English because English is 'a foreign language and, hence, they have no opportunity to practice' (Heugh, et.al, 2007, 107), is a flawed argument.

Significant implications for international and intranational cooperation can be drawn from the findings of this study. Firstly, granting a developing nation enormous amount of money, *per se*, will never enable it to 'grow it up modern'. Nor is it possible for the donors, who, as was seen in this study, are chiefly the English as Native Language (ENL) nations, to export perfect proficiency to the EFL nation. The prevailing taste for spoon-feeding the EFL nation and its EFL teachers in tailor-made and piecemeal fashion, inside the 'training rooms' of four-/five-star hotels owned by corrupt government officials in the capital city, not only reproduces the relentless problem but also encourages absurd teacher-/victim-blaming discourses.

Secondly, beyond possessing a desire to 'grow-up modern,' the EFL nation should clean its own stable. That means it must democratise its socio-educational systems in much the same way as the 'icons of growth'--the donor ENL nations. Also, the latter should monitor whether their donations actually reach the needy teachers: they are usually misappropriated under secret agreements between the donors' own and the fragile state's actor. First and foremost, the donor states and their agents must strongly adhere to attaching their donations and diplomatic relations with the fragile states' degree of commitment and practice of democratization, freedom of expression (in English) and respect for the fundamental human rights.

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Appendix One

Questionnaire (abbreviated)

Dear Master Trainer, I'd be very grateful to you if you devote few minutes to completing this questionnaire.

(1) Background:
(A) I come from (tick •): (i) a secondary school: …..; (ii) a college of teacher education: …..; (iii) a university's English department…..
(B) My experience in years: …..
(2) I describe the English proficiency level of Ethiopia's secondary school teachers as: …..
(3) I describe this training (of Master Specialist Trainers) as: …..
(4) In order for this Master Trainers Specialist Development training to improve in the future:
(A) The Ministry of Education should……
(B) The British Council should ……
(C) The trainers of us Master Trainers (Super-Trainers) should…..
(5) My two big fears that I think will incapacitate the success of the whole ELTIP program (the Cascade Model) are:
(A)……
(B)…..
*(6) Which LACK do you relatively rate as High (**H**), Medium (**M**) or Never (**N**) when it comes to secondary English teachers (write the letters on the spaces):*
(A) Lack of English proficiency …..
(B) Lack of academic/scientific awareness about English teaching methodology…..
(C) Lack of professional autonomy to work as theory of language teaching demands…..
(D) Lack of life conditions (sufficient salary, etc.) …..
(7) Who should do what for Ethiopian secondary EFL teachers' English proficiency to improve? …..