

# Ethiopia's Mother Tongue Instructional Language Policy: a Methodological Discourse

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## Abstract

During Haile Selase's presidency, a formal language policy was created for the first time. And while the Dergu's language strategy was expected to result in the growth of multiple Ethiopian languages, it instead focused on the use of just one. Following the demise of the Dergue, our country has experienced a change toward a mother tongue instructional language policy since 1994, when the previous EPRDF was in power. The goal of this study is to explain and demonstrate Ethiopian mother tongue instructional language development, implementation, and outcomes. A contextual discourse analysis was used to bring the study to life. To that end, after providing a brief background on Ethiopia's present mother tongue instructional language policy, an examination of the policy's creation and execution, as well as its issues, was examined through document inspection and analysis. Finally, the findings revealed that the author of this study valued the benefits of a mother tongue instructional policy for students; however, the researcher contends that making a hasty decision to formulate and implement a mother tongue instructional language policy without taking into account the existing unbalanced stage of development among different regions and the lack of or insufficient readiness to provide education in the mother tongue instructional language appears to be more threatening. An in-depth feasibility study focusing on students' pedagogical demands and the country's population distribution pattern is suggested as a way to ensure that a real and suitable mother tongue instructional language policy is properly monitored.

**Keywords:** Instructional language, mother tongue, and policy

## Introduction

Following the fall of the Dergu time, the previous EPRDF (the present Prosperity Party) changed their education policies. During the Dergu's rule, Amharic was the only medium of primary education across the nation; however, after the EPRDF came to power, a variety of mother tongue instructional languages were adopted as primary education media. As a result, the previous EPRDF made a dramatic reform in the field of mother tongue instructional language utilization in elementary schools. Yes, it is likely the most visible embodiment of the current instructional language policy in Ethiopia's educational system than anywhere else (Getachew and Dereb, 2006) [21]. In its education and training policy (1994), the government stated clearly:

1. Develop people' physical, mental, and problem-solving capabilities by increasing education in general and providing basic education for everyone in particular.
2. Realize the private and societal benefits of education to raise people who can care for and use resources responsibly, as well as be skilled in a variety of abilities.
3. Raise citizens who respect human rights, advocate for people's well-being, equality, justice, and peace, and are raised in a democratic culture and discipline;
4. Raise citizens who can distinguish between harmful and beneficial practices, who seek and stand for truth, value aesthetics, and have a positive attitude toward the advancement and dissemination of science and technology,
5. Develop people' cognitive, creative, productive, and appreciating potential by aligning education with

environmental and societal requirements.

Education, particularly contemporary education, is an essential tool for a country's social, cultural, political, and economic growth. As a result, our nation, Ethiopia, has been investing a large portion of its annual budget to the education sector, which has resulted in the sector developing at an alarming rate (Tekeste, 2006) [45]. The growth was accelerated because of a strong belief that education can eliminate poverty. To secure the growth of Ethiopian society, the government vigorously preached and supported poverty reduction using education as a weapon.

The broad growth of the scheme was really driven by the Ethiopian government's poverty reduction plan policy, which was obliged to be submitted to the World Bank as a requirement for receiving progressive and ongoing loans and help. Another policy that has contributed to the rapid expansion of schools is the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which aim to assist and support the world's least developed countries by providing universal primary education to their citizens and halving the number of people living below the poverty line of one dollar per day (Tekeste, 2006) [45]. Mother tongue instructional language policies in various countries where their people speak a variety of languages have been the subject of heated debates and arguments as a result of historical factors such as colonization, war, multi-ethnic nation-building, or more recent phenomena such as globalization immigration and the spread of Anglo-American cultural influences.

## Methods and Procedures

The author of this mother tongue instructional language policy analysis employed a document analysis as a technique of inquiry, which falls under the genre of qualitative inquiry. As a result, a number of related mother tongue instructional language documents were gathered, and an analysis of the mother tongue instructional language policy issue definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation was conducted professionally and objectively after a thorough reading of them. Thirty (thirty) published studies, written by both local and foreign scholars, were used to provide a thorough mother tongue instructional language policy study. Similarly, the Central Statistical Authority Yearly Abstract, the well-known 1994 Education and Training Policy Document, as well as the 1999 and 2003 annual abstracts issued by the Ministry of Education, were used as important policy document foundations. In all, 34 (thirty-four) thematic documents were used as secondary sources of data in this study, as detailed in the reference section.

## An Approach Based on Theory

Mother tongue language is a language that children have used in everyday conversation since they were very young. Children gain experiences, skills, and information from their family, their environment, and the larger community. Children will benefit from the quality and experiences they gained from their cultures, as well as lessons learned in the classroom or school setting, by readily forming a logical link because the medium of communication is what they know as mother language (Kembo, 2000) <sup>[46]</sup>. Because they have strong foundations in their mother tongue languages, children will succeed. A student's cognitive and affective growth is most efficient when he or she is speaking the language that they are most familiar with (May, 2001) <sup>[26]</sup>.

It is necessary to educate both teachers and students using their immediate mother tongue instructional languages in order to achieve dependable quality education (Poon, 2000) <sup>[31]</sup>. According to Bamagose (2007), employing mother tongue instructional languages helps instructors and students grow their knowledge, attitudes, and abilities. Furthermore, by employing their mother tongue instructional languages prior to introducing a second instructional language, students will be able to have somewhat greater self-confidence and will be able to quickly comprehend concepts of the subject matters that they have obtained (Ricento, 2006) <sup>[33]</sup>.

As a result, implementing a mother tongue instructional policy is critical for students' successful learning and long-term development of skill knowledge and attitude. However, in order to have a successful implementation of the mother tongue instructional language policy, interested stakeholders must encourage students and instructors in their use of mother tongue instructional language. Teachers must play a key role and take responsibility for improved implementation by actively participating in various educational reform activities in the classroom (Wright, 2000) <sup>[42]</sup>.

Furthermore, pupils may readily comprehend concepts and topics of a specific subject when they are taught in their mother tongue first language. To begin, it is necessary to comprehend the language of education in order to comprehend the content of a subject matter. However, if pupils are forced to acquire such courses in new and second languages, their grasp of concepts and ideas will be inadequate. Knowing the sounds, meanings, idioms, and cultural notions utilized in instructional language that is not

their home tongue may be challenging, and the quality of education will undoubtedly be questioned. As a result, the pupils will be unsuccessful in their learning and will be victims of the incorrect instructional language usage policy's consequences.

## Policy on Instructional Language in Mother Tongue

Despite the fact that Ethiopia is a country with more than 80 countries, each with their own languages, for the longest time, just one language (Amharic) was the medium of teaching throughout the country at all elementary school levels. When the Derg administration came to power in 1974, the notion of employing nationality language as an educational medium was explored and planned, but it never got off the ground. And, at the elementary school level, the old EPRDF (the present Prosperity Party) formally began to employ the mother tongue instructional languages of many ethnicities and nationalities as a means of communication.

The simple issue that arises in everyone's mind is why did it take such a long time to begin instruction in the mother tongue? Why have there been no multilingual mother tongue language policy in Ethiopia for years? Since Ethiopia had been governed by a feudal monarchy for a long time, it was obvious. And it was uncharacteristic of the empirical system to handle the ethnic language issue, which necessitated democratic thinking that was not in the interests of feudal lords. On top of that, the rulers believed that a single language was necessary for the countries' unity and independence. They are convinced that the country's long history of independence is attributable to the country's refusal to use a split language.

Various imperial governments promoted the use of a single national language as a means of preserving the country's unity. Attempting to have different mother tongue instructional languages was seen as an attempt to divide countries, which the feudal lord saw as a test of national disintegration. According to Seyoum (1997) <sup>[36]</sup>, feudal rulers in all scenarios failed to see and foresee the grave risk of imposing only one national language on a multiethnic nation, which was viewed as a "de facto declaration of war on others."

Understanding the problem of the feudalist gap and the need to pique people's interest, it appears that the Dergue regime attempted to shift from promoting one single language as a tool for national unity to encouraging the use of the remaining languages for political gain. One of the notable initiatives made during the Dergu time was the governmental decision to initiate an adult literacy program in fifteen mother tongue languages (Ayalew, 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>.

The literacy drive, which began in 1979 and used 15 mother tongue languages, continued until the fall of the Dergu time in 1991. In addition to launching a literacy drive, the Dergu administration made significant policy decisions regarding the transcription of these languages into the Ethiopic alphabet (traditionally used for Semitic Languages in the country).

The majority of them had never been written before. Although the socialist government made a good start in providing literacy campaigns in various languages, the use of these languages was limited to the non-formal education sector, and the government failed or had no interest in using these languages as mother tongue instructional languages in formal school systems (Ayalew, 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>. As a result, the Amharic language has remained the exclusive medium of teaching in ordinary primary school.

When the EPRDF came to power in 1991, there was a desire to use the various ethnic group languages for educational

purposes, and a policy statement was created to that end. And there were two explanations given for the decision. The first was the EPRDF's political inclination after the Dergu regime was overthrown, and the Western Democracy style became the front's stand, forcing them to consider the interests of various nations by including liberty, equality, truth, and above all, respect for human rights in their core beliefs (Seyoum, 1996) <sup>[37]</sup>.

Second, the party was formed by bringing together many ethnic groups, which led to them demonstrating respect for their members' languages in their daily activities. The Amharic ethnic group rulers were branded by EPRDF members, notably the Tigraway ethnic group, as they suppressed any non-Amharic culture, language, and identity (Seyoum, 1996) <sup>[37]</sup>. With this leveling and attitude in mind, as well as the formal form of the EPRDF, the ethnic language agenda has been a primary concern since 1991. As a result of the previous rulers' attitude toward Amharic speakers, it's clear to see how expressing the worth of other nations' and nationalities' languages and creating a policy framework was a blessed task and a simple matter to handle.

### Policy Making

When the government presents a constructive policy problem in Ethiopia's history, the failure to have a strong systematic approach and internal desire in making core policy processes function has resulted in the topic not being implemented. This failure was seen in the 1970s, when a promising education sector review program was launched with the goal of implementing radical educational reform in the country, but it failed before it could be implemented due to opposition from opposing thinkers who had a different idea, as if it was politically motivated, which contributed to the imperial regime's collapse in 1974. (Country studies, 1991) <sup>[14]</sup>.

In a similar vein, competing viewpoints were observed throughout the development and implementation of the present language policy. According to Ayalew (1999) <sup>[9]</sup>, a conference for peace and democracy was held in Addis Ababa from July 2 to 6, 1991, when the transitional government assumed office. The main topic of discussion at this conference was the development of a policy guideline for the rapid implementation of a primary school instructional language policy based on five major ethnic languages (Ayalew, 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>. Parallel to debating the drafting of policy guidelines, this meeting determined on the script in which the language would be written. To that end, the Ethiopic Alphabet serves as a reminder for Semantic language usage, whereas the LATIN ALPHABET serves as a reminder for Cushitic Language usage, as most minority language groups are classified (Tekeste, 1996) <sup>[39]</sup>.

Important concerns arose shortly following the decision on the alphabet's use. The first was in the conferences that were convened in order to make such a significant linguistic policy choice. For obvious reasons, several political parties claiming to represent various ethnic groups made up a sizable portion of the attendees. However, according to Ayalew (2000) <sup>[10]</sup> and Tekeste, (1996) <sup>[39]</sup> arguments, there was no indication that the respective speakers of the language were carefully inquired and evaluated their true desire in using either Ethiopic or Cushitic alphabet usage. These two researchers firmly asserted that the choice taken at that meeting was extremely politicized, demonstrating apparent disdain for the Ethiopic alphabet as a result of its script belonging to the so-called Amhara ethnic group, which had been in political control for about a century. Looking at the economic and

linguistic benefits of utilizing the Ethiopic script over the Cushitic alphabet, one may rationally conclude that using Ethiopic could make preparing language materials easier and less expensive.

### Participation of Important Stakeholders in the Policymaking Process

Since its start, top-level authorities have supported the use of mother tongue instructional language policy, but they have failed to devote enough effort to creating the agenda and allowing various development supporters to enrich the policy specifics. In retrospect, it appears worthwhile to inquire about the constituents engaged in the official document's formulation. According to Seyoum (1996) <sup>[37]</sup>, five taskforces with a total of 42 members were formed for the purpose of establishing a general education policy that included a mother tongue instructional language policy. The ministry of education, Addis Ababa University, the ministry of health, the ministry of agriculture, the ministry of science and technology, and others were among the assigned taskforce for this policy formation (Ayalew, 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>.

The ministry of education held many meetings and seminars with teachers shortly after finishing the initial draft of the mother tongue instructional language policy review. Despite the fact that teachers were requested to participate in discussions on education policy in general and mother tongue instructional language in particular, their helpful suggestions were not included in the final policy paper. Worst of all, the Ethiopian Teachers Union had split in two as a result of the absence of teacher views on the policy paper. The one who supports the finished policy and the other who opposes it and views it as an imposed policy with no input from the appropriate experts known as instructors (Seyoum, 1996) <sup>[37]</sup>.

### The Power Relationships of Major Actors

#### 1. Actors in Key Roles

Although there are many cultural distinctions in the policymaking process, there are certain common methods. For example, before we can perceive the notion of policy implementation, we must first see the concept of policy adoption (Fowler 2004) <sup>[19]</sup>. It is true that the development of mother tongue instructional language policy in Ethiopia did not fully follow the scientific logical methods and phases due to the strong impact of politically injected lobby organizations. Different languages were already in use before the ratification of education and training policy, with the subject of language policy in general and mother tongue instructional language policy in particular. This was approved in a 1991 meeting conducted by the council of representatives. As a result, since different mother tongue instructional languages were in use at schools prior to the official approval of the educational policy, we can conclude that the 1994 policy did not introduce any new mother tongue instructional language ideas, but rather it was merely an approval and continuation of what had already been approved by the 1991 conference decision. Of course, we can't dispute that the 1994 education and training policy took a more restrictive approach in its legislative document by giving proper respect to the pedagogical benefits of utilizing mother tongue instructional language regulations. This policy stated unequivocally that if we need to change the children's learning capability, pedagogically, it is advisable to teach them entirely in their mother tongue instructional language, and that the Ethiopian nation's nationalities and peoples have an undeniable right to promote and well use their language,



including in the formal school system. Furthermore, it is clearly established that elementary education would be delivered in the nationality language (MoE, 1994) <sup>[27]</sup>.

## 2. Power Dynamics Among the Primary Players in the Policymaking Process

It was attempted to adapt and use the PRINCE system of power analysis concept, which was first modified and delivered by Fowler (2004) <sup>[19]</sup> in order to map retrospectively and in a more comprehensive and meaningful manner, in order to gain a better understanding of the power relationship in the process of mother tongue instructional language policy. To present an overview of the PRINCE problem, it should be noted that the phrase is not new, but it is an allusion to Machiavellian's politically field handbook, which Coplin and O' Leay (as described in Fowler, 2004) <sup>[19]</sup> used to construct a method of power analysis. Fowler has accomplished a great deal by altering these writers' work from having five level scales to employing their backdrop notion. By assigning the zero value to the position indication of neutral, he has leveled into highly supporting (+3) to strongly opposing (-3) in his three levels adjustment.

The probability of implementing a given policy idea is calculated using the PRINCE model by dividing the total number of those who love the policy topic by the total number of those who do not like the policy issue. For example, if those who loved the policy topic are 89 and those who did not are 31, the general output according to the PRINCE model will be (89+31) divided by 120, or 74%.

### Implementation of Policies

Although the backdrop notion of employing the mother tongue instructional language policy is eloquently worded, the thought of attempting to put it into reality requires great caution and discernment, since it signifies a great deal to ethnically minded politicians. Because of the political sensitivity of the mother tongue instructional language issue, an adaptation of it may have special characteristics that merit attention. The abruptness of the process must be studied in order to explain more about its unique feature of policy implementation stage.

Since it is awakened by the formal provision of the policy, various ethnic group members and other concerned politicians need to be more active in the trial of implementing the mother tongue instructional language policy. Although the implementation of our country's mother tongue instructional language policy is politically ethnically sensitive, adequate time and proper agreement with all interested parties were not given; rather, it was accepted and executed in a haste (Ayalew, 1999, Wagaw, 1999) <sup>[9, 41]</sup>. It appears that while implementing and putting into practice this mother tongue instructional language policy, the regions failed to use a variety of progressive and well-directed policy implementation approaches, possibly due to a fear of their mother tongue language being delayed due to the extra autocracy of professionals and politicians.

After 1994, a large quantity of Amharic language topic books were promptly translated into other Ethiopian ethnic languages for all grade levels by continuing to perform language implementation in a hurry. Because the use of a new Cushitic script was adopted during the deployment of written mother tongue instructional language, a short-term training for instructors who could speak the language with a new script was required. Because a large number of well-experienced and qualified teachers and administrators did not

speak the intended local mother tongue language, they were removed and replaced by local native language practitioners, which appears to be purely a political decision to dominate the original language users without taking into account the content experience of those old and experienced professionals (Wagaw, 1999) <sup>[41]</sup>. For example, after the Afar region implemented its mother tongue instructional language policy, underqualified personnel such as grade 7 and 8 dropouts have been appointed to teach the mother tongue instructional language topic, as well as Woreda's education office managers. Surprisingly, in addition to the use of a rushed, un-discussed mother tongue instructional language curriculum, there were insufficient mother tongue instructional language resources in nearly all regions, affecting the full-fledged use of this language in schools. Surprisingly, the national director of curriculum and instruction admitted that the newly adopted media of instruction have little or no literacy stocks such as dictionaries, glossaries, and other printed literature, right after the unofficial and official implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy at curriculum (Dereje, 2001) <sup>[17]</sup>. Despite these flaws and drawbacks, the mother tongue instructional language policy remained in place, serving as the region's instructional language curriculum in over 25 native languages.

### The Present Mother Tongue Instructional Policy's Material and Human Resources

As is clear, both human and material resources are required for the successful implementation of mother tongue instructional language policy. For the successful implementation of the essential mother tongue instructional language policy in the specified regional regions, well-trained and motivated teachers, as well as school administrators, who can comprehend and speak the regional instructional language, are equally vital. Furthermore, as modern instructional resources that take into account the cultural makeup of the community are required for the comprehensive application of mother tongue instructional language at the primary school level.

In general, with enough human and material resources, the implementation of a mother tongue instructional language policy as an educational input will undoubtedly be successful. So, before taking any action, these materials must be readily available in order to achieve a professional change to using mother tongue instructional language in elementary schools, where it belongs. Similarly, the availability of well-prepared reference books with additional enriching further reading materials provided in the students' mother tongue language is beneficial for improving teaching and learning processes and achieving the desired academic outcomes at a low cost.

It is also obvious that, as role models for their pupils, instructors must be well prepared and taught in their native language, which may be enhanced by good and quality preparation. In the meanwhile, instructors must focus on their mother language teaching in order to achieve success. As a result, selecting mother tongue language teachers requires considerable work and careful consideration. Above all, the chosen teachers must be enthusiastic about the language's use and instruction. Following the selection of instructors, adequate pedagogical training must be provided by allotting appropriate time. During the training of mother tongue instructional language teachers, practical on-the-job training is essential for mastery of the needed information, attitude, and abilities. Similarly, practitioners must be educated and trained in depth on the diversity of society's social groupings

and cultural origins. One point that must be emphasized is that before persons are selected to teach mother tongue local language instructors, they must first get sufficient knowledge of the benefits and scientific potential of teaching and learning in the mother tongue. Participation of the Community in the Current Mother Tongue Instructional Policy.

Ball (2010) <sup>[48]</sup> claims that delivering instruction in the local mother tongue language can help parents, communities, and even individuals have a better knowledge of technical, political, and ideological issues. However, while employing mother tongue instructional language in the teaching and learning process is more important for long-term language use, parents and communities' engagement and participation are also important. The benefits of adopting the language may be seen clearly with strong parental and community support and engagement. If parents are actively involved in their children's education, they may aid by establishing schools, supplying supplies from locally accessible resources, and assisting in the selection of competent instructors for training.

### **Mother Tongue Language Awareness and Attitudes**

The attitude and knowledge of the local populations might have a good or negative impact on the deployment of mother tongue instructional language at the school level. Whatever piece of cake proposal and strong commitment the government declares, it will not receive widespread coverage and implementation unless it also has adequate support and commitment from the local society at the grassroots level. If the community does not approve of the project, it will undoubtedly have a negative impact. As a result, the government and other interested parties should focus more on raising awareness and changing attitudes, which is critical for the continued deployment of the mother tongue instructional language.

One thing to keep in mind is that if this mother tongue instructional language is employed for the first time as a medium of teaching, individuals may not be interested in using it completely because the old one already has economic, social, and political foundations. As a result, adequate time must be allowed for the progressive separation from the existing language. Continuous engagement of local government agencies, native language speakers, and religious leaders is critical at this stage in raising society awareness.

### **Problems with the Language Policy's Implementation**

We also know that good and well-designed planning is required for the successful deployment of mother tongue instructional language. And, without a full-fledged and well-designed plan, the mother tongue instructional language's correct implementation will undoubtedly be jeopardized. The three obvious concerns that result from a lack of appropriate planning are highlighted as follows in this section:

The first concern is the presence of diverse communities. In response to this issue, UNESCO suggested in 1953 that if mixed groups are inevitable, education should be offered in the language that causes the least difficulty to the majority of students, with special attention given to those who do not know the language of instruction (UNESCO, 2003) <sup>[44]</sup>. Likewise, because Ethiopians live in settlements where the dominant and less dominant live together, the UNESCO problem can be evident if not adequately managed ahead of time. The situation will undoubtedly intensify, especially in urban and suburban regions. According to political parties' decisions, there was a planning difficulty in 1991 when the

new policy was introduced, and no arrangements were made for children in these villages.

In November 1992, the Ministry of Education sent an urgent circular to numerous areas (Ref no. 15/1-94/19334/11) after reviewing the concerns in various locations (Ayalew, 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>. The Ministry of Education issued a circular ordering the use of the old AMHARIC language to offer education to certain problem-affected areas and communities. By doing so, you can use a shift system or any other adaptable technique. The Ministry of Education's proposed departure plan, on the other hand, was not entirely embraced until recently. Rather, many parents have moved their children's schools to central regions where mixed populations study (1995, Hoben) <sup>[23]</sup>.

The second issue that was discovered when trying to execute the language policy was the compelled use of mother tongue instructional language. The issue here was that, despite the government's abrupt shift in instructional language policy, the children who did not know the language as a result of the mixed makeup of the neighborhoods created a new dilemma. The implementation of the mother tongue language failed to give the people of those communities' precedence, instead giving priority to ethnic mother tongues, causing another snafu with the children's ages and learning interests. Despite the fact that several studies have demonstrated that children learn better when they speak their mother tongue, the United Nations (1989) <sup>[43]</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child specifies that children should not be denied the opportunity to speak their native tongue. The mixed nature of the communities, on the other hand, must be viewed with caution (Hobben, 1995) <sup>[23]</sup>. Another set of parents whose true need for linguistic choice has been downplayed by political authorities is represented by the same approach. Dawro, Goffa, Gamo, and Wolita were the four ethnic groups whose mother tongue dialectics were forgotten, and a new politically prepared language named WOGAGODA was given to use as a mother tongue instructional language against the interests of those four ethnic groups, which was once again a major issue during the introduction of mother tongue instructional language in Ethiopia's southern nations. The lack of appropriate resources for creating educational materials for each ethnic group with dynamic dialectics was most likely the driving force for policymakers. The newly established political language was not claimed by any groups, and its deployment was met with fierce hostility (Ayalew 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>.

The interest and appeals of parents and community members were ultimately sought and the decision was reversed, but only after lives were lost and property was harmed, as Ayalew clearly explained in his research (Ayalew 1999) <sup>[9]</sup>. The failure of WAGAGODA plainly demonstrated a lack of comprehension on the part of policymakers of the different realities of people who were the primary players in enacting the language shift (Fullan, 2000) <sup>[20]</sup>. In the instance of WAGADOGA, policymakers not only overlooked and weakened local realities and value systems, but they also shifted the entire purpose of language of instruction, which is a human right, for economic considerations. The third issue encountered when adopting the mother tongue instructional language in Ethiopia was the lack of local people's quality and competence to conduct decentralization. As Fowler (2000) <sup>[18]</sup> shown in his study, adopting a multitude of adjustments at the same time reduces the policy endeavor's potential benefit.

From Fowler's perspective, a lot of policy attempts in Ethiopia have made the same mistake of altering everything too soon. It is important to note that the new government not only altered the instructional language policy, but also

modified practically all text books, syllabuses, and systems at an alarming rate in response to the introduction of instructional language with little or no time spent on it.

Decentralization of educational organization and management, the introduction of a new teacher career ladder, the adoption of new curricula, and the development of a new system of financing public higher education are just a few of the new policies that have been implemented alongside the mother tongue instructional language policy (MoE, 1994) [27]. As a result, several educational modifications were implemented in Ethiopia in the early 1990s. However, most of it will not be examined since it is outside the scope of this examination. The writer's main goal is to demonstrate that implementing mother tongue instructional language policy is an inevitability as a result of many fundamental educational changes as a result of the country's political shift, which has impacted the very practicality of instructional language policy change.

When multiple stakeholders' will and capacity are brought together, decentralization will be considerably more beneficial. Trying to make various political reforms from the top down would not only be ineffective, but it will also be difficult for people to embrace as their own. (Ayalew, *et al.*, 2000) [10]. Furthermore, decentralization has resulted in a lack of linkage between regional and local constituents. According to a number of studies, including Swanson, 2000 [38], Gibton, Sabar, and Goldering 2000 [22], the achievement of any country's decentralization legislation requires well-coordinated efforts from all socioeconomic groups and areas. If we continue to have significant regional variances in the implementation of the language policy at the primary school level, the curriculum output will fall short of expectations. For instance, our policy declared that English would be employed as the medium of teaching for secondary and higher education. However, some areas employed it as a medium of instruction in grades 5, 7, and 9, which has a detrimental impact on regional language competency and creates unequal differences among children across the country.

### Concluding Remark

According to Hoben (1995) [23], allocating decision-making over language usage to ethnicity is the preferable strategy to promote minority self-determination and empowerment. It would also be critical to provide a variety of possibilities for them to make their own appropriate decisions. Furthermore, using comparable language at home and at school helped to bridge the gap between the two (Krashe, 1997 & Rothstein 1990) [25, 49]. Likewise, utilizing comparable mother tongue instructional language boosts parents' commitment to school issues, allowing them to better inform themselves about their children (Rothstein 1998) [35]. It will, above all, boost the kids' academic achievement (Rodriguez, 1998) [35]. The aforesaid merits, on the other hand, will only be realized if and when the right circumstances exist.

The responsible policy emphasizes that the instructional mother language policy has shown to be an effective instrument for enhancing student learning. Above all, the policy has fostered a feeling of ethnic identification and communal culture realization (MoE, 1991) [50].

The Ministry of Education also believed that enacting a mother tongue instructional policy had increased public awareness and participation in educational matters. Even if the mother tongue instructional policy has brought a favorable trial for many places, the law educational accomplishment of language minority pupils for whom the policy supported was

the main challenge experienced. Regional inequalities by primary school net enrolment rate range from the lowest 10% to the greatest 91.5 percent, according to the MoE's annual abstract from 2003. As the data shows, a large percentage of linguistic minority regional groupings perform below the national average. To give you a better idea, in 2002/03, no student from Afar or Gambella scored more than 250 out of 400 in the Ethiopian Higher Education Certificate Examination (EHECE) (MoE). This information demonstrates how large the geographic disparity is. Despite the fact that there is some variation between areas, the strategy has been unable to close such large discrepancies for several years. In this regard, one might pose a critical issue by stating that if we have such disparities across areas for a number of years, what is the purpose of having such a policy? This question is crucial for bridging such gaps and resolving such issues. Researchers and policymakers should go back to the beginning of language policy development to solve this essential topic.

It is impossible to achieve and anticipate success and progress from the instructional language policy when the most significant stakeholders, such as educators, parents, students, and the whole regional peoples, are excluded from the policy-making process. Politicians, of course, may claim that they accomplished this and that on mother tongue instructional language policy since they are the only external policy actors that orchestrate it.

### Action Plan for the Future

To be honest, implementing a mother tongue instructional language strategy in the school system of a multicultural society is far more important and rational in pedagogical thought. However, as will be mentioned briefly below, such instructional reform must take into account the local, global, and stakeholder realities.

1. To improve the execution of a specific language policy problem, we must learn from our mistakes and engage in adequate engagement and conversation. The present mother tongue instructional language policy was allocated by the former EPRDF for the express aim of political gain, with little input from stakeholders. If experts discussed it, genuine attention would be paid to pupils' learning and national economic gains. All involved persons, including competing political parties, civic groups, parents, kids' instructors, educational administrators, religious leaders, and others, must be properly included into the participation process. Not only will the policy's quality increase, but the concept of democratic participation will be upheld, and the policy's outcome will be significantly enhanced.
2. Before attempting to adopt a mother tongue instructional policy, educational resources necessary for its implementation (e.g., students' text books, instructors' guides, syllabuses, listening materials, and other supplemental reading materials) must be created ahead of time.
3. It was also suggested that efficient and well-trained mother tongue instructional language teachers be assigned to schools, with capacity building work being given to those who have already been assigned to improve their subject matter knowledge, teaching methods, and continuous assessment techniques.
4. Because we live in a globalized world, educational activities and ideas must be examined from a viewpoint that extends beyond local perspectives. Since the globe is



now regarded a one village employing core languages like English, focus should not be given just to mother tongue instructional languages without giving English and other global languages an equal chance. As a result, it's a good idea to include international language variables for better communication and computation with people all over the world.

5. Because our mother nation has over 80 ethnic groups, the present mother tongue instructional language was only implemented in a few localities, while others were compelled to learn a contrived political language that ignored their existing local reality. Furthermore, the failure result revealed that engaging in any educational activity for an extended length of time results in failure. As a result, in order to better execute the policy agenda, a detailed feasibility analysis of localities must be conducted, as well as a well-discussed local language usage.

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