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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA*

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Introduction

The difficulties involved in the formulation of the aims and objectives of any national educational system are many and obvious. Chiefly, these pertain to finding the appropriate source or sources for such aims and objectives and finding the most suitable format for their presentation.

Such is the intimate connection between educational aims and national aims that the former in fact assume a clear formal and well-articulated statement of the latter. Such a formal statement of national aims or a national political economic and social ideology does not exist for this country. We, therefore, have had to fall back on a number of informal sources in formulating what we believe to be the educational aims valid for Ethiopia. These sources fall into three broad categories. Firstly, we have drawn upon what we, as Ethiopians of life-long acquaintance with our own country have come to regard as basic and widespread values and aspirations in our own society. Secondly, we have canvassed what the political and intellectual leadership of this country believes to be valid educational and national aims for Ethiopia. This we have done by examining various official and semi-official documents, speeches and minutes of discussions as well as non official written expressions of opinion by enlightened Ethiopians. Thirdly, we have tried to examine the efforts of other countries that have attempted a similar task, especially those whose history, social structure and economy is comparable to our own.

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Having drawn upon all these sources we have attempted to weld together a statement that is organic and that responds uniquely to the current Ethiopian situation.

Our second difficulty arises from the fact that statements of aims and objectives in general have a tendency to sound nebulous and platitudinous even when they are based on serious thinking and application. It is difficult to state general aims in operationally testable form, precisely because they are general aims. For the same reason, we have thought it advisable to refrain from making specific quantitative targets in any part of our statement. In this sense, therefore, the accent in our statement has been heavier on general aims than on shorter-run objectives. As to the structure of our presentation we are aware that this is merely one of a number of equally good alternatives.

General Aims

The Need: Discussions concerning the development of Ethiopian education today generally gravitate towards the urgent need of a clear statement of aims and objectives. This need has been clearly elaborated in the annual report of the Education Commission for E. C. 1962. On the basis of many in depth interviews held by the Commission with Ethiopians in various walks of life the following major problems were identified:-

- a) The philosophy, aims, objectives and hopes of Ethiopian Education have not been clearly established.
- b) The educational system gives undue weight to foreign textbooks, methodology and approaches. There is need for suitably adapted textbooks and approaches.
- c) The Ethiopian culture and language have not been given their due importance. It has not been established in what grades and to what extent these should be taught.
- d) The general needs of Ethiopia have not been clearly determined and consequently the goals of the educational system have been equally hazy.
- e) The curriculum and general plan of Ethiopian education have been shifting with every obstacle that came up.

- f) It is necessary to re-examine the wisdom of attempting to spread educational opportunities while providing an education that ranges over sixteen years as is done at present.¹

It seems to be fully realized as we can gather from the above statement and many like it, that to attempt to make a general educational plan, devise a curriculum and prepare textbooks in the absence of a well-pondered and clearly articulated statement of aims and objectives is a wellnigh impossible task. What then should be the aims and objectives of Ethiopian education?

Attitudinal Changes:- At the most general level perhaps the most important service that an educational system can render is to change those basic attitudes prevalent in our traditional society that are inconsistent with the modern society that we are aspiring towards. Traditional man in Ethiopia as elsewhere has been characterized by this resigned attitude towards the problems of life, and has tended to attribute these to supernatural intervention in order to justify his patient acceptance or superstitious reaction. The fostering of the belief that natural phenomena have natural explanations, discoverable through the efforts of human mind, that everyday problems are solvable through the application of disciplined thinking and experimentation, in short the fostering of a rational outlook on life is, therefore, among the primary functions of any educational system. The fact that such a scientific outlook on life can be effectively fostered even at the most elementary levels of the educational system has been affirmed by various experts in Science and Education.² It is possible and desirable therefore, to impregnate the entire educational system with the idea that the learner should be provided, not with ready-made solutions, but rather with the firm conviction that problems are solvable by natural means and with the capacity to tackle and solve problems by himself.

There are certain elements in the traditional Ethiopian educational system which, if carried over to the modern system, will certainly tend to counteract the development of a scientific attitude. Such, for instance, is the belief that learning means rote learning or the passive absorptions of sacrosanct knowledge.

1. *Annual Report of the Educational Dommission - 1962.*

2. See, for instance, J.S. Bruner, *The Process of Education*, Harvard University Press, 1966.

“In a traditional society the stock of knowledge is limited and grows slowly so that the main aim of education is interpreted to be its preservation. In a modern society, on the other hand... knowledge inevitably ceases to be something to be actively discovered. If this is rightly understood it would involve a revolution in traditional education where ‘to know’ has come to mean ‘to know by heart’, where respect for all inherited knowledge is assiduously cultivated and where the assimilative faculties tend to be emphasized to the neglect of the critical and creative ones... this would require, among other things, a new approach to the objectives and methods of education and changes in the training of teachers.”³

The fact that traditional education in Ethiopia has been the monopoly of religious institutions, both Christian and Moslem, has given a strong aura of sanctity and unchallengability to the written word. Furthermore, the relationship between teacher student and has been a strictly authoritarian with requirements of unquestioning acceptance and obedience on the part of the student. Such factors have certainly tended to stultify the creative and critical faculties. It is essential that such possible carryovers from the traditional system be strongly counteracted in the modern educational system.

Notable among those attitudes of traditional Ethiopia, which are inconsistent with a modern society, has been the negative attitude towards manual labour in general. Nearly all ethnic groups in the nation have had and still have depressed classes consisting of tanners, potters, blacksmiths and the like. This is plainly a reflection of a basic attitude of the society that any kind of manual labour, with perhaps the grudging exception of agricultural work, is somehow demeaning to the dignity and status of an individual. It should, therefore, be a fundamental aim of the educational system to change this injurious attitude and establish the dignity of labour at all levels of society. As there is a no better way of changing a person's attitude than through relevant experience, some type of manual work should be introduced as part and parcel of the training process at every level of the educational system. The widespread practice of using manual labour as a form of punishment in schools is inimical to the development of a positive attitude towards labour and should, therefore, be abandoned.

3. *Report of the Educational Commission, Government of India, page 18.*

Economic Aims:- The basic expectation that both the individual and the society have from education is that it should somehow bring about economic betterment. The individual who undergoes an educational experience at any level expects that his earning capacity will have been significantly improved as a result of such experience. In as much as education succeeds in fulfilling such an expectation, in some measure at least, it succeeds also in enhancing the striving for further education. To the extent that it fails to meet such expectations, it stifles any ambitions the individual might have had for a furtherance of education. The futility of an education that does not pay dividends to the individual in strictly economic terms has been amply demonstrated. New literates have so many times and in so many different countries relapsed into illiteracy when they discovered that they could not utilize their newly acquired skill for the betterment of their lives. At higher levels of education a purely academic type of training or a training that has failed to relate to job opportunities has led to much frustration for the individual and great waste for society. It is important, therefore, that the direct economic utility of education to individuals be considered a worthy objective at every level in the educational system.

In Western countries primary education has been considered primarily a preparation for further education and has thus had a basically academic content. The bulk of the population was expected to proceed beyond that level. In countries like Ethiopia, however, either through the learner's inability or disinclination or through the nation's lack of sufficient funds and facilities for all, the bulk of the population will not, for a long time to come, be able to go beyond the first few grades. It is essential, therefore, that appropriate terminal education be provided at the earliest levels, if the educational effort is not to be extremely wasteful. It is obvious further that the content of such terminal education cannot be uniform over the entire nation as the needs vary with the economic basis of the different regions. A thorough study, therefore, needs to be conducted to determine, for instance, the needs of rural versus urban areas and to take into account the different types of agricultural activities within the rural area.

At the primary level any terminal education must quite obviously have a strongly agricultural orientation in a country like Ethiopia, where over 90% of the population is rural. It is true of course that, with the development of the economy, increasing mechanization of agriculture will tend to displace

much farm labour but even so the agricultural population will remain a sizable one for a very long time to come. According to one well-informed estimate it is highly likely that three quarters of the Ethiopian labour force will still be engaged in agriculture in the year 2000. The probability is that the proportion will be even higher. Therefore, any significant expansion of the educational system must be related to the rural population. This, of course, is of the greatest relevance to primary education. At higher levels, though agriculture should still have a position of dominance, an effort must be made to strike the all-too-delicate balance between the nature and size of supply of trained manpower and the effective demand for it. The Third Five Year plan states:

“The most fundamental policy with regards to manpower is to relate the entire educational system at all levels far more closely to manpower needs of the Third Plan period and beyond. This requires above all an extra emphasis especially on scientific, technical and vocational education and training, especially at the secondary level.”⁴

This assumes a thorough and ongoing assessment of the manpower requirements of the country. Some of the difficulties that stand in the way of such a balance are the difficulties of making sufficiently reliable assessment of manpower requirements and the rather long response time required by the educational system to react to it. One effective way of short circuiting these difficulties has been the “tap-off” system whereby employing organizations have tapped off students at the appropriate level of the educational tree and given them specific job-oriented training to meet their urgent manpower needs. This approach seems to be a demonstrably effective one for increasing the responsiveness of the educational system to manpower requirements and should, therefore, be studied for possible encouragement and extension.

Ethiopian education needs to be made more relevant to Ethiopian realities in a sense even wider than the mere matching of manpower supply to manpower demand, though this undoubtedly will always remain of great importance. The

4. *Third Five-Year Development Plan*, Imperial Ethiopian Government Addis Ababa 1968, page 7.

Ethiopian child is today taught in a system of largely alien origin that uses alien textbooks written in an alien language and that employs a large number of alien teachers, or local teachers trained by aliens. Little wonder that the whole educational experience to him often becomes a remote and highly theoretical experience of very limited relevance to his life outside school. It is clear that this situation cannot be fully rectified overnight but it is valid to ask whether the task of making Ethiopian education more practical and more relevant to Ethiopian realities could not proceed faster than it seems to be doing. Ethiopianization of the content of textbooks, amharicization of the medium of instruction to ever higher grades and a generally more practical orientation of instruction at all levels, whether academic or vocational are certainly valid short-term objectives. Ethiopianization of the secondary level teaching staff is an objective that must be attained before Amharic become the medium of instruction. Other measures for making the education less remote and less theoretical would be the introduction of some kind of work experience as part and parcel of the training at every level, participation in community activities, and systematic observations and visits of local projects and institutions. Such a practical orientations of the educational system would help to bridge the currently wide gap between school and community.

Political Aims:- The political aims of education in Ethiopia are three fold:

a. **National Integration:** The people of Ethiopia represent many linguistic, cultural and religious groups. Due to difficulties in communication, there has been little interaction among these groups in the past.

Cultural diversity among the peoples of a nation can be a source of strength or weakness depending on how the situation is reacted to. Colonizers in Africa exploited these diversities for their own imperialistic ambitions. The principle of "divide and rule" can be effectively applied in a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous society. On the other hand, the presence of many sub-cultures and languages in a country can well be the source of national strength and cultural enrichment provided the appropriate mechanisms are created which allow for the blending of all these into a rich culture that allows the due role to its component parts.

The aim of education is to bring about such a blending of indigenous cultures into a rich national culture. This is

being gradually promoted in the schools of the Empire. Those located in the bigger cities especially are meeting places for many young Ethiopians from all over the country. This meeting is even more intimate in the boarding schools. Even if conflicts between students of different linguistic groups erupt from time to time there is at the same time a slow process of better understanding going on.

Not only is the school a meeting ground for children of diverse linguistic and religious backgrounds, but also a place where a conscious effort is made to create national consciousness among them. Children are exposed to one national language. At the elementary level the medium of instruction is Amharic. From then on it is taught as a subject. The mastery of the language is not only a means for acquiring education but also the door to an effective participation in national life. Without it one cannot hold an office of any importance or have access to much valuable information. Steps need to be taken, therefore, to minimize such handicaps until Amharic becomes more widely spread. It is true that children would learn better if they were exposed to their mother tongue at first. Unfortunately, financial limitations make it impossible to develop books, reading materials and prepare teachers to teach in all the languages spoken in the country. Ethiopia is fortunate in having a language which has played a national role for a long time. The promotion of this language in the schools is one important basis of national integration.

This, however, cannot be an excuse for stifling other languages spoken in Ethiopia and the sub-cultures they represent. The national culture would be much richer if it allowed the flourishing of all these cultures. Each would have something of value to contribute to the national culture. Amharic, as a matter of historical fact, has borrowed freely from the indigenous as well as from foreign languages in the course of the centuries. Furthermore, it is necessary that each Ethiopian feel proud of his indigenous culture. It is not by making him despise his ethnic affiliations that his national consciousness can be developed. Hence the school has the important task of fostering pride in each child for his indigenous culture. In order to do this the individual should be properly initiated into his own sub-culture before he is introduced into the national culture. The history and geography lessons should first acquaint the child with the immediate environment of the child, both cultural and physical.

The school as the promoter of national consciousness cannot stop at initiating the child unto his own small cultural and physical environment. It should also instill in him a national consciousness. He should be introduced to other sub-cultures in Ethiopia, as he has been introduced to his own. He should be made to see the underlying unity in all these diversities. He should be introduced to the various national institutions which are important factors of national unity.

Integration is not limited only to creating a national consciousness among the various linguistic groups in Ethiopia. There are also other forms of integration-the integration of the young with the old and the integration of the individual within himself.

Modern conditions have alienated the young from the old to a degree that calls for concern. This is more so in the large cities than in the countryside. The modern schools have contributed their share to this ever-widening gap between the generations. They prepare the young for life in the cities and not for the countryside that most students originate from. The seriousness of this problem is now being gradually realized. The school is no more regarded only as a place where young people receive formal education but also the centre of a community where knowledge is disseminated to all the members of that community. It is hoped that when the old are exposed to the same influences as the young the generation gap will be considerably narrowed.

Integrating of the individual within himself involves the promotion of self-respect and pride in what he is. This problem is of course not as serious here as it is in other parts of Africa where people have undergone the unfortunate experience of colonial rule. It is often said that the greatest harm that colonialism did to man is in robbing him of his dignity. It created a strong inferiority complex in those who were exposed to it. Ethiopia is fortunate in that it has escaped the psychic ravages of colonialism. On the other hand, there is no doubt that sudden exposure to modern ideas and the material accomplishment of the industrial countries has tended to overwhelm the young. Many feel that their cultural heritage is worthless. Consciously or unconsciously they absorb indiscriminately the ideas and values of foreign societies. This has resulted in the alienation of the individual from his culture, and in the tacit acceptance of the superiority of the culture of the western countries. This is mainly because the education

offered to the young is not itself well-integrated education. Raw ideas and values are passed on to children as they come from foreign textbooks. Educators have not yet considered the possibilities of integrating these ideas and values with those found in the country to make them more meaningful and relevant to those exposed to them. No doubt one of the main functions of educational institutions is to relate as much as possible the new ideas and values to those of the local culture.

b. Egalitarianism: Equality among citizens in their political, economic and social rights are the essential elements of an egalitarian society. The promotion of a democratic form of government in this country is already underway, however small the strides so far made. The granting of a constitution and the establishment of parliament are significant strides in this direction. However, it is important to recognize that it is impossible to build democracy on an ignorant and indifferent citizenry. A democratic society is one in which the citizens participate intelligently in all those affairs that affect their lives. In the absence of an enlightened citizenry the constitution and parliament would remain mere facades.

This implies the distribution of educational opportunities to as many people as possible. But what kind of education? It is important to note that education is an instrument that can be used for any purpose; it can prepare individuals to live in a totalitarian or free society. A country that is aspiring to a democratic way of life has to devise, therefore, an education that is appropriate to this aim.

In a democratic society, the citizens participate in their government or influence the course of events in their country by choosing their representatives in parliament or by freely voicing their ideas in public forums. But all these activities require intelligence, information and independence. These freedoms are allowed in the hope that those who exercise them do so not out of ignorance, malice or selfish motives or with the view of promoting the interest of a certain section of the population but in the interest of all. This implies that the person is broad-minded, impartial, objective - in short, educated.

A disposition that deserves special emphasis in the school is tolerance. Democracy is not founded on uniformity of opinions and political views and religious doctrines. It accepts diversity. But such diversity is harmonized by tolerance. The disposition of tolerance is fundamental in a country like

Ethiopia, which like many countries of the world, is made up of various groups of peoples representing diverse customs, religions, languages and temperaments. Because of certain controls the diversities in political opinion may not be so openly voiced although their presence cannot be seriously doubted. If such diversities are not to lead to hostility and division on tribal or religious lines, the school should promote the attitude of tolerance.

These attitudes can be cultivated both in a formal education situation as well as in extra-curricular activity. In the former case the emphasis on questions, experimentation, exploration, criticism, rather than rote learning and indoctrination as method of teaching encourages independent thinking and a rational outlook. Extra-curricular activities like debates and organized games, can be used to cultivate tolerance, team spirit, cooperation and fair play. Unfortunately, most of the formal education takes place by means of rote learning and the teacher assumes the role of an authoritarian. Such conditions do not allow the development of democratic intellectual disposition. This should be a point of great concern to Ethiopian educators today.

In the long run, equality of educational opportunity is perhaps the surest avenue to political, economic and social equality. Chiefly as a result of historical accident or prevalent cultural values major inequalities in educational opportunities exist in Ethiopia today as between town and country, male and female and one region and another. It should be one of the chief aims of educational planning to minimize such inequalities to the extent permitted by present constraints.

c. Preparation for life in the International Community: The world is fast becoming a small village. Travel and the distribution of ideas are faster than ever before. Economic, political and cultural interdependence between nations is increasingly felt. No one country can afford to live in isolation from the rest. What is more, the survival of the human race depends on cooperation and co-existence. The use of the modern weapons of destruction by one nation might well annihilate all that man has so far achieved. To avoid this, international control and agreements are necessary. In this background of situation the United Nations was created. Some regard this organization as a step towards establishing a world government.

In view of all this, one of the major aims of education is to prepare individuals for an international community. A most

effective link between the national community and international community is language. In Ethiopia, English is the second national language and as an international language, it is the key to the outside world. It is, therefore, important that this language is effectively taught in the schools.

Since the creation of the O. A. U. there has been a growing interest in teaching African children more about their neighbouring countries. Also, there has been an increasing effort to rediscover the history of Africa. Much of the writing in the past was distorted in order to promote the interest of colonial powers. There is, therefore, a great deal of rewriting that has to be carried out. There is also a great deal of re-education that has to be made. For a true African community to be created African children must know more about all aspects of sister African nations. In this regard education has a major responsibility.

The establishment of an African University has often been advocated by African leaders. Such an institution would not only bring African scholars together but would also create a much deeper understanding among young Africans. Similarly, joint research undertakings and closer consultation on educational problems, would promote closer cooperation among African countries. It may well be advisable that African children should be taught other African languages. Languages such as Swahili and Arabic are so widely spoken in Africa that they might be included where feasible, as optional subjects in the school curriculum at the higher levels.

Cultural and Moral Values

Beyond tangible economic development and demonstrable scientific truth lies the penumbral region of the cultural and moral values that give each society its peculiar stamp and character. An educational system that merely provided knowledge and skills without the essential blend of such values is in danger of producing soulless and rootless robots. If knowledge and skills provide the means then moral and cultural values provide the ends for which such means are to be used. For this reason, such values are indispensable ingredients of "the good life" in any society.

It is true that Ethiopia is a nation of many diverse cultures. It is also true that these cultures have co-existed in reasonable harmony for many centuries. They have, therefore, come to develop a basic underlying unity. It is the function

of the educational system, particularly at the university level, to record, study and present these cultures in a manner that will make possible the emergence of a truly national culture that draws upon the richness of all the sub-cultures. Research into the musical and artistic expressions of all the peoples of Ethiopia must be actively supported and the results of such research must find their due place in the textbooks and school curricula. Students must be encouraged to learn and perform the songs and dances of their localities and to develop skills in the arts and crafts of their particular regions. They must also be exposed to the music and art of other regions of the country in order to effect a cross-fertilization within the nation. Collection of oral literature from all parts of the country must be undertaken to supplement the written literary tradition of the country. The preservation of manuscripts and antiquities should command greater effort not only for its economic but also for its educational value. Although there should always be specialized schools that cater to professional practitioners of art and music, this alone cannot suffice. All schools in the Empire should give the appropriate place to a national aesthetic dimension in their curricula.

Traditional Ethiopian education has always given a very high place to moral and religious education. Although religious beliefs vary widely in Ethiopia, the country has nevertheless always been and is still fundamentally a highly religious one. If educational objectives are, as they must, to reflect the basic aspirations of the society they are meant for, then they cannot fail to include a moral and religious dimension. Such training cannot be tied to any particular faith but must reflect what is common to all and must be given in a spirit that presents choices to the individual rather than forcibly channel him in one direction. It should focus on the vertical relationship of man to God and the horizontal relationship of man to man. It should lay stress on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. A universalist religious training such as the one proposed here is admittedly much easier to propose than to implement in the absence of properly designed teaching materials and properly trained teachers. It is nevertheless an objective well worth pursuing.

Moral education is basically an elaboration of the principle of love of ones fellow human beings which is a basic tenet of all religions. Nevertheless, religious morality has often included an element of fanaticism which certainly has no place in a pluralistic society like that of Ethiopia. In

its place the virtue of tolerance must be promoted as a cardinal principle. The ritualistic aspects of religious morality which tend to be specific to individual religions are best left to the family or optional religious classes supported by local communities.

Specific Aims

Citizenship

It has already been emphasized that one of the chief aims of education at all levels is to produce "good citizens". However, the phrase "good citizen" is subject to various interpretations. What constitutes the good citizen is different for a communist, a capitalist or a socialist. Usually the government in power determines what the "good citizen" is. This is what makes the task of the educator very difficult. The educator operates within a system. The freedom he enjoys is limited by the government he serves, and the values to be promoted are usually determined by this government in power. As Ali A. Mazrui rightly observes:-

"The role of schools in dealing with such a scale of values might vary according to the dominant orientation of the government in power. The Kenya Government might be inclined to foster and encourage the ethic of self-improvement, since the Government is committed to the goal of creating an indigenous entrepreneurial culture and private enterprise. Tanzania, on the other hand, might be inclined to preserve the traditional scale of priorities—which put communal work before self-improvement."⁵

It is explicitly stated by the Ethiopian government that one of the objectives of elementary education is to foster in children the traditional values of loyalty, unity and devotion to Emperor and country. Loyalty, no doubt is an important trait of good citizenship. However, contrary to the general belief, loyalty does not mean sheer obedience and acceptance of the existing institutions and individuals in authority. A person is loyal to the country if he is always ready to apply his skill and talent to improve it; if he is ever prepared

5. Mazrui A. A. "The Educational Implications of National Goals and Political Values in Africa," in the *Journal of Education in East Africa*. Vol. 2 No. 1. 1971., page 45.

to struggle against those who because of vested interest or other selfish motives wish to perpetuate corruption in the country whatever the consequences that his actions might have on himself. This is the highest manifestation of devotion and loyalty to country. One would not, for example, accuse Lord Russel of disloyalty because of his protest against his country's stand regarding the use of the atom bomb during the war. He fought for what he believed was right for his country and was imprisoned for that. No doubt the greatest test of loyalty to a country is the preparedness to sacrifice one's own good for what one considers to be good for his country. This is the kind of attitude that the school ought to foster in children.

Similarly, the values of unity and devotion cannot be externally imposed but can only be cultivated from within. Unity can only prevail in an atmosphere of tolerance, respect for others, equality and justice. The schools can foster these values because they are, in a way, a miniature society in which are represented individuals of divergent religious, linguistic and economic backgrounds. Outside the schools, such differences may be causes of hatred and discrimination. But the schools could take such divergencies as opportunities for developing understanding, love, tolerance and unity.

The responsibility of the school in producing healthy citizens is two-fold. First, it has to provide the conditions for a healthy living in the school itself. Many of the school children come from poor backgrounds where they do not get enough nutrition, and where the sanitary conditions are very poor. Many of them live in areas which expose them to the temptations and bad influences of urban life. In the past the boarding schools made up for all these deficiencies. Children were fed well in the schools and lived in a sanitary environment. The abolishing of boarding schools deprived children of these privileges. Under the circumstances, the school can only help in a small way. It may arrange with the help of UNICEF to have free milk provided to children, and can ensure that the classrooms, the lavatories and the school compound are kept clean.

The second and perhaps the more effective contribution of the school is in developing the proper habits of sanitation and disease prevention. The cultivation of healthy attitudes towards sex, coupled with fair warning on the hazards of promiscuity is an essential aspect of education.

The school's influence in fostering proper attitudes towards health should also extend to the community. It should take every opportunity at its disposal to educate parents and members of the community in the rudiments of healthy living. Parent-teacher association provide a good opportunity to do this.

To prepare individuals to make value judgment and cultural evaluation is one of the major tasks of Ethiopian education specially at the university level. University courses like social sciences can only be taught with the view of critically examining the social values of the country. As Professor Szuldrzynski well put it:-

“A country in a period of transition cannot afford social sciences denuded of a wider cultural context. Social sciences, like History, Political Science, Sociology, Law, Economics are a direct challenge to the established traditional system of cultural values. Therefore, if they have to contribute constructively to a sound growth of a new society they cannot avoid culture evaluations. It is wrong in my opinion to think that this will make them less scientific or necessarily biased”.⁶

The exercise in critical and intelligent judgment of values is the result of proper education. First, this education has to give due emphasis to the cultivation of the critical and rational faculties of their child. The stress is less on memorization and more in activity and discovery, less on storing disjointed and meaningless facts and more on evolving a coherent body of utilizable knowledge. This is a significant departure from the traditional conception of education.

The objective of education is to produce a rational person, who according to Russell's definition is one “who always proportioned the degree of intensity with which he held his various beliefs to the amount of evidence available for each belief”. Second, as was earlier pointed out education must give high premium to the spiritual and cultural heritage of Ethiopia. The teaching of the moral heritage takes a central place in the curriculum. These are taught not with the view

6. Szuldrzynsky J. “The Impact of the University on Social and Cultural Change.” A Paper Presented for the Conferences on the Role of the University in Developing Country, E. U. T. A. March 1967., page 9.

of producing backward looking persons. They are mainly taught with the view of laying the foundation necessary for creating new ideals and value-systems based on a rational understanding of the culture. The present religious instruction which is mainly the transmitting of revealed truths must be replaced by a secular moral education. This means, in Emil Durkheim's words "...an education that is not derived from revealed religion, but that rests exclusively on ideas, sentiments, and practices accountable to reason only - in short, a purely rationalistic education".⁷ Third, education should emphasise the formation of a man rather than on training him for an occupation. However, important employable specialized skills or knowledge are for the individual's economic self-sufficiency, his education is more important. As Rousseau once declared:

"Whether one destines my pupil for the sword, the priesthood, or the court, it matter little. ...Nature calls him to human life; to live is the trade that I wish to teach him. In leaving me he will not be, I acknowledge, either magistrate, soldier or priest; primarily he will be man".⁸

The Ethiopian education must, therefore, give fair balance between education sought for its own intrinsic value and aims at producing cultured individuals with the ability to make free and independent value judgment on one hand and professionals capable of doing a given job well on the other.

A life of reason is one characterized by balance and harmony. There is place and time for everything. Sensual pleasures has their places too. But excessive pursuit of the pleasure of the senses at the expense of everything else is detrimental both to the individual and society. It is unfortunate that most children grow up to think of sex as something intrinsically bad. Sex education has not yet taken its proper place in the schools, and as a consequence children grow up with very distorted view about it. Not only sex education, but education regarding the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, hashish, etc., should be discussed openly and scientifically. This would enable students to make intelligent decisions on their wants and desires. Moral exhortations or commands would help very little in this regard.

7. Durkheim E., *Moral Education*, The Free Place of Glencoe, Inc., N. Y. 1961 page 3.

8. Boyd, W., *Emile for Today*; Heineman, London, 1970, pages 14-15

Literacy and Basic Education

The acquisition of the tools of knowledge is the starting point of an educational process. These involve mainly the traditional three R's, which once mastered would enable a person to learn more. They are, therefore, indispensable tools of learning.

It was earlier pointed out that from the pedagogical point of view it is preferable that children learn how to read, write and count in their own language first. But this, unfortunately, would be hard to implement at present because of financial reasons. All children in Ethiopia have to learn these, therefore, in the national language of the country, Amharic. To the non-Amharic speaking population of Ethiopia, Amharic is the nearest language and the one that will have immediate usefulness when the children leave school. At the elementary level, Amharic is not only taught as a subject but has also replaced English as a medium of instruction. The latter is only taught as a subject and becomes a medium of instruction at the junior secondary level and above.

Literacy and numeracy are not ends in themselves. People who have learnt how to read and write have been known to revert to illiteracy when they fail to make use of their newly acquired skills. Materials relevant to their occupation and to the improvement of their lives have, therefore, to be provided for them to read. Only in this manner can their skills become functional.

What constitutes basic education is a matter of debate. The multiplicity of subjects present the difficult problem of selecting what is more basic than another. There is no doubt, however, that there are certain basic educational experiences that everyone ought to receive. This basic educational experience is known as "common learnings".

The "common learnings" consist of those educational experiences that are indispensable to a successful and happy life for every individual and the effective participation in the life of the society. With this in view, elementary education must first equip children with certain essential skills which they could use to make a living. Second, it must impart to them some basic knowledge about their own immediate community so that they know who they are. Thirdly, it must acquaint them with the dominant institutions of their community so that they know how they live. Fourthly, it must

initiate them into the larger life of the nation and show them their relation to it. Finally, they should be able to see themselves and their community and country in relation to the world community by being introduced to cultures and peoples of other lands.

It should be noted that at this level book learning should take a minimal role. The emphasis on rote learning has done more harm than good in the past. The most effective approach is the problem-solving approach. With skillful handling of this teaching approach practically every significant skill and knowledge required for children at this level can be cultivated.

Relevant Skills and Knowledge

The education given in the schools will have to ensure that those who graduate or leave school at any level in the educational ladder have acquired enough skills which are employable to productive use. Hence the primary purpose of elementary education is to ensure that children acquire certain relevant skills or knowledge which can be put to productive use. The level of skills achieved in a given field by an elementary school graduate would be rather low but it must be enough to enable them do a job with a certain degree of efficiency. The low age level of most elementary school graduates may not make them eligible for work. But this is a problem that countries that cannot afford to provide education beyond the elementary level must face. As a matter of fact, it is now considered advisable to regard every level of the educational ladder as terminal and not a stepping stone to a higher level. In actual fact, only a very small fraction of those at the elementary level proceed to the secondary level, and fewer still to higher institutions of learning. This is primarily due to the fact that a poor country like Ethiopia cannot afford to provide education beyond the elementary level to more than a small fraction of the school-age population. These facts make it imperative that students graduating from elementary schools have some skills in a relevant field which they could easily employ to make a living. The skills to be promoted are determined by the need of society. In the case of Ethiopia, the skill and knowledge most relevant, especially at the lower levels of education are those that relate to an agricultural society.

Sometimes a conflict may arise between individual interest and aptitudes and that of the needs of the society. Whose interest should prevail? This is a difficult problem; it becomes

even more difficult at the level of higher education. At the elementary level everybody is subjected to the same educational experience. Children have not yet discovered their interests and aptitudes. In fact, one of the major objectives of education at this level, is to discover the interests, aptitudes, inclinations of children in view of providing them proper guidance in their further education and future occupational choice.

An equally important objective of elementary education is the cultivation of interest in those areas which have a measure of practical utility. It is known that individuals develop interest in activities which they did not have before as they get familiar with it. The desire to acquire vocational skills like carpentry, or farming could be cultivated by introducing activities in these areas in the schools. Pointing out the social value of hobbies may also be useful. In this manner, the conflict between individual interest and the needs of society can be minimized.

Like the elementary education so also secondary education should prepare individuals to be economically productive. If proper guidance and counseling were given at the elementary levels and continued at the secondary level, the student would be able to make intelligent choices on the type of specialized skills and knowledge he should pursue at this level. General education which aims at producing an all-round person is an important task of secondary education. At the same time, however, it introduces young people to specialized skills and knowledge in preparation for specific work in their society. The comprehensive secondary school serves these two purposes. While it introduces all elementary students to basic core of knowledge which everybody ought to know, it also prepares for specialized tasks in accordance with the interests and aptitudes of students. At present the comprehensive schools have three main streams, academic, commercial and technical. By joining any one of these streams the student prepares himself for an occupation in which he could contribute most. If he chooses to continue with further studies he can sit for the Ethiopian school Leaving Certificate Examination which would qualify him for university entrance. This terminal and continuous feature of Ethiopian secondary school system serves an important service both to the students and the society. There are of course other more specialized secondary schools - like Teacher Training or Technical and Commercial schools which are terminal.

There is, unfortunately, still more reluctance to join the non-academic stream of comprehensive secondary schools.

The bias against manual types of occupation, though significantly reduced in the last few years, still exists. Most of the students wish to join the academic stream of the comprehensive secondary school that lead to university. One of the important functions of education, hence, becomes to change the attitudes of the students towards manual work. The task of education in attitude change is discussed earlier.

Preparation for Further Education

The concept of a terminal educational system does not mean that elementary schools do not prepare children for further education at the secondary school level. Though the majority of children at the elementary schools may not proceed to secondary education, those who do proceed must receive the necessary educational experience which will ensure their success at the secondary level. This success much depends on a number of factors.

First, children proceeding for further education must know exactly what type of secondary school they should join. This supposes that their aptitudes and interest have been discovered at the elementary level and that they have been provided with ample opportunities to develop them to the maximum. Hence the importance of an effective guidance program at the elementary school level.

Second, those with the special aptitude to carry on with secondary education should receive additional instruction in their areas of interest. Since only a very small percentage are allowed to proceed to secondary schools, elementary schools can afford to be very selective. By means of an accelerated or more enriched program the more able of the elementary school students would be better prepared for secondary education.

The Education of Women

Women constitute about half the population of Ethiopia. Yet they constitute no more than one fifth of literate Ethiopians and hardly one tenth of Ethiopians engaged in higher education. No clearer demonstration can be given of the fact that the Ethiopian woman is a victim of even greater built-in biases in the Ethiopian society than her sisters are in many other societies. In an age when the woman in many parts of the world has come to assert her proper rights as a citizen

such a state of affairs as now obtains in Ethiopia cannot be allowed to continue. An effort must, therefore, be made to uproot through concerted programs of public information and guidance those attitudes of traditional Ethiopia that militate against the education of women.

Aside from the woman's basic rights as an Ethiopian citizen there are compelling reasons based on the woman's special role in society that give added importance to the education of the woman. As mother and home builder the woman is perhaps the most important influence on children in their formative and most impressionable years. She is the first and perhaps the most important teacher a child ever has in any society. Every effort, therefore, needs to be made to ensure for the woman an educational opportunity equal to that of the man. Furthermore, the educational system should at all levels attempt to cater to the special needs of the woman through courses pertaining to homemaking in addition to the regular courses offered to both sexes. For the non-formal sphere radio programs, simplified publications and ad hoc shorter programs of education catering to the special needs of the Ethiopian woman should be encouraged.

Higher Education:-

In Ethiopia as of now higher education refers primarily to Haile Selassie I University although a few other institutions of smaller scale and more limited intent are now appearing on the scene. The role of the university has been well stated in the Second Report of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee:-

"...a modern university has a dual responsibility; to the community it serves, and to the international fraternity of universities. If the first is weak, the university does not deserve the support of the people. If the second is weak, the university degrees do not represent a respectable standard of learning; its graduates do not have full access to other universities of the world and the opportunities they offer. The way to fulfill the first responsibility is for the university to teach and to conduct research on subjects relevant to the country's needs. The way to observe the second responsibility is to perform this teaching and research under world standards of accuracy and integrity".⁹

9. *Second Report of the Advisory Committee of Higher Education*, HSIU, Addis Ababa, 1971 page 3.

It should perhaps be added that the country's needs are not exogenous to the university but that the university itself plays an important role, through research, in determining what the country's needs are. It should be emphasized also that a country like Ethiopia can no longer afford to look upon research as luxury and must therefore make a substantial allocation for research at the university. The only hope for some of the thornier developmental problems may be technological solutions of the kind that only high level research can yield. The many vicious circles that developing countries like Ethiopia are involved in today can only be broken by scientific and technological break-throughs of the type that have given rise to the Green Revolution. Research at institutions of higher learning must therefore be well funded and consciously directed towards current developmental problems. Such problems are of their nature multi-faceted and often call for an inter-disciplinary approach. Group research that focuses on problems from several disciplinary angles must therefore be constantly encouraged. Such research on projects such as CADU, WADU and other similar projects could for instance provide invaluable information on the extent to which these projects failed or succeeded and what modifications if any they need to have if they are to be extended to other parts of the country. Channels must be established to make it possible for the government to specifically commission institutions of higher learning to undertake research and on matters that require the type of manpower and facilities that only such institutions have. The final say on whether such research can or cannot be undertaken at any particular time must of course always remain with the institutions concerned as it is always the best judge of its own resources.

Yet there must always be some room in a university for research unhampered by considerations of practicality or even relevance if a university is to remain true to its nature. It has been demonstrated again and again in the history of learning that major advances in our understanding of man, nature and society have often come as a result of disinterested research.

“Nature yields some of Her most important secrets only when you're not demanding that She give you a particular answer. Like some women She prefers that you make advances that are leisurely and subtle. And she can be

extremely difficult if you court Her for her wealth rather than for Herself alone,"¹⁰

In the instructional sphere the institutions of higher learning have the boldness to experiment with new approaches to making higher education more relevant to Ethiopian realities. In doing so however, they must be wary not to fall into the other extreme of being novelty hunting faddists. They must aim at extending the opportunities of higher education through extension classes, correspondence courses and radio and television lectures. Instruction must be given an Ethiopian orientation through the Ethiopianization of staff and text-books and it must occasionally break out of the shells of the classroom in order to have contact with the workday world.

Higher education in Ethiopia must in short attempt to realize at once several apparently conflicting aims. It must display a practical relevance that is not shorn of idealism and must maintain a stable continuity that is constantly fed by innovation.

As the Chancellor has pointed out in his address at the inauguration of the university, it is the sacred duty of a university to foster "the ability to transcend narrow passions and to engage in honest conversation; for civilization is by nature the victory of persuasion over force." This spirit must be reflected internally in the mutual relationships of the staff, the students and the administration of the university and externally in the relationship of the university as an autonomous corporate body with forces outside of it. The victory of "persuasion over force" can only take place in an atmosphere of freedom. The spirit of academic freedom which has grown with the very concept of a university is therefore one of those fundamental features without which a university cannot be a university. This must include the freedom to pursue truth, study and research and to make it known in speech or writing and the freedom to associate, assemble and discuss issues deemed important without fear of restrain or reprisal.

The international governance of the university itself must give due voice to all who constitute the university community and must thus demonstrate by example "the victory of persuasion over force" and the "respect for the reasoning mind".

10. "Confession of a Mad Scientist," by Professor X. as told by Mark Davidson, *U. C. L. A Monthly*, July 1971.

The ever rising cost of higher education will force the university to establish priorities that will allow it to use the limited available funds for maximum impact on the welfare of the society. It must give serious consideration to the fact that, for instance, a graduate of the Faculty of Medicine costs the country over four times as much as a graduate of the Public Health College when the services they render do not in fact reflect a comparable differential. Similarly a person who acquires his education through extension is much less of a drain on the resources of the university than a regular student although the services they render are certainly comparable. Serious thought might, therefore, be given to attracting senior teachers to extension and achieving educational objectives at less cost.

The university should not lose sight of the fact that it is preparing the future leadership of the nation and that its student body must, therefore, as far as possible reflect the diversified nature of the Ethiopian population. It must never cease from submitting to the government studies and plans that can correct any serious imbalance through upgrading of regional secondary schools or through remedial pre-university course that will cater to students from under privileged areas. Under no circumstances, however, must it in anyway dilute the criterion of merit for university admissions for this would surely militate against the Imperial charge expressed in the Charter and in the directive to the Advisory Committee on Higher Education, which is:

“...to make this University comparable to the leading institutions of higher learning throughout the world”.¹¹

Conclusion

The aims and objectives of any educational system cannot be set once and for all. As society changes and as conditions change so must aims and objectives. The only thing that will not and must not change is the inherent right of every Ethiopian to acquire the best education that his country can give him under existing circumstances. This must always remain the guiding light of any educational policy and it cannot, therefore, be emphasized too strongly.

11. *Second Report of the Advisory Committee on Higher Education*, H. S. I. U., Addis Ababa, 1971, page 2.

We habitually tend to speak of objectives as field entities. In actual fact of course they are ordered in a finely grade hierarchy where the objectives at one level are in fact means to objectives on a higher level such that we have objectives within objectives. It is unavoidable, therefore, that the aims and objectives of Ethiopian education as set out in this article will seem too remote for some and perhaps, in some cases at least, too trivial for others. It is by no means certain, however, that a set of objectives can be set up that would satisfy everyone's judgment in this respect. The attempt in this article has generally been to set out objectives at the most general level.

It is necessary to emphasize also that the aims and objectives as stated here do not assume that the structure of the educational system is to remain as it is. Nor do they preclude the development and expansion of the much discussed non-formal education. The emphasis is on what the educational system ought to try and do rather than on how it ought to do it. Consequently, the objectives as stated are qualitative rather than quantitative. The latter is believed to be the task of Five Year Plans and other specific institutional plans. Only limited consideration has, therefore, been given to the impact of specific financial and other constraints on the implementation of general objectives.

Any statement of aims and objectives must not only be clearly formulated but also widely propagated among those whom it affects and thoroughly understood and accepted by them. The objectives stated must be woven into the very fabric of the educational system and the society at large. Failing that, a statement of objectives is merely another minor pamphlet that gathers dust on a shelf of its sponsors.