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Ethiopia

1 Education in Ethiopia

1.1 Background to the country

Ethiopia is a large country with two major geographical regions: the highlands and lowlands. The climate varies, depending on altitude, and ranges from desert to sub-tropical and temperate. Ethiopia is one of the least developed countries in the world, where an estimated 65% of the population live below the absolute poverty level. The population of the country is estimated at around 50 million people and the majority live in rural areas. Agriculture is the main livelihood of most of the rural population.

Ethiopia has experienced many changes and reforms in its education system over the past few decades. In the 1970's (post revolution) the education system was reformed along the line of a socialist general education which followed a polytechnic approach and was intended to produce 'socialist citizens with all-round personalities'. The general aims of

education were: education for production; education for socialist consciousness; and, education for scientific inquiry. During this period a trial programme of a general polytechnic curriculum took place in 70 schools. It aimed to introduce new teaching-learning strategies which much more closely linked the classroom to the world of work. All subjects were supposed to give scope for the development of practical skills and positive attitudes towards work.

Environmental science, a subject in grades 1-3 of this trial curriculum, took a unified approach to culture and the environment and stressed problem-solving methods. Even the subject mathematics in the trial curriculum aimed to link the "culture of mathematics" to the learner's environment, stressing that there are mathematical roots in Ethiopia in the traditional tasks of the learners' forefathers. For example, construction of a *tukul* [1] needs knowledge about circles, cones and right angles. Carpentry and knitting require special

knowledge about symmetry. The mathematics teaching-learning strategy suggested using fruits, stones or clay balls to support the introduction of set theory and the notion of number, and using an orange to demonstrate fractions. Above all, it was expected that the school would interact with its community: influencing it and being supported by it. These community schools were seen everywhere and were recognised by their gardens and farms, their cultural exhibitions, their community improvement activities and the real participation of elders on school management committees (Institute of Curriculum Development and Research [ICDR], 1993).

[1] *traditional house with conical thatched roof*

Despite the apparent success of the polytechnic curriculum the pilot programme was abandoned late in the 1980's. In the late 1970's school pedagogical centres (SPC) were

established in each district and soon after SPCs were set-up in all schools to support the classroom teaching and learning process. The SPC was to enable teachers to prepare *'prototype teaching aids - as much as possible from locally available materials - giving short-term training to teachers and making informal studies of the awraja (local) environment and culture as a basis for adapting the curriculum, in social science in particular, to the locality.'* (ICDR, 1993).

1.2 Recent educational policy changes

In the past two decades there has been a tremendous increase in pupil enrolments, numbers of teachers, and numbers of schools. The enrolment in primary education was 859,800 in 1974 and grew at an annual rate of 8% to 2,855,846 in 1989, whilst the growth rate in numbers of teachers and schools grew by an estimated 9.5% and 8.5% respectively (Ministry of Education, 1989). The increase in

the quantitative aspects of the system have been to the detriment of the quality of education, which has declined and sustained a pronounced fall in the past two decades. This is primarily due to the scarcity of instructional materials, facilities, and decline in teacher training. The curriculum lacked relevance with no clearly defined objectives and instruction concentrated more on theoretical knowledge with little connection to daily life. The approach also had a high tendency towards rote learning which did not prepare the young for living in the community.

In 1991 the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was established. The education sector strategy (1994) states that *'in the last 30 years the objective and relevance of education in Ethiopia has become questionable'* and that *'the impact of modern education on the day to day life of the society at large has been negligible.'* The strategy identifies major problems in the education system including the following:

- only a small section of the population has individually benefited from the education system, as the vast majority had no access to the system due to the inadequate distribution and the small number of schools in the country;

- the participation rate at all levels was very low with disproportionately low female representation;

- the few schools available were mainly located in urban and other areas of easy accessibility.

Since the establishment of the Transitional Government, Ethiopia has been going through many economic, political and social changes. In education, the MOE identified the following major policy goals:

- to increase educational access, especially for rural children and girls, at the primary level (equity and

quantity);

- to increase the relevance of schooling to children's lives and prospects;

- to provide diversified skills training and vocational education;

- to place emphasis on environmental issues, addressed through basic science instruction;

- to develop decentralised educational delivery systems emphasising the *woreds* [2] and village levels.

[2] district

The primary school participation rate (1995) was about 22% and there was a high demand to raise this figure in order to

realise the economic and social benefits associated with education. In Ethiopia, where about 80-85% of the population is involved in the agricultural sector, this demands a concomitant investment in basic education [3] in order to maximise gains from the introduction of new agricultural technologies, for improved farming methods and increased productivity. The current trend in Ethiopia's economic development also places rural development strategy as its focal point for meeting the community's basic needs.

[3] basic education in Ethiopia refers to the first four years of formal (primary) schooling

The new primary curriculum

This strategy outlined an objective to provide good quality primary education with an ultimate aim of achieving universal primary education over a period of 20 years. The primary

education system shall be from grades 1-8 subdivided into two sections of basic (1-4) and general (5-8) education. Following this strategy new curricula were introduced in 1994. First pilot studies of the new curriculum started in 1994/95 in grades 1 and 5 in 110 schools. The following year the new curriculum was implemented throughout the country after an evaluation and improvement process, based on results from pilot schools. In the second year (1995/96) grades 2 and 6 were piloted, in the third year grades 3 and 7 (1996/97), and in the fourth year (1997/98) grades 4 and 8 are to be piloted. Following evaluation in 1998/99 it is intended that the new curriculum will be implemented nation-wide in grades 1-8. During the fieldwork (1996) the primary school curriculum was being implemented nation-wide in grades 1,2, 5 and 6.

The outline curriculum is set at National level by the MOE which also gives outlines for the syllabus in each subject area. Responsibility has been devolved to regional level for

development of text books and teachers' guides. Supplementary material, for example science experiment guides, are also developed at regional level. Previously the language of instruction was Amharic, the national language. Following the transition, autonomy was given to regional governments to decide on the language of instruction in primary schools. This is likely to have many long-term implications on the teaching and learning process, especially in the production of teaching materials, textbooks and teacher training.

1.3 Education in Oromia region

According to Oromia Education Bureau Short Term Plan (1995-2000), issued in 1995, out of the estimated 8 million school age children in the country (about 3.9 million are in Oromia region), only about 2.3 million are enrolled. Of these, 0.8 million were estimated to be in Oromia region.

Oromia region has developed instructional materials in the new curriculum trial programme. Many of these materials have areas which specifically use agricultural experience and relate to the home environment of pupils, for example:

Grade 5: Oromo Language: there are passages on fruit and vegetables; poultry; utilisation of rivers (irrigation); bee-keeping; personal and environmental sanitation; and, natural resources.

Grade 3: Science: animal and plant reproduction; conservation of natural resources; protection of the forest and wild animals.

Grade 5: Social Studies: Agriculture - types of agriculture, and methods of farming.

Grade 5: Music: Songs used in the fields, during for example, cultivation, harvesting and threshing.

Grade 6: Music: Folklore songs on the region's natural vegetation (forest) and coffee plants.

Teacher training

A draft document by MOE (1995) states that the curriculum of pre-service education for the last 20 years has been suffering from shortcomings, such as objectives and content that lacked coherence and co-ordination with the curriculum of schools, and equipping student-teachers with inadequate teaching skills, knowledge and attitudes. In order to resolve the problems encountered, and to facilitate the efficiency of teacher education and training, a new Education and Training Policy has come into effect. The policy stipulates that teacher education and training components will emphasise basic knowledge, a professional code of ethics, methodology and practical training. A strategy of the policy is that teacher training programmes and the curriculum will be made relevant to the new educational objectives, and be responsive to the

different curricula of general education. In response to this strategy immediate action was needed in preparing a new curriculum for primary school teacher training following the new primary education strategy teacher training institutions (TTIs) will train teachers for the two cycles. Teachers of the basic primary cycle (1-4), and teachers of the general education (5-8) will undergo a 2 year initial training programme after completing grades 10 and 12 respectively. To recruit trainees that have completed grade 10 of the new curriculum will take a period of 6 years, since the new curriculum is introduced on a sequential basis through various stages of preparation, evaluation and trial programmes. As a compromise, a short term plan has been implemented to train teachers in one year. Trainees are selected depending on successful completion of grade 12, and their devotion, interest and commitment to the teaching profession. Most of the teachers interviewed for the study will have completed the previous course of training; a one year Teacher Training

Institute (TTI) qualification that follows twelve years of schooling. This was a general training covering pedagogical skills as opposed to a specific subject area.

Donor funded projects

Ethiopia is receiving a considerable amount of funding from multilateral, bilateral and NGO donor agencies and a fair proportion of this funding is to the education sector. In Oromia Region international donor funded projects include: assisting with in-service training; rehabilitating schools; building capacities amongst TTI teachers and educational officials; production of educational radio programmes in Afaan Oromo and natural science for grades 2&6; training female teachers as gender sensitive advisors in high schools; and, conducting training on literacy programmes and materials production. NGOs working in the region have projects in school construction, supply of equipment and materials, and the rehabilitation of pedagogical centres.

2 The schools

2.1 Selecting the schools

Due to logistical problems, only one week of field work was accomplished in Ethiopia. This was not sufficient time to study two schools in detail. A full case study was carried out in the innovative school, and a day was spent in another school (school B). The collaborating partner for this study is from Oromia (Region 4) Education Bureau; which is the main reason for selecting schools in this region. The innovative school was selected following indicators in the research guidelines, it is also a pilot school for the new curriculum.

School B is in the same region, approximately 40 km from School A, and according to officials from the district education office, is not known for any special or innovative practices.

Table 1: Summary of Schools A and B

Factor	***School A***	***School B***
• grades	1-8	1-8
• shift system for classes	no	two shifts
• number of pupils m:f (total)	701:350 (1051)	698:463 (1161)
• main source family income	agriculture	agriculture
• attendance rate	80-92%	90%
• enrolment rate for area	45%	n.a.
• drop-out	4.2%	10%

• repetition	2.2%	n.a.
• average teacher:pupil ratio	1:40	1:45
• adult literacy rate (region)	5-25%	n.a.
• number of teachers m:f	20:6	19:7

2.2 An 'innovative' school - School A

2.2.1 the community environment

The village [4]

[4] information on the village and agriculture was obtained from the *Woreda* Agricultural Extension Office and the *Woreda* Administration Office

The village lies in a remote area approximately 17 kms along a dirt track from the main Addis Ababa-Debre Markos road

(Photo 1). The majority of families are engaged in traditional, subsistence agricultural practices. The average farm size per family is around 1.5 hectares and approximately 40% of the farmers are landless. There are between 140-200 families in the village (although the population was estimated at around 3,361) and the average family size is seven persons. There is no electricity or sanitation in the village and four stand pipes provide poor quality water. Men are in charge of all agricultural activities and women have economic control of the household. Both men and women are involved in farming. Literacy rates are low and estimates were given of between 5% - 25% of the adult population over 25 years of age being literate. Major social problems identified in the village were, health problems (malaria, worms, TB and eye diseases); no health centre; no electricity; no higher education secondary school; no agricultural banking, credit or savings group; poor transport; and, no telephone or post office. Most of the community follow the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Agriculture

The main rainy season is from June to September, and harvest and land preparation will vary depending when the rains arrive. Generally, peak times in the year are April to August for sowing and weeding, and November to February when harvesting followed by land preparation takes place.

Crops grown tend to be for subsistence and include tef [5], wheat and oats. Other income is from cattle and dairy products, honey production, vegetables and fruit. Farmers receive a limited amount of support through the agricultural extension service, which helps supply farmers with inputs. There is only one agricultural extension agent per 1800 farmers in the *woreda.*

[5] cereal crop

Photo 1: Location on the village and School A

School and community relations

There is a school committee whose function is administrative and to provide a link between the school Director (who is the Committee Secretary), the school, and the community. It is an elected committee of 8 community members, 1 teacher and 1 pupil. The committee deals with all financial problems and the school budget, school buildings, school equipment and provision of seeds for use in the school agricultural plot. During a visit to the school by the researchers a committee member arrived unexpectedly to check the school accounts. Teachers say that relationships between the school and the community are good (12 teachers are past pupils of the school). Sometimes there are problems over the community's lack of awareness of the importance of education, especially where pupils drop-out and go back to work in the community. Teachers are then faced with parents asking *'what is the point of education if they don't get qualifications?'.*

Community members are interested in the agricultural activities and generally what is happening in the school. The school sells vegetables from its agriculture plot to community members. They help the school by donating vegetable seeds, cultivating the school land, loaning oxen for ploughing and providing free labour. During peak harvesting times the whole school may help the local community to gather the harvest. This year the *woreda* administration approached the school committee to request that teachers and pupils at the school helped to gather this year's harvest as there was a danger that heavy rains would cause major crop losses. The school was closed for a week and all pupils and teachers participated.

2.2.2 The School Environment

The school is accessed from the main road leading to the village. The main gate is approximately 100 metres from the road. There is a football pitch in front of the school and a

volleyball court inside the grounds. A natural watercourse has been diverted through the grounds which is used for irrigating the agriculture plot. The school compound is surrounded by a five strand barbed wire fence to keep livestock out and generally the grounds are tidy. There is some effort to make the grounds more aesthetically pleasing through giving each grade the task of looking after individual plant beds. There is a school agriculture plot, which is used for teaching and learning purposes (agriculture was a subject in the old curriculum, now it is part of science) and also for bringing an income into the school. Nine hectares of land is rented to local farmers, and last year ETB 5000 was earned from rent and growing one hectare of vegetables. This is a considerable sum as the average family income per year is estimated at ETB 1300.

Photo 2: The school buildings (School A)

The school was established in 1965. It is a government

school with grades 1 to 8. Grades 1 and 3 each have 3 sections due to large pupil numbers, grades 2 and 7 have 2 sections each, and grades 4,5,6 and 8 all have 1 section. There is one classroom for each section. Grades are not divided according to ability and there is often a great variation in pupils' ages within a grade. Classrooms are constructed from wood, mud and straw (Photo 2) with few windows and little ventilation. There are not enough benches or desks for pupils, conditions are very cramped (Photo 3 & Photo 4) and overall the classroom size (10 x 6 m^2) is inadequate for the number of pupils. There is a library/staff room, directors office, pedagogical centre (Photo 5) and a small office for equipment. There are two toilet blocks and facilities for boiling water (to make tea). The school has a solar powered radio, given to the school through a donor agency 'Audio Distance Education' programme.

School system

School terms are September to December and January to June with a two week break at the beginning of February. School hours are 8.30 -12.30 and 13.55 -15.15. Lessons are 45 minutes long; where the new curriculum is being implemented lessons are in 40 minute periods.

Enrolment, Pupil Numbers, Attendance, Drop-out and Repetition

Table 2 illustrates the number of pupils in the school. Approximately 45% of pupils in the surrounding area are enrolled in the school. The remaining 55% are unlikely to attend any schools; the enrolment rate for Oromia Region is 29% (1996). The overall attendance rate is around 92% and is highest during October to March. Attendance is lowest during April to June, at around 80%, when more land cultivation is undertaken.

Table 2: Pupil Numbers by class (1996) - School A

Grade	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***
boys	182	153	91	39	39	50	68	79
girls	127	84	44	13	23	30	15	14

During 1995 there were 25 male and 19 female drop-outs. The drop-out rate is highest in grade 1 and this is usually due to poor health and family problems. In the higher grades drop-out is due to marriage and the need for children to help at home, either in agriculture or other tasks (mainly girls). Repetition mainly occurs in grades 1 and 2. In 1996 there were 11 repeaters in grade 1 and 12 repeaters in grade 2. This is usually due to pupils being below school age and classrooms being overcrowded. In grades 1 and 2 some children were as old as 15 years, in a class with 7 year olds (Photo 3). At registration for the new school year parents were arriving with under school aged children (grade 1 pupils should be 7 years old). This was noticed through use of the

'arm test [6]' but because there is no evidence (birth certificates) of age and because many pupils are malnourished, it is difficult to reject them on the grounds of this test. The school decided to set up a kindergarten, although there are no adequate facilities for this and little money to purchase resources. In the kindergarten, pupils aged 3 to 6 years, sit on stones in a dark, airless hut. There are no teaching-learning aids in the room and the walls are bare. The *woreda* education and administration offices were not able to help in the matter or provide a teacher, but the director released one teacher from his staff to work in the kindergarten.

[6] this test is implemented to estimate a child's age. The child is asked to stretch one arm over their head to touch the opposite shoulder. Age is estimated depending on the distance of reach.

Photo 3: Inside the classroom of grade 3 (School A)

Photo 4: A grade 5 maths lesson

Assessment and Examinations

The director of the school is quite satisfied with the exam system, which consists of continuous assessment in grades 1-4; semester exams and monthly short tests in grades 5-8; and final national exams, prepared at regional level, in grade 8.

School committee

In all sections of all grades there is a parent committee. This comprises 4 parents, nominated by other parents, and a secretary. This committee deals with discipline and other general problems; for example, if a pupil is frequently absent the problem goes to the parents committee who then

approach the pupil's parents.

2.2.3 The Teachers

There are 26 teachers in the school, 6 female and 20 male. The average age of teachers is around 24 years. The Director has been at the school in this position for 3 years. He appears to be a highly motivated and enthusiastic individual and has a good working relationship with his teachers. Following his appointment to the school he believes that collaboration between teachers has improved and they are now more motivated and hard working. The majority of the teachers have been at the school for between 3 to 6 years and five teachers have more than seven years service each. All teachers have the basic TTI qualification and the agriculture teacher also has a diploma.

Altogether five male and three female teachers were interviewed in two groups. All except one of the teachers

were under 24 years old, and all had the required basic TTI training. The first group of teachers were enthusiastic and responsive in the interviews. They enjoyed the matrix ranking activity and held active discussion over the exact meaning of the matrix headings and their responses to them. This group of teachers had participated in the pilot (new curriculum) programme workshops, and were more enlightened. The second group of teachers were initially passive and unresponsive. They did however, start to show interest in the matrix and had quite active discussions when ranking the methods of teaching.

One of the main problems at the school is the lack of finance. The government provides text books, occasionally chairs and tables, and they pay teachers' salaries but the school must raise funds for general school maintenance, tools for agriculture, materials to make teaching aids, blackboards, chalk and other materials. The school does not have sufficient income to equip the school to an adequate standard. There

are not enough classrooms for the number of pupils. Although the school would like pupils to have uniforms, parents cannot afford to buy them. Some pupils do not even have exercise books and there is a general lack of textbooks. Other major problems identified by teachers include:

- textbooks do not arrive on time and there are not enough. This problem is overcome by writing on the blackboard and giving assignments, but teachers believe teaching would be more effective if all pupils had textbooks;

- classrooms are overcrowded (in grades 1 and 2 there are more than 90 pupils to one teacher) and there are not enough desks and benches. Classes are only held outside for practical work and when listening to the radio. The radio is used frequently in school teaching;

- there are no materials for teachers to produce their own teaching aids;

- some equipment suggested in textbooks (e.g. chemicals in science) are not available in the school;

- there is a large fluctuation in the attendance rates of some pupils;

- health problems which lead to long periods of absenteeism;

- motivating pupils is difficult; mainly in lower grades where overcrowding means a teacher cannot give attention to individual pupils;

- pupils travel long distances to get to school (up to 2 hours), many come without food, so pupils are constantly fainting;

- problem of girls being "hijacked" for marriage which is one of the reason for the low number of female pupils in higher grades. Previously, daughters in their teens were sold into marriage by their parents. If this happens to girls now, the school will intervene to try and stop the marriage taking place. In the last three years the school has made a concerted effort in this area to try to make parents aware of the importance of allowing their daughters to receive an education. Most of the time the school is successful in stopping the marriages, and this has formed closer bonds between the teachers and both male and female pupils.

New graduates with TTI qualifications felt that the level of training was not sufficient for teaching higher grades. The training covered pedagogical skills but little about subject content. The teacher's guide helps, but it is not adequate and it often refers to the pupil's text which does not arrive on

time. As the school is a pilot for testing the new curriculum, teachers have been to workshops on implementing the new curriculum, but they feel this is not enough. The training at these workshops was shallow and did not go into the subject area. They would like more training to update their knowledge, so that they are able to follow the new curriculum. One teacher has a diploma in agriculture, but the other teachers feel they need more practical training in agriculture as they run an agricultural club as a core curricular activity.

Photo 5: The Pedagogical Centre (School A)

What is a good teacher?

Many of the pupils responses to the question 'what are the characteristics of a good teacher?' relate to the teacher's skill and patience in ensuring pupils have understood a lesson (Table 3). Pupils also mentioned that a good teacher would

'use illustrations and examples so that lessons can be remembered'. In response to the same question Grade 5 pupils complained that *'we do not understand Amharic when the women teachers take us'.* This is probably because pupils do not start learning Amharic until Grade 5 and the teacher only speaks Amharic, so is unable to explain in Oromo any misunderstandings the pupils may have.

Table 3: What are the characteristics of a good teacher? (School A)

Pupils' response	***Teachers' response***
A teacher should:	*A teacher should:*
• explain by giving illustrations and examples so that the lessons can be easily remembered	• have an all round personality
• be knowledgeable	• be involved in extra-curricular

	activities
• use different teaching methodologies	• change with situations
• not mind repeating something until pupils understand	• be knowledgeable about a subject
• correct and advise pupils when they make mistakes	• plan lessons and prepare teaching aids
• use little corporal punishment	• follow up lessons
• *'explain well and revise the subject until we understand it'*	• monitor pupils
• *'gives us a chance and encourage us to ask questions'*	• be accepted into community (a teacher not accepted into the community will not be accepted

	by pupils)
	• be resourceful, adaptable, committed
	• treat all pupils equally
	• be aware of differences in abilities between pupils
	• know how to help weak pupils
	• give good examples
	• relate classroom teaching to the locality
	• make their own effort to improve their level of knowledge for effective teaching and learning processes
	• help in extra-curricular activities

2.2.4 The Learners

Pupils were interviewed from grades 5 and 6 as they follow the new curriculum. Grade 5 pupils have followed the new curriculum since the beginning of this school year (1996), and Grade 6 pupils have followed the new curriculum since they were in grade 5. All pupils interviewed come from agricultural backgrounds and out of 13 pupils, three girls and two boys walk up to two hours to come to the school. The subjects pupils (grade 6) like the most included science *'because it integrates many subjects',* music, social science and maths *'because I am good at maths'* (girl). Social science, English, Oromo and maths were subjects liked by grade 5 boys because *'they are easily understood and will be useful to us in the future'.* The girls liked maths, language and social science. Grade 6 pupils said overall they like all subjects, there is nothing they dislike. Grade 5 pupils disliked English *'because it is difficult to understand'* and science *'because it*

is difficult - the textbook is difficult'. Pupils say they would like to continue with their education and have professional careers such as a doctor, pilot or teacher, but this depends whether they pass their final exams. A number of pupils said they would like to become *'educated, better farmers';* one pupil said *'I don't want to farm because the standard of living is low, but agricultural extension agents are important for the farming community'.* When asked why they do and don't go to school (Table 4), general expected answers such as, *'to improve our knowledge'* were given. One boy said 'so *that we can teach others who are ignorant';* his parents are illiterate, they attend literacy classes but he also helps them.

Table 4: Why do some children go to school and others don't?

(• indicates responses from class 5: · indicates response from class 6)

Why do children go to school?	***Why do some children not go to school?***
· To build our literacy/knowledge and our country	· because parents are ignorant
· To learn and increase our knowledge	· Poverty/financial problems
· To help ourselves and our parents	· Too far to travel to school; they stay and work on the farm instead
· To improve behaviour and attitude	· Social problems - badly behaved children don't go to school
· To learn to respect people and have good manners	
· So that we can teach	

others who are ignorant	
· To improve our standard of living and develop languages	
· To learn all subject areas	
• To get knowledge	• Poverty
• To get jobs to support family	• Lack of parental support
• To learn about health	• Lack of awareness of education by parents and pupils
• To learn skills and handicrafts	• Have to work at home herding cattle/goats
• To learn languages	

When pupils were asked what they like and dislike about school, one of the first responses about what they liked was

'the school environment'. It appears to be very important that the surroundings are pleasing to the pupils. One pupil mentioned kidnapping of girls. This referred to a recent case where a girl pupil was kidnapped (for marriage) whilst the school was helping the community collect the harvest. She was later returned by police due to the school's intervention.

2.2.5 Pupils' activities at home and school

Pupils say that there are many activities they learn at school which they use at home. An example was given from a science class about water filtration. The water in the village is of very poor quality, and at school pupils learnt about the health benefits of filtering and boiling water. They have taken this knowledge home and their parents now carry out this practice. At school pupils learnt how to prepare nursery beds for vegetables (e.g. carrots and onions), and they learnt about growing chilli and pepper; they now grow these crops at home. Pupils say they have taught community members

about the importance of preventing disease transmission, washing clothes, and hygienic sanitation practices. They advise illiterate people in the community about their schooling and encourage them to go to school.

Pupils could identify some areas in which their home experiences had been brought into the classroom. For example, grade 5 pupils say that they measured land in a maths lesson, and they have used the sports field to measure straight lines and circles. One girl said *'what I learn theoretically at school I then apply on a field at home; it is accurate'.* In terms of bringing knowledge and experiences from home into school, one boy mentioned that he brought eucalyptus seeds from home to plant in the school. Another said that culture practised at home is brought to school (as folklore) so that it *'can be a lesson for others'.*

Pupils said that generally learning in school is not difficult because lessons follow on as they continue from grade to

grade. They also said that practical lessons and observation makes learning easier: *'folk stories may teach us useful things and we learn these at home', 'it is easier to learn discipline at home', 'language and counting is easy to learn at home in a simple form. We then improve our knowledge at school'.* These were comments made by grade 6 pupils to the question, 'is it easier to learn things at home?'. Agricultural practices are learnt at home and it is easy to relate topics in subject areas which use agriculture as examples. Grade 5 pupils gave one example where they had learnt that it was bad to burn stubble and grass, as it was detrimental to the environment. Pupils say that teachers do ask about their experiences outside school, and again folklore was mentioned, *'folklore and stories from the local community may give lessons to others through these experiences'.* Another pupil said that teachers ask whether there are any plants or flowers that pupils have at home, that are not in the school. Grade 5 pupils say teachers ask them

about certain practices at home, for example, whether they cover food to prevent flies landing on it; they then learnt why they should cover food.

Pupils mapping diagrams (an example is shown in Figure 1) showed that boys tend to be involved in agricultural activities more than girls, although harvesting, watering plants and herding livestock appears to be done by both boys and girls in grade 5. Generally girls appear to do all of the household tasks both at school and home.

Table 5: What children like and dislike about school (School A)

(• indicates response from class 5; · indicates response from class 6)

What do you like about school?	***What do you dislike about school?***

· Music (girl who likes singing)	· Grade 1 children make a mess of the compound
· Companionship	· Kidnapping of girls
· Learning	· Not enough materials and facilities for practical activities
· The plants and vegetables in school grounds	· Over crowded classrooms
· Good environment	· Shortage of reading materials
· Teachers teach us well and pupils are willing to participate	· Working outside if there is insufficient classrooms as this is damaging to the eyes
· Learning practical skills which we can apply at home e.g. water filtration improves health	
• Learning about cleaning and	• Sometimes school asks us

sanitation	for money and we don't have it
• Like school environment	
• 'Refreshing our minds'	
• Helps us to get a good job	
• Hope for future - To be a teacher or doctor	

2.2.6 Teaching Learning Processes

The Director is able to identify many strengths at his school. He says he has very capable teachers who are highly motivated and show a great interest in their work. Teachers learn from and help each other, with the experienced teachers helping the less experienced teachers. Despite many pupils having to travel long distances on foot to reach the school, they are hard working. Pupils have ability,

enthusiasm and perseverance and all of these factors contribute to increased teacher motivation. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and pupils show no fear in asking the teacher questions. There is a question and answer competition each week between classes in each grade. This aids pupils in learning and revision for exams, and there is an award at the end of the year for the pupil that wins the most question and answer sessions.

Pupils and teachers raise money for the school through agricultural and home economic activities. This gives them a feeling of ownership of the school and leads to more respect for the school grounds and equipment. The extra income means also that buildings are better maintained. The home economics club raised ETB 250 for the school by selling bread and tea. The agricultural club raised ETB 300 from selling produce.

Table 6: Activities at Home and School (School A)

(Summary of mapping diagrams by pupils from class 6, by frequency of occurrence of each activity in the mapping diagrams)

Activities 1 do at home	***boy***	***girl***	***Activities I do at school***	***boy***	***girl***
fetch water	2	3	watering plants	1	1
digging	3		digging	3	1
fencing	2		playing football	2	
collecting firewood/chopping	2		learning	4	2
studying/homework	3	1	volleyball	1	
herding	3		planting	1	
planting	1		raising flag	2	

water plants/vegetables	2	3	plant trees	1	
harvesting	1		clean classroom		3
playing football	2		playing ball		2
clean house		1	having books marked		1
planting vegetables		1	land cultivation	1	
make coffee	1	1	collecting and burning rubbish	1	
plant coffee		1	planting coffee seedlings	1	
cooking		1	planting sugar cane	1	
serving coffee		1	writing		3
clean house		2			

Table 7: Activities at Home and School (School A)

(Summary of mapping diagrams by pupils from class 5, by frequency of occurrence of each activity in the mapping diagrams)

Activities I do at home	***boy***	***girl***	***Activities I do at school***	***boy***	***girl***
collect firewood		1	plant flowers	2	1
collect tef		1	plant vegetables	1	3
cook		1	plant enset [7]	1	2
make tea		1	clean classroom	1	3
fetch water	2	3	weed		2
harvest	3	3	learn in classroom	2	2
plant enset	1	1	make tea		1
make dung fuel		1	fencing		1
clean house		2	fetch water		1
bake injera		1	water	1	4

			vegetables/flowers/tree		
collect dung		1	play sport	2	1
make coffee		3	read in library		1
herd/take cattle/goats to water	3	2	make straw stack	1	
homework	2	2	plant eucalyptus	1	
waters flowers/plants	1	1	harvest tef	1	
clean out cattle shed daily		1	look after seedlings	1	
make alcohol		1	look after school ground	1	
take care of siblings		1	clean latrine	1	
make straw stack	1		drink tea	1	

plant eucalyptus	1		read	1	
plant seedlings	1		water coffee seedlings	1	
weeding	1		ring bell at end of lesson	1	
read books	1				
play	1				
plant vegetables	1				
harvest enset	1				
look after tree nursery	1				
play football	1				

[7] enset is a staple food crop

Figure 1: A pupil's mapping diagram

The curriculum and content of learning

Teachers say that the old curriculum was not related to lives of pupils and at that time the school had no input into curriculum development. Now the school is one of 110 pilot schools involved in implementing the new curriculum. Due to it's involvement, it is in a position to make comments and recommendations on the new curriculum. Teachers believe that the new curriculum is relevant to the lives of the pupils, but it depends on the teachers' ability to implement it. They feel that the content is adequate but the implementation is difficult. Some teachers have undergone a short orientation course on the new curriculum, but others have had no training. Teachers do not know how to manage large classes and still follow the curriculum. The teacher's guide and the syllabus allows teachers to bring in relevant examples, as and how they feel necessary. If teachers are not capable of doing this, there are other teachers in the school who are able to help, advise and guide them; teachers share experience in assisting each other.

Teaching learning practices in the school

The matrix ranking activity (table 8) was carried out with two groups of teachers and two groups of pupils. Pupils were very quick to grasp the matrix ranking activity. There were active discussions between all the pupils, such as *'how can we "ask questions and give examples" unless the teacher elaborates and "explains, asks us questions and gives examples"?'.* Results were very interesting as both groups of teachers and pupils gave similar rankings. 'Pupils learn by doing' and 'teacher demonstrates' were in the top three rankings by both groups of teachers and pupils. Observations and interviews in the school indicated that these methods of teaching are frequently employed. There appears to be a fair amount of project work carried out in the school, which is usually done outside classroom hours, e.g. making a model to illustrate the use of solar energy, and making a model of a microscope. During the long vacation, pupils (grade 6) are

set an assignment by teachers. For example, one was set on the use of fertilisers. Pupils were to inform local people what they had learnt in the classroom, and they then reported back on the outcome of their advice to local farmers. There are also a number of co-curricular activities, such as the agriculture club and home economics club, which pupils seem to enjoy. 'Pupils read from textbooks' is ranked below 'pupils write' and 'pupils repeat and recite' possibly because of the shortage of reading and writing materials. When a teacher is absent, pupils will teach each other. An English lesson was observed in which a male pupil was taking the lesson by following the pupils' text book. The pupil had written the lesson on the blackboard and was asking the class to answer the questions. Pupils were keen to answer and they questioned the pupil in charge if he made a mistake. Better pupils are put with poorer pupils so they help each other. In another class, a group of pupils was selected to set general knowledge questions which were then presented to the rest

of the class for discussion. Despite the use of these methods of teaching and learning, where it appears that pupils spend a lot of time teaching each other, they do not give a high rank to 'pupils teach each other'; teachers rank this method highly. Teachers say that pupils are encouraged to ask questions in class, although both teachers and pupils do not rank this highly as a method of learning. Pupils say that they only ask questions to teachers about work they don't understand, but in their listing of the qualities of a good teacher (Table 3) they mention a good teacher should *'encourage them to ask questions'.* In science they may ask how the results were obtained. Sometimes they will ask teachers about things they have seen outside school, e.g. different land practices. Teachers ask questions to pupils to ensure they have understood a lesson.

Table 8: Methods of Learning (School A)

Rank	Teachers' response (group 1)

1	• pupils 'learn by doing'
2	• teacher demonstrates
3	• pupils teach each other
4	• teacher explains, asks questions and gives examples
5	• pupils ask questions and give examples
5	• teacher reads from text books
5	• pupils repeat or recite
6	• pupils read from text books
7	• pupils write
*	• teacher punishes pupils

Rank	**Teachers' response (Group 2)**
1	• pupils 'learn by doing'
2	• pupils teach each other

3	• teacher demonstrates
4	• pupils repeat or recite
5	• pupils ask questions and give examples
6	• teacher explains, asks questions and gives examples
7	• pupils read from text books
8	• pupils write
9	• teacher reads from text books
*	• teacher punishes pupils

Rank	**Pupils' response (grade 5)**
1	• pupils learn by doing
1	• teacher demonstrates
2	• pupils repeat or recite
2	• teacher explains, ask questions and gives examples

3	• pupils teach each other
4	• pupils ask questions and give examples
5	• pupils write
6	• teacher reads from text books
7	• pupils read from text books
*	• teacher punishes pupils

Rank	**Pupils' response (Grade 6)**
1	• teacher explains, asks questions, gives examples
2	• pupils learn by doing
3	• teacher demonstrates
4	• pupils ask questions and give examples
5	• teacher reads from text books
6	• pupils read from text books

7	• pupils write
8	• pupils teach each other
9	• pupils repeat or recited
*	• teacher punishes pupils

** rank score = 0*

2.2.7 The Home Environment

Parents did not appear very enthusiastic about being interviewed. Five parents (two female and three male) turned up at the school; they all live in the village and all of them are farmers. Four have been to literacy training but literacy levels are very low. Parents feel there are good relationships between the school and community and problems are dealt with through the parents committee or the school committee. Parents say teachers give support and advice to their children, one parent said *'we see teachers as our own*

children, because of their concern and commitment to the school'. Parents have little involvement in school activities apart from providing the school with seeds and providing oxen and implements for cultivating the school land. Parents feel it is important that their children get a good education, as one parent quoted, *'I started school at the same time as my friend, but I dropped out after grade 3, he continued to grade 12 and is now a very successful, well off farmer - education is important.'*

Parents say they are satisfied with their children's schooling and that they should learn *'all subjects'* in school. Parents said their children learn language better *'because they are learning in their own language';* they teach them about cleanliness; they advise them to wash their clothing; and, they bring home handicrafts they make in school. When asked whether their children talk about what they learn in school, the following responses were given: a mother (illiterate) said,

'no, we are farmers and have no time to listen. I tell them to go somewhere and study and not to disturb me'; a father quoted, *'yes, about our backward culture, e.g. underage marriage, use of fertilisers and land cultivation techniques'.* Most parents did appear to know about their children's schooling, and said that children talk about what they learn in school, such as language, mathematics, environment and agriculture.

Parents' role in schooling

Pupils (grade 6) say that they talk to their parents about school work, areas mentioned included reproduction, AIDS transmission, and the effects on the environment through deforestation and soil erosion. Grade 5 pupils mentioned sanitation and cleanliness. Pupils say their parents are interested in their school work, they ask about *'planting seedlings in the school'* and *'about our learning'.* Many

parents are unable to help pupils with their work, one girl said *'no one helps, the only time I get to do my homework is in the evening when everyone is asleep'* (she also walks two hours each way to get to school). Some pupils say their parents are interested in their schooling because they pay for books and other materials. One girl said her mother regrets not going to school, so she encourages her to get a good education. A boy said his parents told him *'learning is useless, you must stay at home and help us on the farm';* he missed school for one year. His parents still didn't want him to go to school, but members of the community spoke to his parents to ask them to allow him to continue his education.

Parents say that they do learn things from their children. Examples given were planting seeds, language, use of fertilisers, yields per hectare and different techniques for sowing crops. Parents say they learn some of these methods from agricultural extension agents, but that what they learn

from their children is also important. Their children do ask questions and they feel happy about this because *'we feel our children are getting a better education'.* They would like their children to get good jobs such as a doctor or a high court judge. One parent said he would like to see his child become an agricultural extension advisor and *'to be a better farmer'.*

2.2.8 Contextualising teaching and learning

Teachers say that it is important to relate to pupils' experiences in teaching and learning. When explaining difficult concepts, examples should start with home life and then move gradually to village, community, regional and national level. In science subjects, teachers and pupils will go outside and use the land, for example, to make measurements when learning mathematical concepts. Teachers believe such a process is good as they see that pupils appear to understand and grasp concepts more easily.

In the new curriculum there is flexibility that allows teachers to bring in examples and make subjects relevant to their particular environment. For example in science, to measure the volume of an item they used a pumpkin. In the text book, land area is referred to in terms of hectares; instead teachers use the local measure for area. When relating the content of a lesson to the environment, either home or school, if resources are needed and they are not available in the school, the teacher will go outside the school to find the necessary materials. Practical activities tend to take place in co-curricular activities such as the agriculture club and the home economics club; co-curricular activities increase pupils motivation.

2.2.9 Agriculture in contextualising teaching and learning

Teachers do use agriculture as a means of contextualising their teaching and learning practices in the school, although

they do not appear to recognise this as an innovative teaching method. In science lessons a number of projects have taken place in which agriculture has been used to contextualise the subject. To illustrate plant growth rates with and without fertiliser, pupils brought manure from home, spread it on one plot and examined the change in yield and growth compared to a plot that was untreated. An experiment was undertaken to demonstrate the yield difference between maize that had been broadcast compared to that sown in rows. In certain cases the methods have been transferred to the community. Drama is used in teaching practices, for example in discussing responsibilities in the household they will enact what each member of the household does such as the youngest member herding cattle and the next youngest ploughing. Co-curricular activities are carried out with grades 1 to 8 and these often centre around learning through practical activities. For example, a group of pupils were given a plot of land and asked to solve questions such as *'how*

many radishes can you plant in this plot?', 'how much money would you expect from your plot?'. Teachers say that implementation of ideas and concepts, when involving agriculture, are taken up with more interest by pupils. When classroom learning is related to what happens in children's homes, motivation and attention is increased. Pupils' interest in agriculture is illustrated through the level of uptake by farmers in the community who have learnt through the pupils. Some pupils grow their own produce at home using knowledge they have gained in the school. They then sell their produce in the local market and use the money to buy textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils and even clothes.

2.2.10 Issues arising from School A

Teachers are unaware of some problems they may have such as special needs of pupils, making use of the resources around them and using multigrade teaching methods. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils

illustrated by the teachers' comments that pupils show no fear in asking questions. There is good student teacher interaction in the classroom; active participation in co-curricular activities; co-operation and collaboration between the school and the community (e.g. harvesting) and such events as regular question and answer sessions between groups of pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils have been strengthened since the school started to intervene in cases where girls were sold into marriage, and there was no mention of this intervention causing conflict between the school and the community. There appear to be good supportive community relationships, possibly helped by the fact that many of the teachers are past pupils of the school and they live in the village. Teachers appear to be happy and highly motivated, but some say they would re-train for another profession if they had the opportunity, because the teaching profession is looked down upon. Teachers face many problems, primarily a lack of facilities and resources,

textbooks that arrive late, little or no training to implement the new curriculum, fluctuation in the attendance rates of pupils, and overcrowded classrooms.

Teachers appear to be very active in making the best use of the resources around them to use in their teaching and learning processes. Teachers do not contextualise their teaching methods knowingly but there were a number of examples quoted by teachers that involved some element of bringing pupils' experiences into their teaching practices. In the new curriculum there is flexibility that allows teachers to bring in examples to make subjects areas relevant to their particular teaching environment. Teachers showed great interest in the research and were keen to know more about the process of contextualisation. During the end of the case study work in the school, a geography lesson was observed in the agriculture plot. Pupils were making a map of the village, which was then going to be planted with flowers to differentiate areas.

2.3 An 'average' school - School B

2.3.1 The School Environment

The school was established in 1976 and recently moved (1994) to a new site. The school appears well kept from the outside and buildings were similar to school A (Photo 6). There appears to be a very good school pedagogical centre (SPC) at the school which is in frequent use, a number of teachers were observed using aids available in the centre, such as diagrams and maps (see photo 3 in methodology).

School system

The school works in two shifts, 8.00 to 12.15 and 12.30 to 16.45. If there are two or more pupils from the same family the school tries to ensure that they come to different shifts. This means that parents will always have a child at home to help with farmwork or household tasks and so attendance

may be higher.

Enrolment, Pupil Numbers, Attendance, Drop-out and Repetition

There are 1161 pupils at the school, 698 boys and 463 girls (Table 9). Last year there were only 809 pupils. As the school works a shift system, there are a number of sections to each grade. On average there are more than 50 pupils to one teacher. The overall attendance rate is about 90% and the drop-out rate is estimated at 10%. More than 90% of the pupils come from farming backgrounds.

Table 9: Pupil Numbers by class, 1996 (School B)

Grade	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***
boys	182	153	91	39	39	50	68	79
girls	127	84	44	13	23	30	15	14

2.3.2 The Teachers

There are 19 male and 7 female teachers at the school, including the director. The director has recently been promoted to this position after serving 5 years as a teacher in the school. The average age of teachers is 27 years and the average length of service in this school is 10 years. All of the teachers have TTI qualifications and 4 teachers have Diplomas. Teachers interviewed (2 female and 3 male) were all between 25 - 34 years of age and they all have TTI training; one teacher also holds a diploma. All of these teachers have only 1-2 years service in this school although the majority have between 6-10 years teaching experience. In this school teachers have considerable more teaching experience than those in School A. Recent TTI graduates are usually assigned to remote rural schools, and those with more years' of service move to more accessible schools

(such as School B). This is the main reason for the difference in years of service, and age of teachers, between the two schools. Teachers face many physical problems in the school such as:

- shortage of text books and teaching materials;
- overcrowded classrooms;
- poor maintenance of equipment and a general lack of desks and chairs;
- no reference materials;
- not enough textbooks;
- the textbook, syllabus and teacher's guide all arrive at different times;
- lack of equipment suggested in the teacher's guide to demonstrate lessons practically.

Photo 6: School B

Recently a resource person was appointed for the SPC. He

has made his own screen printer to produce, amongst other things, printed lesson planning sheets for teachers. As the school is on a main road it generally receives books and materials earlier than more remote rural schools. Overall there is a lack of funding to the school to enable it to buy materials and facilities, especially items needed to develop the SPC.

The school now implements the new curriculum in grades 1, 2, 5 and 6. Teachers feel that they have not had sufficient training to enable them to implement the new curriculum. They feel unable to cope with the content and there is too much demand in the new curriculum in terms of materials; there is no science laboratory at the school. One teacher recently attended a workshop at zone level for implementing the new educational policy. The same teacher was then expected to help train other teachers at *woreda* level. Some teachers walked 3-4 hours to reach the school in which the training was taking place, consequently they missed much of

the course. The training was poorly organised and was not sufficient in terms of its objectives. There is no monitoring on the effect of these workshops. Overall, teachers feel in need of more training in all areas. One particular example was given in the use of science kits. At present the resources person is sent for training in the use of the kits, but the teachers who are the ones who will actually be using the kits receive no training.

Teachers appeared reluctant to say much about their teaching and learning practices in the school, especially the female teachers who said very little. Unfortunately the time spent in this school was very short which made it difficult to establish a rapport with teachers, and consequently the information they provided could not be clarified. The teachers all say they would like to stay as teachers, but to *'be a better teacher', 'improve knowledge'* and to *'improve teaching qualifications'.* In order to do this they would like to see

improvements in teachers' lives and their status. If this were to improve it would have an effect on the community as they would value the teachers as being important members of society and consequently they would value their children's education.

Pupils responses to the question, 'what is a good teacher?' were similar to those at school A. Pupils mention the importance of the teacher being able to explain lessons well so that pupils could understand difficult concepts more easily. A good teacher, according to pupils, should also revise the subject and lesson until it is understood and *'explain and elaborate when we ask questions'.*

2.3.3 The Learners

Activities were carried out with one group of grade 5 pupils. Pupils were very shy in this school and initially there were no volunteers for the interviews; they were suspicious about the

interviews and time was needed to explain why they were needed. They freely responded once the activities began. When pupils were asked whether there was anything they learnt in school that they now use at home, one boy said that he learnt about raising chickens in a school lesson (not practical work) and now he keeps chickens at home. At school they learnt to plant eucalyptus; they already do this at home but the method is different. At school they trim the roots before planting seedlings as the tree grows better. Pupils have taken this knowledge home and say their parents now practice this method when planting eucalyptus. From interviews it appears that many pupils do not attend school because of commitments at home. This was also mentioned as a response when pupils were asked 'why do some children not go to school?' (Table 10). Reasons for attending school are similar to school A, to become knowledgeable and get a good job. Pupils like the subjects that they understand well and get good marks in, such as maths, Oromo language

and social studies. One girl likes science and another enjoys social science *'because it is interesting'.* English and science were mentioned as the least liked subjects *'because they are difficult'.* Pupils did not really know what they wanted to do after primary school. The general consensus was to continue with their education if they get good grades. The likes and dislikes at school mainly concern resources, such as a lack of materials.

Table 10: Why do some children go to school, and others don't? (School B)

Why do children go to school?	***Why do some children not go to school?***
• to learn	• they have to work at home on the farm
• to become knowledgeable	• they have no money

• to learn language and science	
• to get good results and then a job	
• to be a good teacher	
• to become literate	

Table 11: What children like and dislike about school (School B)

What do you like about school?	***What do you dislike about school?***
• lessons are interesting	• dusty classroom
• the school environment	• seats are broken
• playing ball	• small blackboard
	• not enough textbooks (1 book

per 5 pupils)

Pupils activities at home and school

More than 90% of pupils in the school come from farming families. Pupils' activities at home show that girls do most of the housework (fetch water, make coffee), as well as some of the agricultural activities. There appears to be little division between girls and boys in the type of agricultural tasks they do, except ploughing which tends to be a boys job. Nearly all of the pupils said that they do their homework at school because they do not have time to do it at home. When they get home from school they must help their parents with farm work. Some of the pupils walk for up to 1½ hours each way to reach school. Activities at school, such as watering plants and making tea, are carried out in clubs, the agriculture club and the home economics club respectively. The poor state of equipment (desks and chairs) is illustrated in photo 7 and also by one boy's answer to 'activities I do at school': *'I must*

check my seat before I sit on it because many of the benches are broken.'

Table 12: Activities at Home and School (School B)

(Summary of mapping diagrams by pupils from class 5, by frequency of occurrence of each activity in the mapping diagrams)

Activities I do at home	***boy***	***girl***	***Activities I do at school***	***boy***	***girl***
harvest barley			fetch water from the river for cleaning classroom floor	2	1
plough	3		attend class	3	1
thresh corn	2	2	homework	3	1
cut grass	1		study	1	2
weeding	2	2	play	1	

herding cattle/goats/sheep	1	1	*'check that my seat is not broken before I sit on it'*	1	
cut grass for fodder	1		water plants (in agriculture club)	1	
make coffee		3	answer questions	1	
collect threshed grain from the		1	make tea		2
field					
roast cereals (for food)		1	read textbook		2
fetch water		3	write		1
cook *injera* [8]		1	pay attention in class		1
clean cowshed (daily)		1			

wash clothes		1			

[8] *injera* is a staple food in Ethiopia

2.3.4 Teaching- Learning Processes

As the director has only recently been appointed he was unable to give clear information about processes in the school, although previously he was a teacher at the school. The director believes this school is better than others in the area because there is high attendance rate. The SPC is good and there are experienced long serving teachers at the school. According to teachers pupils do very little project work in the school and few lessons are ever held outside the classroom, although 'pupils learn by doing' was ranked highly as a method of learning by both teachers and pupils. This could be because school clubs, such as home economics and agriculture, appear to be important activities in the school.

Teachers do not allow pupils to work in groups because they say classes are too large (60-90 pupils), therefore teachers tend to use rote learning methods, such as 'pupils repeating and reciting'. Radio programmes appear to be used frequently in teaching.

Pupils said during group interviews, that they discuss between themselves when they don't understand something in class but they give 'pupils teach each other' a zero rank. When asked whether they ever ask questions to the teacher in class one pupil said *'yes, if something is not clear. The teacher encourages us to ask questions about the subject area, and they ask us whether we have understood.'* In the rankings however, pupils gave 'pupils ask questions' a low rank. 'Pupils read from textbooks' probably receives a low rank because it is a method not used often as there is a shortage of textbooks.

Photo 7: a classroom

Table 13: Methods of Learning (School B)

Rank	Teachers' response (group 1)
1	• teacher demonstrates
2	• pupils 'learn by doing'
2	• pupils repeat or recite
2	• teacher explains, asks questions and gives examples
3	• pupils ask questions and give examples
4	• teacher reads from text books
4	• pupils write
4	• pupils teach each other
5	• pupils read from text books
*	• teacher punishes pupils

Rank	Pupils' response (grade 5)

Rank	Pupils' response (grade 6)
1	• teacher demonstrates
1	• pupils 'learn by doing'
2	• pupils repeat or recite
3	• pupils write
4	• teacher explains, asks questions and gives examples
4	• teacher reads from text books
4	• pupils read from text books
5	• pupils ask questions and give examples
5	• teacher punishes pupils
*	• pupils teach each other

* rank score = 0

2.3.5 The Home and Community Environment

Pupils come from very poor backgrounds where the majority of parents are illiterate. They say their parents are interested in their school work because they buy them pens and pencils and because they tell them to study well. Teachers say there is a general lack of parental awareness about the education of their children as parents rarely come to the school when they are asked. On parents' day less than 5% of parents came to the school. Pupils say they only talk about school work at home with *'someone who knows about learning'.* In the majority of households this is unlikely to be the parents. Sisters and brothers were the people mentioned as being able to help with school work.

School and community relations

Relations between the school and community are said to be satisfactory but teachers have little direct involvement with the community. Although the school was supposed to be a literacy centre, the programme has not started yet. There is

little initiative from the community, according to the teachers' interview. Teachers say there is a lack of commitment and awareness by the school education committee which at present is not functioning well. Teachers have tried to resolve the matter with no success and they will need the help of higher officials in order to get co-operation from the school committee. There have been problems with vandalism at the school.

2.3.6 Contextualising teaching and learning

The new educational policy follows a pupil-centred approach to learning and indirectly makes reference to the process of contextualisation. Teachers agree that the idea is good but one which they have never seen in practice. Not enough time was spent in the school to reveal whether a contextualising approach was being used by any of the teachers. Pupils' interviews revealed that teachers sometimes asked them about home experiences during lessons. During a lesson on

animal production, the teacher had asked them about their animals at home; one boy said *'I know how animals are raised at home, and this helps me to learn this subject in class'.* Teachers do draw upon agricultural experiences in lessons. Examples given were raising livestock and planting trees and seedlings.

2.3.7 Issues arising from School B

The director of the school does not appear to be fully aware of what happens on a day to day basis in the school. Relations between the school and community appear to be very poor, revealed by the fact that only 5% of parents turned up for a parent's day. Teachers in the school are experienced and well qualified, but they showed little enthusiasm to initiate their own innovative teaching methods. The curriculum requires that teaching and learning should be made relevant to the local situation. There is some evidence that teachers do this but generally there is no contextualised

approach to teaching and learning in this school. The school has a very good pedagogical centre and recently a resource person has been appointed to run it. As in School A, this school lacks facilities and resources required for teachers to, they believe, carry out their job more effectively. Not enough time was spent in this school to produce a detailed case study but the information that was collected does indicate that poor community relations with the school affects teachers' motivation levels and consequently pupils' motivation. A contextualised approach that would involve community members may be a means of improving the situation.

Figure 2: A pupil's mapping diagram (School B)

3 Findings from the country study

Ethiopia has over the past few decades seen many changes to its education system due to economic and political change.

A document by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1994) states that there has been a gradual decline in the quality of education which has been pronounced in the past two decades. Factors such as scarcity of instructional materials, overcrowding, inadequate school buildings and a decline in the quality of teacher training have contributed to the problem. Moreover, the curriculum lacked relevance with no clearly defined objectives. Instruction concentrated more on theoretical knowledge with little connection to daily life. The approach lacked problem solving skills with a high tendency towards rote learning. Participation rates at all levels were very low with disproportionately low female representation, and the few schools available were mainly located in urban areas. The government (1994) states that almost all of the junior and secondary schools, with a total enrolment of 12% of the eligible age group, are located in the medium and large towns. Nearly 60% of rural communities have no schools. The poor access to primary schooling for

children in rural areas was revealed during the fieldwork, when a fair proportion of children said that they had walked long distances, taking up to two hours, to attend school. (Poverty is another main reason for not attending school as children are needed to work at home where food production is likely to be a higher priority than education. During the fieldwork it was clear that many children, both boys and girls, are involved in agricultural activities daily. Pupils mentioned that homework had to be done at school because they had too much work to do at home.) Overall enrolment rates are low; UNICEF (1995) estimate the primary school enrolment ratio (gross) at 25% over 1986-92.

Ethiopia's Education Sector Strategy (1994) states that *'the main objective of any educational system is to cultivate the individual's capacity for problem solving and adaptability to the environment by developing the necessary knowledge, ability, skill and attitude', 'in this respect the existing*

educational curriculum of Ethiopia had not been properly developed to meet the societal and pedagogical demands', 'the curriculum is irrelevant and with no clearly defined objectives, the teaching concentrates more on theoretical knowledge with little connection to day to day life. The approach is not problem solution and students mainly rote learn'. The strategy for education frequently refers to the use of the pupil's experiences in teaching and learning, the need for more innovative teaching methods and the need for more relevance in the curriculum such that, *'the content of the curriculum will be revised to be relevant to the needs of the community', 'the science teaching will emphasise application and will be properly linked with day to day activities of the student', 'the teaching/learning process shall emphasise problem solving by making the curriculum more relevant and by adopting appropriate teaching methods'.*

There was little evidence to suggest that teachers knowingly

contextualise their teaching and learning practices in the schools visited. Reasons included, a general lack of resources, time constraints, overcrowded classrooms and poor teacher training that does not prepare teachers for using innovative teaching methods, or for making use of local resources in their teaching practices. A new curriculum has been developed for use in primary level teacher training, and this follows the objectives of the new educational policy. Trained teachers, however, have only received minimal training in using the new curriculum and most teachers interviewed were disappointed with the level of training they had received in order to implement the new curriculum. During fieldwork, discussions with teachers revealed a keen interest to know more about the idea of contextualising teaching and learning. As a process it was not one they were familiar with, but they felt it would be quite easy for them to practice because of pupils' daily contact with agriculture. A major objective of the previous curriculum was 'education for

production'; so agriculture was taught as a separate subject and all schools had agriculture plots and agricultural teachers. The new curriculum for basic education focuses on a general curriculum where agriculture is incorporated into subject areas such as science.

In the 'innovative' school teachers were trying hard to make learning relevant to pupils. During interviews with pupils they were able to easily identify areas where agriculture had been brought into subject areas. The most frequent example given was measuring land area in a maths lesson. Teachers gave examples, such as a maths lesson in which pupils were asked to calculate the number of radishes they could plant in a certain area. They say that implementation of ideas and concepts involving agriculture are taken up more and greater interest is shown. In this particular school, pupils placed a strong emphasis on teachers being able to *'explain by giving illustrations and examples so that lessons can be easily*

remembered'; they also mentioned that a good teacher *'uses different teaching methodologies'.* Generally parental attitudes were agreeable to such an approach. They appreciate their children telling them about their school work, particularly if parents also gain something from their children's schooling, for example new agricultural technologies or practices to improve general health. Where practices have been transferred to the community (e.g. vegetable growing and water filtration), it has proved to link the community with the school and has improved parental awareness of the importance of a basic education. Many teachers are past pupils of the school which appears to have helped in linking the school and community.

Agriculture as a subject was incorporated previously into curricula so resources for initiating a contextualised approach to teaching and learning, through the use of agricultural experience, are in abundance. As the majority of children come from agricultural backgrounds, and experience

agricultural practices daily, it is an area extremely familiar to them. Parents' and teachers' attitudes to a contextualised approach to teaching and learning are very positive. Teachers already try to use pupils' experiences in their teaching practices but many feel they do not have sufficient training to enable them to use this knowledge effectively in teaching new concepts. The new curriculum is relevant to pupils' lives and does allow teachers to use their own examples and bring outside experiences into classroom learning. Despite the poor condition of schools and a general lack of resources, teachers state their main problem is insufficient training to enable them to implement the new curriculum.

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Sri Lanka

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