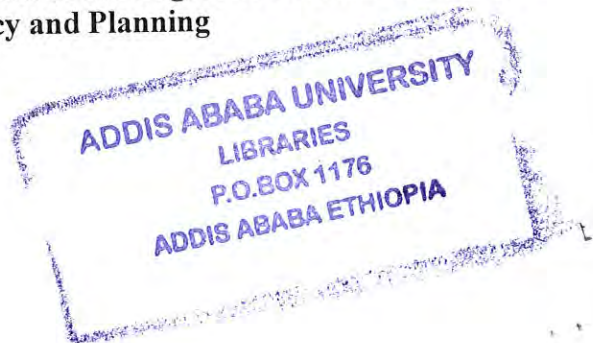


**THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE ETHIOPIAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

By: Tamiru Zeryhun Zemedkun



**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University
in a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of the Degree of Masters of Arts in
Educational Policy and Planning**



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

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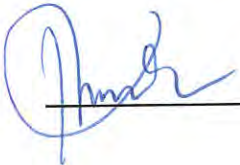
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Abstract

While education enrolment increases are important, they are not sufficient. As a result, within the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Programs (II & III) attention has been paid to the quality of education necessary to ensure that students that graduate from the first and second cycle of primary school leave with the requisite skills to be a contributing citizen and be prepared for secondary school. In augmenting this effort for quality education, therefore, National Learning Assessments have been begun by the Ministry of Education since 2000. Hence, this study focuses on the aim that encourages and supports the effort being exhibited in National Learning Assessment, in particular, and in the education and training quality assurance, in general. The study mainly employed qualitative approach of data collection - individual interviews and document analysis. A quantitative description using data out of a piloted questionnaire was also used. As an evaluative survey study, it was a non-sampled research with a subsequent nature of retrospection. The data analysis, by and large, was a qualitative advancing using explanation, description, comparisons and contrasts and a triangulation exercise with the use of the data from the three data collection tools. It was found that there was a clear perception of a significant impact of the NLA recommendations on the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy implementation. While the NLA recommendations so far forwarded were practically utilizable and well attended by the policymakers and decision makers in the sector, it was revealed that there is a significant problem in the dissemination of the summary reports of the National Learning Assessments to every one in need. Thus, the implications of this study are supposed to be the vitality of the development and realization of a national policy framework on learning assessment, the introduction of census-based assessment, fluency in the dissemination of the NLA reports to all interested and the country's need to participate in regional/international assessments for better benchmarking of best practices.

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List of Abbreviations

ARM	Annual Review Meeting
EFA	Education for All
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
ETP	Education and Training Policy
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GEQAEA	General Education Quality Assurance and Examinations Agency
GEQIP	General Education Quality Improvement Program/Package
JRM	Joint Review Mission
MoE	Ministry of Education
NLA	National Learning Assessment
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NOE	National Organization for Examinations
SIP	School Improvement Program
TDP	Teacher Development Program
UNESCO	United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Aid for International Development
AED	Academy of Educational Development

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Except for the degree of variation, every country in the world strives to provide equitable and quality education to its citizens, bearing an ultimate goal of the development of human capital in mind. These efforts may either be emanating from a policy framework that interfaces with other sector policies, which is quite reliable and acceptable, or other related documents such as proclamations, guidelines and others.

Within this global framework, the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of Ethiopia, which is an outcome of the government's deliberate plan to implement the rural and urban development policies and strategies, was in place to ensure sustainable development for the rural population, which constitutes about 85% of the country's total, and the same to the urban as well. Particularly creating access to primary education for all school-age children and thereby producing educated farmers and other workers who utilize new agricultural technologies and produce for market is indispensable for the realization of the rural transformation strategy and the agriculture-led industrial development.

Following the enforcement of ETP in 1997, the government of Ethiopia launched the first five year Education Sector Development Program (ESDP-I) within the framework of ETP as part of a twenty-year education sector indicative plan. Its main thrust being improving quality, relevance, equity, and efficiency and expanding access with special emphasis on primary education in rural and underserved areas, the promotion of education for girls in an attempt to achieve universal primary education by 2015 was also among the intentions (MOE, 2005).

Taking into account that well-trained and qualified manpower play a pivot role for the speedy development of competitive socio-economic status in the country, the policy framework for the education and training programs is designed in such a way that it helps the realization of various development plans, i.e., rural and agricultural development, urban and industrial development and the building of democratic society (GEQAEA, 2008).

In general, during ESDP-I, II and III there has been a substantial expansion of education at the primary level and as a result enrollment in primary schools (grades 1-8) has shown significant increase. During ESDP-I the target was to increase primary enrollment to 7 million from 3.7 million in 1995/96. However, the achievement was 8.1 million, which implies an average growth rate of 12.8% in enrollment. This trend has also continued in ESDP-II with the annual average growth rate of 11.7%. Accordingly, the primary school enrollment in 2007/08 has reached to 15.3 million (GEQAEA, 2008; MoE, 2007/08).

With regard to the number of primary schools, there were 16,513 primary schools in 2004/05 and this number has reached 23,354 in 2007/08 which is an increase of 41.4% (GEQAEA, 2008; MoE, 2007/08).

In terms of gross enrollment rate (GER) at primary level, the achievement in 2007/08 was 95.6% (90.5% female and 100.5% male), which is an increase by 15.8% from 1996/97, but lesser than the 100.2% target that had already been set for the year. Similarly, the net enrollment rate (NER) has also increased from 73.2% in 2004/05 to 86.0% in 2007/08. Though the NER was increased by 12.8% from 2004/05, it has shown a slower increase compared to the GER. This reveals that the age structure at primary level is not changing towards the appropriate age, i.e. contrary to the preceding years achievements. Both of the three programs (ESDP-I, II and III) were mainly aimed at increasing access to meet the target set for UPE by the year 2015. This denotes the government's commitment to meet EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (GEQAEA, 2008; MoE, 2007/08).

Simultaneously with the provision of education as a semi-public good, governments have to monitor and evaluate the progress of their education system over time with the use of learning assessment tools which are universally accepted by scholars of the field.

With this consensual idea, growth is registered in national and international learning assessment activities in many countries including that of Africa.

But, there exists lack of appreciation still in many quarters about the potential value of the data that learning assessments can provide. Even when countries conduct a national learning assessment by their own, the information yielded by the learning assessment is frequently not fully exploited (Greaney and Kellaghan, 2008).

Parallel to the above success story in Ethiopia, the concern for educational change and quality improvement has been the main focus of educational planners for years. However, the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand (1990) is considered to have uncovered much of the dreadful necessity of learning assessment. According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2004), the Education for All declaration gave not only fresh momentum to issues related to assessment but also made clear that there has to be a new form of assessment: system assessment, or national assessment, in order to determine whether children were acquiring the essential knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and values that schools have promised to deliver (GEQAEA, 2008).

As cited by Kellaghan and Greaney (2001), Article 4 of the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) states that focus of basic education should be "on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrollment, continued participation in organized programmes and completion of certification requirements" (p. 5). Similarly, after a 10-year follow-up to the Jomtien declaration, the Dakar Conference stressed the importance of having "a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes" as governments need to ensure basic quality education for all, for their citizens (UNESCO, 2000).

As seen in the foregoing part, a concern with educational quality has been the basis for the rise to modern assessment. The emergence of learning assessment is believed to come up with an objective appraisal system of a given education system before arriving at sound judgment. It is also important to note that one of the modern assessment procedures focus on outcomes. Kellaghan and Greaney argue that unlike past assessments which focus on inputs (e.g. physical facilities,

curriculum materials, books, and teacher training) to determine the quality of education, this is no longer the case. Today, the dominant question posed by many stakeholders, including policymakers, has become on the outcomes of education: whether students are acquiring the desired knowledge, skills, behavior, and attitudes (p. 29). As a result, policymakers or educational managers need information that would be necessary to reach informed judgment as related to the adequacy of student achievements obtained in the system. They may also need a baseline data on student achievement against which to measure progress or excellence being registered in the educational program (GEQAEA, 2008).

To this end, assessment data should be of particular interest to educational policymakers and administrators, such as senior ministry of education officials and politicians. In addition, the above mentioned actors should also be concerned of the findings and recommendations of the learning assessments for the huge amount of resources that NLA requires them to carry out.

This study, therefore, intends to identify the extent to which the implementation of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy is intervened by the recommendations of the three successive National Learning Assessments so far managed (in 2000, 2004 and 2008) by the Ministry of Education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As national learning assessment takes many forms and serves several purposes, the response to the findings and the recommendations should squarely address important issues affecting the education. Hence, policymakers are to strive to ensure that national learning assessments are aligned with other essential instructional mechanisms in the education system: curricula, teacher education, school capacity building, measures to address inequities, etc. Such policy measures make national learning assessments to be effective instruments in improving the quality of learning and education at large. In light of this, scholars, however, argue that there is no point in carrying out a national learning assessment if its findings and recommendations are not communicated to potential users, & are

not acted upon (GEQAEA, 2008). Learning assessment findings and recommendations have to be communicated to potential users such as the education policymakers and administrators, who will be responsible for making decisions.

Despite growth in national and international learning assessment activity, a lack of appreciation still exists in many quarters about the potential value of the data that learning assessments can provide, as well as a deficit in the skills required to carry out a technically sound learning assessment. Even when countries conduct a national learning assessment or participate in an international one, the information yielded by the learning assessment is frequently not fully exploited. The reasons that may account for this being either the policymakers have only been peripherally involved in the learning assessment and not have been fully committed to it, or the results of analyses may not have been communicated in a form that was intelligible to policymakers, or the policymakers may not have fully appreciated the implications of findings for social policy in general or for educational policy in particular, relating to curricular provision, the allocation of resources, the practice of teaching, and teachers' professional development.

As an effort to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Education and Training Policy of the country and the educational progress benefited from it, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has begun undergoing series of national learning assessments on 4th and 8th grades since the baseline assessment in 2000 under the possession of the then National Organization for Examinations (NOE). Since then, three rounds of assessment findings and recommendations were publicized through report documents disseminated to concerned bodies in more or less even fashion.

Even though these promising trends are appealingly observed in the Ethiopian education and training policy implementation, the writer of this study does not have the opinion that assessment results were profoundly integrated into the educational policy decision making processes to the extent of the need and the financial expenses by the government. It was, therefore, this view which motivated the writer

of this study to investigate the impact of the three rounds of learning assessment recommendations and whether the potential of these assessment results was fully utilized commensurate with the initial momentum and the resources being expended.

However the writer has, to the best of his understanding, fetched for research works having similarity or difference in findings in the study area, got nothing important. The only researched documents which may say anything related to the title are found to be those studied by the National Organization for Examinations, MoE, and some books from the foreign world of educational assessment.

1.3 Key Research Questions:

This study intends to answer the following key questions:

1. To what extent have the National Learning Assessment recommendations so far forwarded addressed the ETP implementation?
2. What observable interventions were made as a result of recommendations forwarded?
3. How have the learning assessment results contributed to enhance learners' achievement?
4. What major problems were encountered in conducting the three successive National Learning Assessments?

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General objective: The study aims at encouraging and supporting the effort being exhibited in National Learning Assessment, in particular, and in the education and training quality assurance, in general.

1.4.2 Specific objectives: This study is able to:

- Determine the extent to which the national learning assessment recommendations made so far addressed the implementation of ETP;
- Identify the specific and clearly observable interventions in place as a response to the assessment results;

- Show the outputs attained so far, if any, from the interventions recommended by the National Learning Assessments;
- Identify some major problems that were encountering the practices of three successive National Learning Assessments.

1.5 Significance of the study

Educational policymakers, politicians, planners and managers should ensure that learning assessment is in accordance with other instructional guidance mechanisms in the education system. It is also obvious that considerable resources are invested in national learning assessments in order to ensure that they provide sound feedback to the education system in view of the intended objectives of learning and overall effectiveness of the system. However, evidences in many of the developing countries show that the information obtained from the assessment is not either effectively communicated or used for policy decisions (GEQAEA, 2008).

Regarding the above literature, one may possibly agree that there are educational arenas in which assessment findings and recommendations are being closely adhered to, and there are others which are even not given positive reception. Unless assessment results are integrated into the educational policy decision-making processes, it can not have considerable impact on the quality of students' learning.

So far, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has carried out three successive studies, the first one being a baseline assessment. These studies have enumerated a number of recommendations which their producers thought enhance the Education and Training Policy (ETP) implementation. The studies were intended to provide national policymakers and top-level educational managers with systematic information about the status of students' learning outcomes in the general education sector, particularly grades 4 and 8, and the extent to which students attain pre-defined standards or proficiencies.

The writer of this study, therefore, attempts to investigate the impact of the National Learning Assessment recommendations so far anticipated by the three successive assessment studies carried out.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The impact of National Learning Assessment recommendations is not necessarily limited to policy-related decision making and its implementation only. It has a great upshot on learners' achievement, curriculum development and reform, teaching and learning process, educational leadership and management and the inclusion of the issues of exceptional learners. Therefore, the study is limited to focus only on the impact which is rendered by the recommendations of the three successive NLA studies possible on the ETP implementation, particularly regarding the policy implementation aspect on the enhancement of students' achievement and the provision of quality education.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

As a survey, the study would have been more trustworthy had it considered external stakeholders as informants, particularly from the private sector. Besides, however not halting ones, the lack in reference books on the topic, the insufficiency of financial resource and the scarcity of time from the researcher's side have undoubtedly played their inescapable backlash role on this research effort. Be everything as it may, the research undertaking was managed as well as made full-fledged by the support from and helps of my family and intimate friends.

Chapter 2 - Review of Related Literature

2.1 Policy and Its Implementation: An Overview

2.1.1 Policy: Defined

There is a vast literature within a number of disciplines that attempts to define policy. Dye (1972) defined policy as whatever governments choose to do or not to do. It is an account of policy as authoritative choice. For Starling (1988), policy is an action or inaction of the government directed towards the accomplishment of some purposes or goals. Put differently, policy consists of the goals and assumptions that underlie what government does. This implies that policies are general guides to action which constrain or direct objective attainments. On the other hand, some authorities view policy as a decision or set of decisions (Jenkins, 1978; Easton, 1953), others contend that policy is a course of action (Anderson, 1979). Stone (1997) defined policy as a rational attempt to obtain objectives. In this sense policy is viewed as a guide or direction giving statement to make decisions.

Educational scholars Sergiovanni, et al. (1980) defines policy as any authoritative communication of expected behavior for individuals in certain positions under specified conditions. Campbell and Mazzone (1976) declared educational policy as giving direction to the allocation of education goods and school funds, instructional personnel, curriculum innovation, bargaining authority, and the racial composition of student bodies. According to Haddad and Demsky (1995), policy is seen as a decision or group of decisions that may set out directives for guiding future decisions or initiate, sustain or retard action, or guide the implementation of previous decisions.

Some authors promote multiple perspective of policy and indicate that one definition of policy would be misleading and thus the context in which it is used should be reflected (Bullock, Anderson, and Brady, 1983). Others view policy as a process (Colebatch, 2002; Yanow, 1996). Ball and Bowe (1992) argue that policy is constantly shifting and is loosely coupled. This reflects that policy is a process not

just an end-product, and thus policy is better understood as a continuing process rather than a determinative choice. Prunty (1985) builds on the approach that power and control are central in policy process. On the other hand, Geller and Johnston (1990) believe that policy should be seen as something more than a sequential process reflecting the legitimate authority structures of initiating, developing, implementing and evaluating.

From the above discussion, it is important to note that there is no simple and agreed upon definition for policy. Describing a policy as course of actions outlined in simple linear relationship with each other or as a positivistic approach to solve policy problems does not reflect how policy works in practice. The notion of policy as a process reflects the political nature of a policy, which is interactive. Careful review of the representative descriptions and definitions given above reveal the organizational, behavioral, problem solving, directional, consequential, corrective and decision-making components of policy.

2.1.2 Meaning of and Approaches to Policy Implementation

Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) define policy implementation as the carrying out of a basic policy decision while for Barrett (2004) policy implementation is the process of translating policy into action. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) also viewed policy implementation as an interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them. These authors followed the rational approach and underlined the linear relationship between agreed policy goals and their implementation. Some authors like Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) assumed a clear separation of policy formation from policy implementation. This is a top-down approach, where policy formulation and policy implementation are conceived as two distinct phases within the policy process.

The top-down approach to implementation scholars conceived implementation as the hierarchical execution of centrally defined policy intentions (Nakamura and Smallwood, 1980; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).

These theories assumed policy implementation starts with a decision made by central government (Sabatier, 1999). They also assume a direct causal link between policies and observed outcomes and tended to disregard the impact of implementers on policy delivery.

Top-downers essentially followed a prescriptive approach that interpreted policy as input and implementation as output factors. Due to their emphasis on decisions of central policy makers, DeLeon (2001) described top-down approaches as a governing elite phenomenon.

On the other hand, bottom-up theories emerged as critical responses to the top-down school. These theorists rejected the idea that policies are defined at the central level and that implementers need to stick to these objectives as neatly as possible. Instead, the availability of discretion at the stage of policy delivery appeared as a beneficial factor as local bureaucrats were seen to be much nearer to the real problems than central policy makers (Hill and Hupe, 2002). Similarly, Hudson (1989) argues that the power held by street-level bureaucrats' stretches beyond the control of citizens' behavior. Hjern and Hull (1982) suggested that implementation analysis should start with the identification of networks of actors from all relevant agencies collaborating in implementation and then examine the way they try to solve their problems.

According to Berman (1978), policy implementation occurs on two levels: at the macro implementation level, centrally located actors devise a government program; at the micro implementation level, local organizations react to the macro level plans, develop their own programs, and implement them. Berman argues that most implementation problems stem from the interaction of a policy with the micro level institutional setting. Central planners only indirectly can influence micro level factors. Therefore, there can be wide variations in how the same national policy is implemented at the local level. Contextual factors within the implementing environment can completely dominate rules created at the top of the implementing pyramid, and policy designers will be unable to control the process. Under these

conditions, if local level implementers are not given the freedom to adapt the program to local conditions, the policy is likely to fail.

As a reaction to growing uneasiness about the heated debate between top-downers and bottom-uppers, researchers such as Goggin et al. (1990) tried to synthesize both approaches. The new models named as hybrid approach presented by these scholars combined elements of both sides in order to avoid the conceptual weaknesses of top-down or bottom-up approach.

Dunsire (1978) and Saetren (1983) argue that the two perspectives should apply to different times in the implementation process. On the other hand, scholars like Berman (1980) argue an implementation plan should be developed using either the top-down or bottom-up approach depending on a set of parameters that describe the policy context.

Under certain conditions it is most appropriate to hold either a top-down or a bottom-up perspective. Educational policy studies, however, have indicated the extent to which it is difficult to distinguish conceptually between practices, formally or analytically, described as formulation and implementation. What is important is to understand how policy enters the classroom door (Cuban, 1990; Odden, 1991) or how the policy is translated into action.

2.2 Nature of Learning Assessment

2.2.1 Concepts of Assessment and of Learning Assessment

The concept of assessment may be used in education to refer to any procedure or activity that is designed to collect information about the knowledge, attitudes, or skills of a learner or group of learners (Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001 b). Some institutions also define assessment as follows:

The process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the student about his/her progress, strength, and weakness, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy, and to inform policy (AFT, NeME, NEA, 1990:1).

As reflected in the definition above, assessment has traditionally been associated with the appraisal of individuals. However, since 1980s, it has frequently been used to describe the performance of schools or of school system (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001: 19).

On the other hand, a national assessment is defined as an exercise designed to describe the level of achievement, not of individual students, but of a whole education system or a clearly defined part of one (e.g. grade 4 pupils or 11-years-olds). National assessments were introduced to address the fact that the educational data on inputs that had been collected in the past were often of little relevance or use to educational planners. As a result, national assessments would address this issue by providing information on the "products" or "outcomes" of schooling (e.g. student achievements or inequalities in the system). It was hoped that the information could be used in conjunction with the input data in order to provide a sounder basis for policy-and decision-making in education.

Kellaghan and Greaney (2004: 11) further hold that there are five main issues that are to be addressed by national assessments:

- *How well are students learning?*
- *Is there evidence of particular strengths or weaknesses in their knowledge and skills?*
- *Do achievements of subgroups in the population differ?*
- *To what extent is achievement associated with characteristics of the learning environment?, and*
- *Do the achievements of students change over time?*

2.2.2 Purposes of National Learning Assessments

As educational institutions are one of the essential societal arenas established to up bring citizens with desired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, ensuring that schools are living up to their expectations becomes a necessity. In other words, there has to be a clear understanding that getting children into school is only a first

step in achieving the goal of education. Reform must be made and focused on how much learning acquisition and outcomes take place, rather than counting on mere enrolment (Kellaghan and Greaney 2004).

However, many countries used to consider educational quality as having less role, while pursuing the policy of quantitative expansion. One way for improving pupil achievement and school quality is the use of national learning assessments. Carroll (1996) says that national assessments would provide teachers and parents with more quality information about students' achievements and help identify students at risk of educational failure and provide the basis for remedial actions. Moreover, he notes that national assessments serve as reminders of the need to ensure that adequate personal and financial resources are available to undertake educational activities in a competent and timely manner. According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2004), national assessments are motivated for the following underlying purposes:

- to raise educational standards;
- to provide information that can be used to serve for decisions about the allocation of resources;
- to obtain information that can be used to assign accountability for student performance;
- to serve as part of modernization movement;
- to alter the balance of control in an educational system. It may be used to ensure what is taught in schools is less dependent on the professional judgment of teachers, and more dependent on central authorities that mandated the assessment;
- to compensate for the weak assessment practices of school teachers; for instance, the introduction of a national assessment involving all schools may come as a response to problems of inefficiency (high rates of early school leaving and grade repetition) that may be attributed to deficiencies in teachers' assessment practices. In this regard, teachers were believed to have lacked clarity on the objectives or procedures of assessing their students.

2.2.3 Focus and Implementation of National Learning Assessment

A concern with educational quality has been the basis for the rise to modern assessment. The emergence of learning assessment is believed to come up with an objective appraisal system of a given education system before arriving at sound judgment. It is also important to note that one of the modern assessment procedures focus on outcomes. Kellaghan and Greaney (2004) argue that unlike past assessments which focus on inputs (e.g. physical facilities, curriculum materials, books, and teacher training) to determine the quality of education, this is no longer the case. Today, the dominant question posed by many stakeholders, including policymakers, has become on the outcomes of education: whether students are acquiring the desired knowledge, skills, behavior, and attitudes (p. 29).

As a result, policymakers or educational managers need information that would be necessary to reach informed judgment as related to the adequacy of student achievements obtained in the system. They may also need a baseline data on student achievement against which to measure progress or excellence being registered in the educational program. In the mean time, teachers may need similar information on the achievement of their students in order to make some form of comparisons and assess their own professional effectiveness (GEQAEA, 2008).

Another focus of modern assessment system is the use of external agencies. The underlying justification includes the assumption that one may not totally rely on school based assessment. Moreover, the time needed to gather data and generate information for decision-making process, cost-effectiveness, the need for holding schools accountable so as to raise school improvement and to address the decision makers' expectations of the same and their continued attention to the topical areas covered in the assessment undertakings.

On the other hand, Linn (2000) and Torrance (1997) hold that school improvement may not necessarily match with assessments that are intended to measure them. One cause for the focus on external assessment is believed to be the erosion of the role of school inspectorates. Moreover, technological advances in assessing and

processing of larger data expeditiously with cost-effective manner have provided the means of establishing an alternative system of accountability based on students' achievements.

Finally and most importantly, besides serving as a means of obtaining information on the status of educational systems, assessment is used as a lever of reform (Popham, 1987). It is generally agreed that assessments play significant roles in changing teacher behavior as well as classroom instruction, both of which are expected to raise the standard of students' learning. The use of assessment also enables to provide policy guidance to the education system; information based on assessment will be made available without delay to educational planners, administrators, schools and the general public; observing accountability both at ministry and school levels as per their range of responsibility.

In summary, assessment that affects the quality of education focuses on student achievements; an assessment carried out by an agency outside of the school; and the expectation it is to meet as a lever of reform. All of the three features can be applied to national as well as international assessments.

2.3 Uses and Under Uses of Learning Assessment Results in Policy Formation/Implementation

2.3.1 Uses of Learning Assessment Findings and Recommendations

Although the primary purpose of a system of national learning assessment is to describe students' learning, its role is not limited to description. To justify the effort and expenditure involved, the information that an assessment provides about the achievements of students, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they are distributed in the population (for example, by gender or location) should be useful in informing policy implementation and making decisions. A national learning assessment is also envisaged as providing information to curriculum developers, textbook writers, teacher trainers, and the public. In this view, an assessment should provide more than information; following dissemination, it should become a lever of reform.

Kellaghan and Greaney (2004:69) outline five topics that are relevant when considering how learning assessment information might be translated into policy implementation: (a) institutional capacity to absorb and use information, (b) trustworthiness and relevance of the information provided by the assessment, (c) procedures to identify appropriate policy or informed decision following an assessment, (d) determination of a system wide or targeted intervention, and (e) complexity of policy formation/implementation and decision making.

The use that can be made of the findings and recommendations of a national learning assessment depends, in the first instance, on the information that the assessment provides. Thus, those responsible for policy and management should specify their information needs at the planning stage of an assessment.

All national learning assessments provide a description of students' achievements. However, the uses that can be made of the information in deciding on intervention, for example, will depend to some extent on the detail in which achievement is described (for example, for separate domains or content areas of a certain subject) and on the clues the assessment provides about the reasons for low achievement. Whether the data obtained in an assessment identify issues that might be addressed in curriculum or textbook revision will also be a function of the level of detail in achievement tests.

Assessment results can play a pivot role in setting standards for student achievement in the education system. Of course, monitoring trends will be possible only if comparable data are available at different points in time.

According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2004), learning assessment results can be used in formulating policy, in reviewing the education system, and in making decisions to provide additional resources to schools. The extent to which they are used for these purposes will, however, depend on a range of factors. These factors include the availability of reports of appropriate length in appropriate

language geared to the interests and needs of policy makers and decision makers; the availability and use of adequate channels of communication; the availability of budgetary resources; and the interest, ability, and willingness of decision makers to absorb, interpret, and apply the findings and recommendations of a learning assessment.

2.3.2 Under use of Learning Assessment Findings and Recommendations

According to Kellaghan, Greaney and Murray (2008), in considering the use of (and failure to use) national learning assessment findings, one must recognize at the outset that not a great deal of information is available about this topic. Furthermore, much less is available about the optimal use of findings or about the effects of basing policy decisions on the findings. This lack of findings may not be a true reflection of actual use, of course, because information related to use by government bodies/policy makers may not be publicly documented.

The evidence that is available indicates that the use of national learning assessment findings is not widespread, despite the potential that information derived from an assessment has for sparking reform and despite the expense incurred in obtaining such information. This observation has been made, for example, in the context of determining specific policies and decisions and suggests that the use of national learning assessment data is very similar to the use of the findings of other policy-related research. However, though identifying a specific use of assessment data might not be possible in some cases, the fact that the data influencing effect on public opinion and raising consciousness in itself is significant.

As to these scholars, a variety of reasons may be advanced for the underuse of national learning assessment findings. First, findings are likely to be underused when the national learning assessment is considered to be a stand-alone activity, separate from and with little connection to other educational activity. This situation is likely to arise when national learning assessment activity is new or when it is carried out by external agents or at the request of

donors. Ross (2000), for example, has pointed out that in Sub-Saharan Africa policy documents are often perceived by local bureaucrats as belonging to the donor agency and as separate from local policy making.

Second, underuse of national learning assessment findings is likely to occur when policy makers, education managers, and other stakeholders who are in a position to act on findings have had limited or no involvement in the design and implementation of an assessment.

Third, it is surprising, given the fact that assessments convey important information, that the first stage of use—the communication of information to relevant actors such as policy makers, providers of teacher training, and donors—is not always completed in a satisfactory manner, thus clearly limiting the potential for use. This problem may be due to a failure to budget for the dissemination of findings. In a situation in which most of the available project time and resources are required for the development and administration of instruments and analysis of data, nothing may have been left for the production and dissemination of information products and services.

Fourth, the deficiencies of many assessments in instrumentation, sampling, and analysis can raise questions about the validity of the data they provide, causing potential users to pause before acting on findings or to dismiss the findings altogether.

Fifth, if a national assessment identifies socioeconomic and educational inequalities associated with ethnic, racial, or religious group membership, this result may be a source of embarrassment to politicians, leading to attempts not to make findings public.

Sixth, appropriate policy and managerial decisions are unlikely to ensue from a national learning assessment if procedures and mechanisms are not in place (a) to consider the findings in the context of other policy and managerial activities and (b) to determine action on the basis of assessment findings.

Finally, national assessment findings are likely to remain underused unless all stakeholders who are in a position to act on findings (a) are adequately informed of the findings, (b) assess the implications of the assessment findings for their work, and (c) devise strategies designed to improve student learning. For example, in the case of schools and teachers, unless steps are taken to frame national assessment findings in a way that relates to teachers' concerns- and unless funds are provided to create mechanisms by which teachers can use the information derived from an assessment to guide reform-then the course of least resistance for school personnel may be at best to ignore the national assessment and at worst to undermine it.

These observations should serve to caution against having unrealistic expectations for the policy changes and implementation that can follow an assessment.

2.4 Learning Assessment Practices in Ethiopia

Though official educational assessment in its strict and modern sense may not be considered as an integral part of the country's education system, the first need for educational review in Ethiopia could be considered to have taken place in the early 1960s. Such pioneering effort was prompted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The underlying cause was that UNESCO wanted to find out whether the then popular studies of Schultz Harbison and others on human capital theory hold true in countries like Ethiopia in order to expand their education system (Tekeste, 2006: 16).

This was, followed by the Addis Ababa Conference on African Education that was convened in 1961, where all African States took part. One of the resolutions passed by the Conference was the commitment of African States to achieving universal primary education by 1980. On the other hand, by the end of 1960s, the Ethiopian government and many of the educational partners (especially the World Bank) realized that the sector was experiencing a critical crisis. The paradox was that the

education system was producing far too many secondary school graduates who could not be easily absorbed by the modern economy, while at the same time the great majority of Ethiopian school age children had no access to primary education. As a result, winning universal primary education by 1980 was a goal that proved unrealistic in the then Ethiopian context.

The problem of widespread illiteracy and the anomalous situation of secondary school graduates becoming "unemployed educated" and the growing dissatisfaction at the country's lagging performance to achieve UPE, instigated the first Ethiopian Education Sector Review (ESR) between 1971 and 1972. According to Tekeste (1990, 2006), the study took place at a time when only four percent (4%) of the appropriate age group attended secondary education and between 10-12% of the primary school-age group was estimated to attend school. The primary task of the Education Sector Review was to make the rural population the main target of the reform system as the slow pace in spreading education into the rural area (where an estimated 90% of the population then resides) was deplored both by the Ethiopian government and its development partners. However, when the ESR was made public, the Imperial system was on the verge of political crisis due to famine that claimed millions of the country's citizens. Moreover, other social and economic factors contributed to the abolition of the system in 1974. The ESR also remained simply a memory of the mid 1970s educational review event.

The military era's education system which attempted to cultivate the young generation with the Marxist-Leninist ideology had shown a relative progress in the area of enrolment and expansion. According to Tekeste, though enrolment at primary and secondary schools during the years between 1975 and 1989 grew at a rate of 12 percent of the 7-16 year-old school age cohort, the deterioration of pedagogical conditions affected the over-all quality of learning. Clapham in Tekeste (1990) quoted Poluha (2004:182) and commented that though the Imperial education system might have lacked relevance, "a fairly good education for a relatively small number of children had under the socialist regime been transformed into quite a poor education for a much larger number of children".

As a result, the military government in 1983 commissioned an evaluation of the education system with a view to devising strategies for the "implementation without delay the objectives of education" (Tekeste, 1990: 18-20). Financed by UNICEF, World Bank, and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA); it was possible to conduct of a nation-wide Evaluative Research of the General Education System in Ethiopia (ERGESE), where the final report of the study was published in 1986. Tekeste, however, noted that the government then in power hardly benefited from the study. In general, very few resources were made available to bring about the quality of the education system in the recruitment of teachers, educational materials supply, etc. While education is considered as one of the areas of priority, throughout the 1980s, the system, however, could not get sufficient resource shares nor the recommendations from the ERGESE study used to intervene in the quality problems of the system

After the fall of the military rule, the Education and Training Policy (ETP 1994) came to replace the prior educational systems in a much different form and content. The policy, which capitalizes on the achievement of universal primary education, also pays considerable attention to quality learning. For example, the first objective states: "develop the physical and mental potential and the problem-solving capacity of individuals by expanding education and in particular by providing basic education for all". Moreover, the cultivation of cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by relating education to environment and social needs calls for quality of education and training (ETP 1994: 7-8). The assessment section of the policy document also envisages that there is a continuous assessment procedure in academic as well as practical learning including the use of aptitude tests in order to ascertain the formation of learning profiles at each level (p. 18). Similarly, in the Education Sector Strategy section, the need for educational assessment reads: "An evaluative system which, is designed to test the achievement of the students' profile constituting of academic, practical and aptitude will be instituted ..." (p. 16).

In a bid to achieve universal primary education and also intervene with quality needs, Ethiopia launched the first five-year Education Sector Development Program (ESDP I) in 1997. ESDP has passed through a two-five-year period thus far. Currently, the country is implementing the third ESDP that runs from 2005/06-2010/11. Quality assurance in this sector-wide approach is envisaged to be attained using a variety of measures, but national learning assessment is emphasized as a mechanism to monitor student learning progress for policy intervention.

So far, Ethiopia has gone through three national learning assessments. The first (baseline) Ethiopian national learning assessment was launched in 1999/2000 by the MoE in collaboration with the Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO) I project. The main objective of the first national assessment was to determine the various levels of student performance at Grades 4 and 8 in four key academic subject areas. Grade 4 pupils were tested in English, Basic Reading, Mathematics and Environmental Science, all of which were prepared in different instructional languages; and Grade 8 students were assessed in English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Teachers, head teachers and the overall conditions of school compounds were considered as well as students who were considered to be major data sources. According to the findings of the study, all participating regions had a room for improvement in all key subject areas but no single region scored above acceptable minimum level of 50% achievement (MoE, 2000). The results also indicated that schools with high achievement at Grade 4 also tended to obtain high achievement at Grade 8. The results of the study were discussed in a workshop at which constructive recommendations were provided for the improvement of the quality of students' learning. The reports were disseminated to regions and other stakeholders (GEQAEA, 2008).

The Ethiopian second national learning assessment, a continuation of the first, aimed to collect information on student achievement levels, to identify factors that enhance or retard student learning, and to recommend appropriate remedial actions to improve performance in primary education. Grades 4 and 8 were assessed in 2003/04, with the necessary financial and technical assistance provided by

AED/BESO. Results from the study showed that the composite achievement results at national level for both Grades 4 and 8 were less than the minimum standards expected by the MOE. The study concluded that student achievement needs to improve significantly if the country is to benefit from its educational system (GEQAEA, 2008).

The Ethiopian third national learning assessment aimed to measure learning achievements of Grades 4 and 8 students and to identify the factors that contribute to those achievements. It also aimed to provide comparative information on school improvement since the Ethiopian second national learning assessment was conducted. The overall achievement level of the students was measured by the mean composite score for the selected subjects. The national composite mean score of Grade 4 was 40.9 %, which is not only below the minimum expected but also less than the score obtained in the previous two studies. The national composite mean score of Grade 8 was 35.6%. In both studies recommendations were disseminated (GEQAEA, 2008).

Collectively, the following were the recommendations of the three NLA studies; (For the detailed content see annex-1)

⇒ **The 1st (Baseline) National Learning Assessment:**

1. The need for the improvement of the curriculum and instructional materials (Related to the capacity & pace of students);
2. The special attention recommended to strengthen the quality and attractiveness of learning materials, and teacher preparation in the subjects of English and Mathematics;
3. The need for regular or frequent use of radio for supplementary instruction;
4. The priority to the availability of textbooks in a manner that providing each pupil with a full set;
5. The emphasis on the urgency of the deployment of adequately trained teachers, sufficient textbooks and reading materials for the policy of local languages of instruction to succeed;

6. The concern to enhance girls education, in addition to the affirmative actions, by increasing the proportion of female teachers in schools;
7. The advice to share experiences between schools on basis of best practices of attaining proficient student achievement.

⇒ **The 2nd National Learning Assessment:**

1. The over all performance of the education system as measured by student achievement needs improvement;
2. The over all performance of girls as measured by their academic achievement needs improvement;
3. The performance of rural students needs improvement;
4. Performance of students in core curricula (English and Mathematics) requires special attention;
5. Disparity of performance by region and sex of students in subjects other than English and Mathematics needs improvement;
6. The improvement of student achievement, first and foremost requires improvement in school management;
7. Improvement of student achievement also depends on the improvement of student home background and personal behavior;
8. Better supply of school curriculum materials needs attention to improve student scholastic performance;
9. Special attention to teacher quality and behavior is the other priority area for improvement of students' learning;
10. Strengthening the instructional practice of teachers and instructional support in the classroom are vital to improve student learning;
11. Regional disparities in student achievements need to be improved;
12. Learning from national learning assessment is required.

⇒ **The 3rd National Learning Assessment:**

1. A comprehensive school reform has to be introduced to improve the academic performance of the school system taking each subject into account;

- a. Home and parental conditions reform (With regard to lowering/freeing from different costs);
 - b. Curriculum and instructional support reform (Related to availability);
 - c. Teacher reforms;
 - d. Reforms on school management (Income generation);
 - e. Reform on student conditions (In relation to training parents & parental committees).
2. Disparity between boys and girls still needs attention and there is a need to provide additional support to girls;
 3. Pupils in urban schools need more support than what is provided at present;
 4. Transfer of experience that contributed to the effectiveness of socially relevant issues (life skills) is required for the improvement of student academic achievement in the various subjects;
 5. There is a need to progress in academic achievement overtime by making use of the recommendations given by the previous and the current national learning assessments.
 6. School feeding has to be encouraged;
 7. Parents has to be sensitized to avail home materials that support academic achievement;
 8. Residences for teachers have to be built around schools;
 9. Teacher support systems have to be strengthened;
 10. With in a comprehensive school reform, school leadership need to be reformed (Needs as a principal);
 11. School, community and local governments have to work together;
 12. Differences in terms of quality of education within (government) schools have to be eliminated in order to maintain equity in student performance;
 13. Priorities for comprehensive school reform have to be holistic.

Chapter 3 - Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Design

As the title of this research implies, the study was retrospective in nature and used an evaluative survey method. In the study were included non-sampled respondents who were asked to directly give opinions, information on different types of actions and facts known to them. Therefore, mainly by employing qualitative approach of data collection - individual interviews and document analysis, and a quantitative description using a questionnaire, the researcher has attempted to achieve the objectives of the research through such a mixed way of data generation in order to offset the limitation of one approach by another.

The purpose behind using the qualitative approach of data collection and analysis was the nature of this study which urged a minimal amount of pre-structuring and a very loose and highly emergent design. A reason that may also be given behind utilizing this tool is the indispensable and compulsory nature of the approaches in relation to the data sources in context. The nature of the study also obliged the researcher to follow a qualitative advancing that is seen to be loosely structured. And these data were believed to help the researcher to arrive at the attainment of the objectives set in the preceding sections by employing the data sources explained below.

As to the aspects of the data under discussion and the collection approach are concerned, a number of distinctive points can be raised, among which are the assumption about the world, the research purpose, the role of the researcher and importance of the context of the study.

3.2 Data Sources

The articulations in the preceding sections of this paper on the organic link between learning assessment results and policy implementation imply that the beneficiaries of this study, as an impact evaluation, and subsequently non-

sampled research, were the policymaking and educational decision making bodies in the education sector - the higher officials in the ministry of education and regional education bureaus. Hence, the primary data sources considered for this study were these handpicked higher officials and experts currently working on policy and planning, curriculum and examinations development and national learning assessment. Here, it is notable that these informants were purposely selected for their packed exposure to the NLA exercises carried out so far and the experience they hold in the sector.

Therefore, the study included 5 informants - the former minister of education, the state minister especially responsible for the general education sub-sector, the current and the former ESDP process owners under the ministry and a learning assessment specialist, for the individual interview protocol.

On the other hand, the head, vice head and experts on policy and planning, national/regional learning assessment, examination and curriculum development from each region education bureau and MoE were also taken for questionnaire response, accounting to 40 respondents.

As a matter of fact, the consideration of ESDP II and III documents as sources of data for this study was also found inescapable.

The other vital data sources were the GEQIP documents, the SIP and the TDP Blue Prints, and the three National Learning Assessment (NLA) reports generated in the last decade.

3.3 Data Gathering Tools

The data gathering tools, being relevant to the data sources in context, were an individual interview guide of 4 questions and a questionnaire of 10 items, with a preceding survey on the documents and reports mentioned above. For the questionnaire, as has not previously been used data gathering tool, a pilot study was carried out on 10 sample respondents from MoE who were on the same status as the main data sources. After the piloting data were collected and analyzed, irrelevant items were left alone off the record and others were improved based on the feedback obtained (Samples of the tools are annexed).

3.4 Procedure of Data Collection

The first stride in the data collection procedure was the survey on and data collection from the documents and reports mentioned above. The researcher believes that he benefited from doing so in a way to develop a yielding type of questionnaire and interview protocol. He deems that he was able to equip himself with the necessary information which helped him not to be misguided by possible unreliable and confounding responses.

Then, followed was interviewing the primary data sources - the group of the top management members of the Ministry of Education mentioned above, for the individual interview protocol that consisted of key issues like the extent of the address of the NLA recommendations onto ETP implementation, observable program interventions as a result of and measurable contributions to students' scores based on the NLA recommendations, from which reasonable volume of reply was obtained.

On the other hand, the piloted questionnaire, which had had 10 items before the piloting and two of which (Items 3 and 5) were discarded for the 50-78% "UNDECIDED" response, was rehabilitated by another two items and administered to the 40 respondents of the second group. But, it was unfortunate that these items were also failed to be responded accordingly and left alone off the record again. Therefore, it should be noticed that the questionnaire was administered for the rest eight items, out of which three questions were open-ended and two of them were the extensions of items 3 and 5. Hence, the response of the open-ended item 9 had been treated separately in the analysis, but found by the researcher that it was responded by the participants in a similar fashion with the reply from the interview question 4. Finally, the five original response categories of the questionnaire (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) were purposely reduced to three of them (Agree, Undecided and Disagree) for analysis deliberation.

3.5 Analysis of Data

The data analysis, by and large, was a qualitative approach consisting of explanations, descriptions, contrasts and comparisons. Applying triangulation on the data obtained from the individual interviews, the questionnaire and the survey on relevant documents, the analysis has utilized an inquisition of the impact of the recommendations of the NLA reports so far worked out. This approach was also supported by quantitative data processing, using Microsoft Excel, which has depicted the responses of the questionnaire under discussion.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Interpretation

The purpose of this study is identifying the extent to which the implementation of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy is intervened by the recommendations of the three successive National Learning Assessments so far managed by the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, different instruments such as interview, questionnaire and document analysis were employed to gather pertinent data from the research sources.

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1A below shows that four of the higher officials interviewed are a degree of MA and above holders with a very high position and responsibility in the ministry, and in the sector at large. The assessment senior specialist is a known statistician and analyst in learning assessment practices, and is acquiring his MA very soon. As the particulars of their experience clearly shows, all of them are highly acquainted to the national learning assessment practices so far exercised and the recommendations so far forwarded.

Table 1A: *Characteristics of the MOE Top management members interviewed*

Interviewee's Position	Qualification	Experience		
		In the education Sector	In NLA related position	Details
Former Minister	PhD	5 yrs	3 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previously administrative vice president of a university - Lately head of a financial agency
State Minister	MA	15 yrs	7 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formerly REB head and head of regional state and currently serving as state minister for Gen. Education
Former ESDP Head	MA	27yrs	6yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formerly ICDR, NOE and ESDP department head - Currently Consultant in W. Bank
Current ESDP Head	MA	22yrs	1yr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University vice president - HESC deputy G. manager - Currently ESDP dep't head
Assessment Senior Specialist	BA, and MA student	20yrs	11yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formerly a high school teacher, and later an item developer - Currently NLA expert

Table 1B below shows that the respondents of the questionnaire were enough qualified for the purpose and, moreover, were well experienced (all of whom are found to have over 10 years of experiences) in the education sector. On the other hand, it should be noted that having at least a one year experience in their current NLA related positions (see Table 1B), the respondents were intentionally handpicked for they were the best subjects in the education sector from whom the exact reply was expected to be obtained.

Table 1B: *Characteristics of the respondents of the questionnaire*

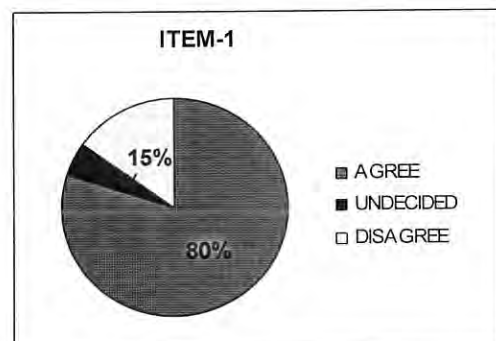
Respondent's Characteristics	Variables	Years of Experience	Frequency
Qualification	PhD		-
	Masters Degree		10
	Bachelors Degree		30
	Diploma		-
Experience	In the education Sector	Over 10 Years	40
		5 -10 years	-
		Below 5 years	-
	In the Current NLA related position	1 - 5 years	29
		6-10 years	5
		Above 10 Years	6

4.2 Impact of NLA Recommendations on ETP Implementation

4.2.1 Questionnaire Response

Item-1: The impact of the National Learning Assessment effort on the implementation of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy is high.

Item-1		
Response Categories	Freq.	%
AGREE	32	80
UNDECIDED	2	5
DISAGREE	6	15
	40	100



This item was attempted by all of the respondents and 80% of them responded "Strongly Agree"/"Agree". From this result, one may possibly understand that the NLA practices are perceived to be well recognized by and communicated to the respondents, as nearby officials and experts; and the NLA recommendations are also accessibly disseminated and well understood to the extent of their effective implementation.

4.2.2 Interview Protocol

Interview Question-1

Have you any idea on the extent to which the NLA recommendations so far forwarded addressed the ETP implementation?

This concomitant question with item-1 of the questionnaire was responded by the participants from different perspectives. 60% of them answered that the series of national learning assessments were carried out based on the stipulation of the education and training policy itself saying that there would be in place a general educational assessment system in the sector. And, therefore, they said, it is expected from the series of assessment endeavors to address the ETP and to have a high impact on its implementation. These respondents tried to convince the researcher by enumerating various instances, such as using the curriculum contents as the source of the assessment items and in turn by addressing that area of concern, utilizing the schools and the students as the assessment arenas and subjects and in turn by forwarding valuable implications and, in general, all the findings and the recommendations revolving around the enhancement of the implementation of the ETP, especially for policymaking and education decision making.

Other 40% of concurrent respondents, however, answered this same question differently. They responded that there wasn't such high impact as addressing the policy implementation. But, they said, there were some placid interventions in place based on the assessment recommendations. These respondents also added that the assessment results were neither well communicated to all concerned stakeholders nor debated on as issues of policy concern, for

instance, in any private or public mass media. As to these respondents, if the assessment results had been well communicated to the public and made aware of the findings, the impact would have been as high as required, and the government would move to better implementation of the policy or make certain reforms.

As far as the researcher's view goes, both of the two groups need to consider one another's ideas. Only the results having been well communicated to the needy wouldn't necessarily bring about either policy debate at any level, including parliament, or make the impact as high as needed.

In fact, National Learning Assessment results, by producing a great amount of data and information describing students' scores, are research efforts which have a significant impact on public opinion. Nevertheless, according to the researcher, they were not contributing to the extent of making the education system more efficient and effective. For they were scarcely used and not taken as a real mechanism as required for control and accountability, to date, the information generated doesn't seem to have had meaningful consequences beyond informing, sensitizing, and raising consciousness to a certain level.

4.2.3 Document Analysis

It is customary that if a policy to be implemented, strategies and different levels of plans and programs are to be installed. Unless these tools of policy implementation are in place, it is hardly possible to fetch the goals of the policy.

The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy, as ever to any national level policy, has these implementation tools; for instance, the education sector strategy, the ESDP I-III, the GEQIP and its descendents - SIP, TDP and the likes.

In order to prove that the NLA recommendations have really addressed the ETP implementation, the writer of the study has attempted to collate all of the recommendations forwarded by the three NLA studies (listed in the literature section and collated in annex 3) in nine major thematic areas given below. And he

examined whether these groups of recommendations were really addressed by any of the above mentioned implementation tools or not.

- Curriculum, textbook and other instructional materials;
- Teacher development;
- Gender and regional disparity, with special emphasis on girls' education;
- School management and leadership;
- Student home background and personal behavior;
- English, Mathematics and mother-tongue instruction;
- Experience sharing among schools;
- The need for school feeding; and
- Attention to the recommendations of NLA.

Citations and Discussion on the Recommendations:

Curriculum, textbooks and other instructional materials:

Regarding this thematic area of the recommendations, both the ESDP and the GEQIP documents boldly addressed the issue of curriculum, textbooks and other instructional materials, and also the need for the reform.

The ESDP II Program Action Plan (June 2002) states as follows:

“Attempts to reform the curricula in primary grades, in accordance with the goals of the Education and Training Policy began even before the advent of the ESDP I and continued during the ESDP implementation period. The emphasis of the curriculum reform was to design and develop learning materials that shall improve the problem-solving capacity of the students and to make them more productive members of the community who respect the human rights and democratic values.” (p. 12)

The GEQIP plan document also reads that the development objectives of the First Phase of the GEQIP (2009-2013) were to: (i) improve teaching and learning conditions in primary and secondary education and (ii) improve management, planning and budget capacity of the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureaus. Among the proposed interventions was the quality improvement for general education through a curriculum reform and implementation for Grades 1-12 in all subjects, followed by the provision of textbooks compliant with the curriculum.

Here, it should be noted that the ESDP II and GEQIP documents came to being in 2002 and 2008 respectively, after the first and the second national learning assessment recommendations were forwarded in April 2000 and December 2004 respectively. This possibly shows that the documents were developed using the recommendations as inputs, in one hand, and attempting to address them on the other.

Teacher development:

The TDP, as part and parcel of the GEQIP, is there mainly to enhance teachers' professional, social and personal development, via which to bring about good quality education as measure of students achievement. Furthermore, establishing new training programs for teacher educators and pre- and in-service teacher training, school grants to enhance community based management of schools and other determinations may possibly be taken as positive responses to the NLA results. By just noticing its emergence with GEQIP, it is imperative to perceive that the TDP was a reaction to the NLA recommendations especially pertinent to teacher development.

Gender and regional disparity, with special emphasis on girls' education:

Beginning from the out set of the ETP, it was well communicated that girls education would be given due attention and care by the government, and this commitment has frequently been shown in the above mentioned consequent implementation documents. For instance, the ESDP II Program Action Plan (June 2002) states that despite significant progress in increasing access to and coverage of education, attempts to narrow the gaps in regional and gender disparities have been slow. It has further explained that gender and regional disparities also persist in quality indicators such as dropout rates, repetition rates, etc. and tried to show the lack of meaningful local actions to surmount social and cultural barriers to access to education of girls and members of the minority communities and their completion of a given level of schooling as one of the contributing factors to gender and regional disparities.

The ESDP II plan document also signified that non-formal education programs would specifically address the problem of gender disparity in the provision of basic education and increase participation in primary education. The document also reads that specific approach for enhancing participation of girls include location of learning centers closer to home or communities, recruiting of female instructors where ever possible, develop curriculum and learning materials that are more responsive to special needs of girls, encourage advocacy and social mobilization and supporting multiple delivery system in involving the use of communication media.

The ESDP III Program Action Plan (August 2005) also states the following, emphasizing girls' education;

"Improving educational access to girls, retaining them in school, reducing repetition rate and thereby closing the gender gap was a major concern during the implementation of ESDP I & II. To this effect extensive awareness creation activities were undertaken on the importance of girls' education among communities. Efforts have also been made to make schools girls friendly by constructing separate latrines for boys and girls, assigning female teachers and head teachers etc, to provide close support to girls. Moreover, girls' clubs were established in schools and tutorial and guidance and counseling services were provided to female students. Gender mainstreaming guideline and five years female education strategy has been developed. Female education forum has been established and strengthened to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines on girls' education. All these endeavors have contributed to the significant increase in girls' enrollment."

Hence, simply seeing to the above literature, one can measure the attention paid to narrowing the gap of gender and regional disparity.

School management and leadership:

This has been known to be one of the major components of the General Education Quality Improvement Program, GEQIP package. Regarding this the GEQIP plan (November 2008) states the following;

"The development of the Guidelines for the Organization of Education Management, Community Participation and Education Finance in 2002 was a key initiative in supporting the decentralization of education management. The 'Blue Book', as it is known, outlines the functions, roles and responsibilities of different levels of

Government administration, schools, governing bodies, Parent-Teachers Associations and communities more generally in education management. Strengthening local level governance including improving school level management, accountability, transparency, and community participation are key principles. In addition, a Woreda ESDP Program Implementation Manual was developed in 2007 with the aim of strengthening education management in Woreda Education Offices."

It is inescapable to work hard on the educational management of schools for every effort made in the school would be for vain unless there is a strong managerial and leadership role in the school. Therefore, one may possibly see that there had been a timely recommendation made by the NLA studies and a good subsequent reaction followed by the government and the GEQIP partners in introducing the School Improvement Program in time.

The issue of "*Student home background and personal behavior*", which stands alone as one of the thematic subjects of the NLA recommendations, is also a matter of school improvement endeavor that can be viewed parallel to the other pertinent cases in the SIP.

The case of "*English, Mathematics and mother-tongue instruction*" as one of the core areas of recommendations of the NLA, it can easily be seen that it was being addressed by both the curriculum reform as well as the teacher development efforts at same time.

"*The need for school feeding*" issue has always been unfathomable matter in the Ethiopia education arena, for the majority of the people is poor to feed themselves, and consequently to be out of school. Indicating that school feeding is critical to access as well as quality of education, both ESDP II and III Program Action Plans stated the following:

"In order to improve access, stabilize attendance, reduce dropout rates and alleviate short term hunger so that children can attend classes attentively, school feeding program shall continue and be expanded in areas where there is serious shortage of food and that the feeding program will actually serve as incentive to go to school." (ESDP II, 2002)

“School feeding was identified as a strategy in ESDP II to raise and maintain school enrolment with a particular focus on meeting the demand side of education for chronic food insecure and vulnerable children. As a result, it was possible to reach about 544,000 primary school children in 2004/2005. In addition, the program contributed to reduce dropouts, stabilizing attendance, improving children’s ability to learn, and narrowing the gender gap. The program is implemented in Afar, Somali, Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR).” (ESDP III, 2005)

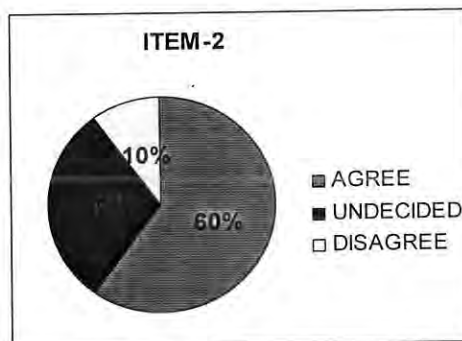
When the writer of this study saw to the recommendation made to give due “Attention to the recommendations of NLA” studies, he understood that by the measure of much concern, for this was the purpose of this research to be carried out. As the aforementioned content of this paper showed to the best of the curiosity of the researcher, he regrets to say that enough attention was not given to the three round NLA recommendations so far forwarded.

In concluding the document analysis section, the writer, as to his understanding based on the preceding discussion, can possibly generalize that the NLA recommendations so far forwarded in the three rounds vastly addressed the ETP implementation and were more or less considered by the policy and strategy implementation documents.

Therefore, one can wrap up that there was a considerable amount of alignment despite the lack to fully interpret these recommendations into actions, possibly because of a number of constraints-absence of the NLA policy framework, deficiencies of trained man power and financial resources at any level, lack of adequate interest from the side of the stake holders, etc.

Item-2: The National Learning Assessment recommendations so far forwarded have been given due attention by the concerned bodies at each level of the education sector.

Item-2		
Response Categories	Freq.	%
AGREE	24	60
UNDECIDED	12	30
DISAGREE	4	10
	40	100



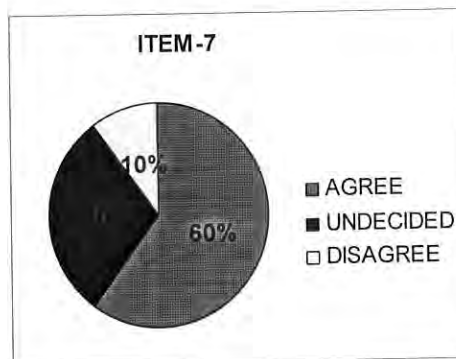
This item was administered and analyzed to supplement the preceding item 1. Being responded by all, this item was answered by 60% of the respondents as strongly agreed/agreed upon, witnessing that the NLA recommendations so far forwarded were given due concern by the bodies at each level of the education sector.

Here, the researcher was amazed why the 80% respondents who answered "Strongly Agree"/"Agree" for item-1 didn't respond the same for this item, given that the two items are the faces of the same coin. Because, it is pretty acceptable that if the impact of the NLA recommendations on the ETP implementation is as high as perceived by 80% of the respondents, then, the researcher understands that the attention to the NLA recommendations by the concerned bodies is equally sky-scraping, and vice versa.

Purposely enough, the researcher did not include an interview question corresponding to item 2, for item was there just in a way to augment the responses from item 1. But, in discussing the extent of the impact of NLA recommendations under item 1, almost all of the respondents were reflecting that the concern to the NLA practices and the attention to their recommendations were not concentrated on at the federal and regional levels equally. This was because, they said, there wasn't any system of accountability laid which could initiate all concerned bodies to act equally towards the implementation of the NLA recommendations. Some of the interviewees also explained that the ministry of education, beyond carrying out the NLA and disseminating the reports accessibly, could never be engaged in the specifics of the region education bureaus to the extent of detailed executions, which have already been made clear by the constitution. Hence, from these stances, anyone may possibly conclude that, a lot of accomplishments are expected from the region education bureaus in responding positively to the NLA efforts been made. It should also be noted that beyond instituting their own regional learning assessment bodies, these major arms of the sector should be able to act as a focus and playground of the implementation of the ETP as well as the NLA recommendations.

Item-7: Practically utilizable recommendations were forwarded by the three rounds of the National Learning Assessment reports.

Item-7		
Response Categories	Freq.	%
AGREE	24	60
UNDECIDED	12	30
DISAGREE	4	10
	40	100



This item was also administered and analyzed so as to compliment that the NLA recommendations impact was high. It has got 60% of the respondents' agreement with the idea it conveys. These respondents confirmed that the NLA recommendations so far forwarded were exploitable beyond reasonable doubt. Based on this fact, one can possibly conclude that this employable nature of the NLA recommendations enabled the high impact of the results. And the more the utilizable the recommendations, the higher the attention to be given by concerned government bodies, including external stakeholders. Here, one can notice that the consistency of the relatively significant percentages of the response categories both in item 2 and 7 showing the organic link between the employability of NLA recommendations and the attention that may be given by policy and decision makers.

4.3 Observable Interventions as a result of NLA Recommendations

4.3.1 Questionnaire Response

Item-3: (The item was discarded for a flaw discussed in Chapter-III)

4.3.2 Interview Protocol

Interview Question-2

What observable program interventions do you think so far in place as a result of the NLA recommendations?

Almost all of the respondents were at ease of answering this question except once again departed into differences. They both effortlessly collectively enumerated that the Curriculum Reform and Textbook Revision Program, the Teacher

Development Program (TDP) and the School Improvement Program (SIP) are some of the indicators to show the federal government's commitment in introducing observable program interventions. These respondents seriously considered the General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP), which comprises the above mentioned programs, which were told to be the clear program interventions as a result of the initial ideas from the NLA recommendations. Moreover mentioned by the informants was the Education Sector Development Programs (I-III) planning, as effective strategies to ensure quality in the general education sub-sector which may considerably take into account the recommendations of the NLA.

But the two groups were differed in a way that these program interventions and plans alone never ensure education quality in the Ethiopian context. The respondents that believe in a strong idea that there should, first and foremost, be in place a policy framework so as to continue the already instigated national learning assessment practices with an improved momentum. In addition, their reply goes, the policy framework is critical so as to regularly conduct the program at key exit levels throughout the general education by assigning responsibility and accountability to each level of the education sector-from federal government up to the schools level.

Reasonably enough, the researcher's view to this end is a mediating one between the two groups of respondents. The replies of both of the two groups contain a certain level of acceptable facts. As it can be sited from the number of recommendations of the three national learning assessments, one may possibly be convinced that the government of Ethiopia has made violent move towards the assurance of quality general education, and its commitment is substantial regarding the implementation of the program interventions and plans so far mentioned above. But, as to the researcher's understanding, unless otherwise these plans and programs, in fact the recommendations of the assessments carried out in the past decade, are preceded and supported by a nationally agreed-upon assessment policy document as an intervention, every NLA attempt would be a futile exercise.

4.3.3 Document Analysis

The following documents were examined to the detail and analysis was made in support of the responses by the interviewees.

The Education Sector Development Plans (ESDP II and III)

The consecutive Education Sector Development Plans (ESDP II & III) have frequently specified in clear terms the arrangement of the implementation of national learning assessment practices as one of their over all strategies to acquire and utilize relevant data and so as to monitor the output of the education sector.

Regarding this, ESDP II has put the following:

“National Learning Assessment of Grade 4 and Grade 8, among other sources, is one of the samples of a larger group of studies whose findings and recommendations have been useful in shaping the content and structure of ESDP II programs.” (ESDP II, PAP: p 4-5, June 2002)

ESDP III has also put the following saying in another way round:

“National Learning Assessments will also be conducted at the final grades of first and second cycle primary so as to monitor progress in students' achievements and to identify major influencing factors for appropriate policy interventions.”

By aligning these and other tangible texts, one can easily justify that quality assurance in this sector-wide approach is envisaged to be attained using a variety of measures, but national learning assessment is emphasized as a mechanism to monitor student learning progress for policy intervention.

Moreover, the above citations clearly evidence that the NLA recommendations and findings have highly addressed the ETP implementation via the tools, such as the ESDPs.

General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP)

According to literatures in various MoE documents, the very subject of installing GEQIP is the initiative taken by the government and the international donor groups towards the improvement of quality in the general education sub-sector. According

to a GEQIP document, among other indicators, student's achievement is a well taken key output measure.

The Amharic GEQIP document (MoE, June 2007: p. 8) states the following:

“... የሀገር ዓቀፍ የትምህርት ቅበላ ጥናቶች የሚያሳዩት በየደረጃው የሚሠጠው ትምህርት የሀገሪቱን ማህበራዊና ኢኮኖሚያዊ ዕድገት በተፈለገው አቅጣጫ ማንቀሳቀስና መምራት የሚችል ብቃት ያለው ዜጋ ማፍራት እንዳልተቻለ ነው።...”

The essence of the above statement is that the education delivery on each level was found to be incubating citizens who were not able to effectively move and lead the country's socio-economic development, as evidenced by the National Learning Assessment reports.

The document also clearly speculates that the GEQIP was in place in order to exhibit enhanced students' scores, in short term, and ultimately to ensure quality general education in Ethiopia.

From the above literature and explanation, then, the researcher was able to believe that the GEQIP is a project that, at least partially, dedicated to the enhancement of students' achievements via which to ensure quality general education. Here, just by seeing to the times of emergence of the two efforts (NLA and GEQIP), one can possibly conclude that the idea of GEQIP was, in one way or another, a possible recommendation of NLA.

Curriculum Reform and Textbooks Revision Program

The reform, first coined by the GEQIP task force, tried to address the overloading, improve the sequencing of content, and orient instructions toward the adoption of more active learning methodologies. The program was expected to support the reform of the curriculum for grades 1-12 in improving the quality of general education. This curriculum reform was based on needs analysis carried out in 2007 and the recommendations forwarded by the National Learning Assessment reports. Kellaghan, Greaney and Murray (2009), in witnessing the decisiveness of the views of stakeholders in interpreting assessment results to the extent of pointing to the need for curriculum reform, mentioned Ethiopia's experience, citing the personal communication made with Zewdu Gebrekidan, as follows:

"In Ethiopia, feedback from teachers, students, and parents was used in conjunction with an analysis of student performance on national assessment tests, to reach decisions about curriculum change. (Kellaghan, Greaney and Murray 2009: p 93)

The School Improvement Program (SIP)

The School Improvement Program, developed by MoE as one of the extensions of the General Education Quality Improvement Program, its Blue Print (MoE June 2007, p. 5) states the following as one of the first and foremost goals of SIP:

“የተማሪዎችን የትምህርት አቀባበል እና የትምህርት ውጤት በከፍተኛ ደረጃ ማሳደግ፤”

This may unvaryingly be translated into English as:

“To highly enhance students’ learning and learning outcomes;”

In addition to this, the SIP Blue Print (MoE 2007: p. 2), signifying the importance of the implementation of the program, states the following:

“የትምህርት ቤት መሻሻል ፕሮግራም....ትምህርትን በጥራት ለመስጠት እና የተማሪዎች የመማር ውጤት (Learning Outcomes) ላይ ተፅዕኖ የሚያሳደሩ የትምህርት ቤት ርዕሰ-ጉዳዮችን (Domains) በመለየት እንዲሁም.... የተማሪዎችን የመማር ሁኔታና ውጤት የማሻሻል ተግባር ላይ በመንቀሳቀስ የሚፈለገው የጥራት ደረጃ ላይ ለመድረስ ያስችላል።”

The equivalent of the above Amharic quotation may read as follows:

“School Improvement Program enables to deliver improved student learning and possible high proficiency in student achievement through identifying those domains that have impact on learning outcomes.”

Another document, named by ‘SIP Implementation Manual’ (MoE 2007: p. 1), also dictates the following in its preamble:

“የትምህርት ቤት መሻሻል ዋናኛ አላማ የተማሪዎች መማር (Student Learning) እና የመማር ውጤት (Learning Outcomes) በከፍተኛ ደረጃ እንዲያደግ ማድረግ ነው።”

The English version of this excerpt may possibly be the following:

“The main objective of School Improvement is enhancing student learning and learning outcomes significantly.”

The Teacher Development Program (TDP)

According to the Teacher Development Program Blue Print (MoE 2007: p. 9) published Ministry of Education it clearly stated that TDP and SIP are two sides of the same coin:

“በአጠቃላይ በሁለቱም መርገ ግብሮች የሚከናወኑት ተግባራት እርስ በርሳቸው የተያያዙና አጠቃላይ ትኩረታቸው ተማሪዎች ውጤታማና በመልካም ሥነምግባር የታነፁ ዜጎች ሆነው እንዲወጡ መሥራት በመሆኑ ለያይቶ ማየት አይቻልም።”

Equivalently, the above may be read as follows;

“The tasks of the two programs (TDP and SIP), in general, are organically entwined and convergent on producing students who are successful in school and well nurtured citizens.”

Here, one can possibly make out that teachers’ qualification is one of the major indicators of quality education. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Teacher Development Program is one of the core components in GEQIP.

The above analyses made of the data generated from the three instruments, easily helped the researcher conclude that the NLA recommendations so far forwarded highly addressed the ETP implementation.

4.4 NLA Results Contributing to the Enhancement of Students’ Achievement

4.4.1 Questionnaire Response

Item-5: (The item was discarded for a flaw discussed in Chapter-III)

4.4.2 Interview Protocol

Interview Question-3

Do you agree that the NLA results contributed to enhance students’ achievements?

In answering this question, all respondents converged to a point that the NLA results didn’t yet contribute to the altitude of augmenting students’ achievements at any level. These respondents believe that the NLA results may have done some commendable contributions by informing the top management of the education sector, federal and regional, and the international donor groups which were funding the NLA exercises since the inception. With this sensitizing effect of NLA results, some respondents said, there are very few schools in different regions emerging with the improvement of students’ achievements.

In relation to this, one of the interviewed respondents can be quoted as follows:

“የሌሎች ጥናቶች ውጤቶችን ከሀገር ዓቀፍ የመማር ብቃት ምዘና ውጤት ጋር በማጣመር ተተንትነውና ተደራጅተው ወደሥራ የሚገባቸው የትምህርት ፖሊሲ አፈጻጸም ፕሮግራሞች በሚገባና በሚፈለገው ደረጃ ከተተገበሩ የተማሪዎች ውጤት የማይሻሻልበት ምንም ምክንያት አይኖርም፤ እስካሁን በተሠሩ የአጠቃላይ ትምህርት ጥራት የማስጠበቅ ሥራዎች የተማሪዎችን ውጤት በማሻሻል ረገድ ጥሩ ጅምርን ያሳዩ ሞዴል ትምህርት ቤቶች ተፈጥረዋል፤ ይህንን ልምድ ቀምረን ወደተሻለ ደረጃ ማድረስ ይቀረን ይሆናል፤ በተለይም በጥራት ፓኬጅ አማካይነት እንደዘርፍ ወደተግባር ከተገባበት ጊዜ ቅርብነት (1999 ዓ/ም) አንጻር መልካም ተሞክሮዎች ተገብደዋል፤ በሂደት እየተማርንበትም ነው፤ ለወደፊትም የተሻለ መሥራት እንደሚቻል ይታመናል።”

This quotation can equally be translated as follows:

“If the NLA results are integrated with other efforts in the sector, there is no reason behind the program interventions not to succeed in boosting students’ achievements. Particularly at this time, those NLA recommended program interventions are at the edge of bringing out model schools to the surface which are able to produce students with proficient learning outcomes. With the undersized span of time since GEQIP has begun in 2008, it is sufficient to say that the whole effort is on the right track to scale up the instigated learning process in a way to improve results of schools and students’ scores.”

As it holds true for any learning assessment effort in the rest of the world, the respondents underlined, this is the importance of MoE’s NLA exercise as a new entrant to the practice. But, they also reflected that so immature the NLA practice in the country that yet unable to contribute much to the enhancement of students’ scores to the level stipulated by the ETP. This was, they said, because of the absence of a nation-wide framework and for there wasn’t any system of accountability laid so as to effect the proposed recommendations, especially at regional and school levels, and in turn to yield proficiency in students’ scores.

The writer of the research agrees with the idea of the respondents’ reaction for it can easily be evidenced by the NLA reports issued triennially in the past decade. Particularly, the 2008 report plainly showed that the composite mean scores of 4th and 8th graders from 2000 onwards were declining overtime despite the ministry’s half-done informing, sensitizing, and raising the consciousness of the concerned bodies. Here, it was noted by the interviewees that the region education bureaus were the first to discuss on and possess the NLA reports via which they were able to know the level of achievements of their students in time, immediately next to the assessor-MoE.

4.4.3 Document Analysis

The 3rd NLA report (p: 48-49) showed a comparison of the grade 4 students' achievements in the Ethiopian 1st, 2nd and 3rd National Learning Assessments indicating a composite mean score of 47.9, 48.48 and 40.9 respectively for the years 2000, 2004 and 2008 (See table 2A below). It also emphasizes that grade 4 students could not meet the expected national standards set by the ETP of 50% in all the three learning assessments, underlining that there is a significant decrease in the results of the grade 4 students from the 2nd to the 3rd NLA.

Table- 2A: Comparison of mean scores of 4th graders among the three NLA

Subjects	First NLA (2000)	Second NLA (2004)	Third NLA (2008)
Mathematics	39.3	39.7	40.3
Reading	64.3	64.5	43.9
English	40.5	38.7	36.5
Environ. Science	48.1	51.7	42.6
Composite Mean	42.6	48.48	40.9

The same report (p: 45) demonstrated a comparison of the grade 8 students' achievements in the Ethiopian 1st, 2nd and 3rd National Learning Assessments indicating a composite mean score of 41.1, 39.7 and 35.6 respectively for the years 2000, 2004 and 2008 (See table 2B below). It also emphasized that grade 8 students not only could not meet the expected national standards stipulated by the ETP of 50%, but there was a consistent decline in all subjects from the 2nd to the 3rd NLA.

Table-2B: Comparison of mean scores of 8th graders among the three NLAs

Subjects	First NLA (2000)	Second NLA (2004)	Third NLA (2008)
Biology	47.2	41.3	38.3
English	38.7	41.1	38.4
Mathematics	38.2	40.9	34.1
Chemistry	40.3	40.1	34.7
Physics	-	35.3	32.2
Composite Mean	41.1	39.7	35.6

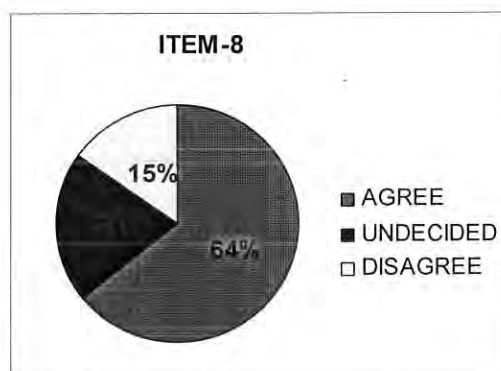
The above tables and the explanations attached to them clearly support the responses given by the interviewees. And all together they explicitly convince anyone that the NLA results do not do any help to contribute to the students' achievements.

4.5 Major Problems encountered the NLA Carried out So Far

4.5.1 Questionnaire Response

Item-8: While conducting the three National Learning Assessments during the past ten years, the process was being encountered by different problems.

Item-8		
Response Categories	Freq.	%
AGREE	25	64
UNDECIDED	8	21
DISAGREE	6	15
	40	100



64% of the respondents agreed that the learning assessment practices were facing a number of problems. They also have listed out some problems they perceived as major ones. According to the researcher's view, the problems did not seem severe enough to bring the NLA practices to a halt. This is also true by the observation made by the researcher that the NLA exercises have never been stopped, and as an instance the latest one is underway.

4.5.2 Interview Protocol

Interview Question-4

What major observable problem would you mention encountering the three NLAs so far?

All of the respondents unanimously agreed that there were a number of problems. And every respondent specified at least two problems that were collectively collated as lack of competent personnel in the field, limited facility and financial support, lack of enough and adequate administrative support,

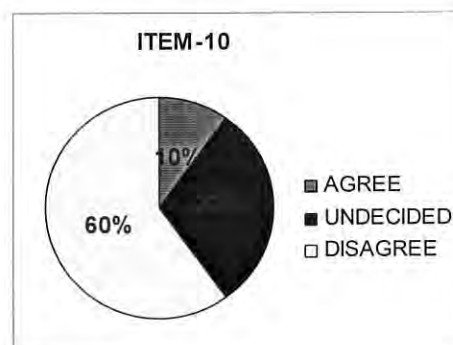
limited dissemination of the NLA reports and lack of adequate and genuine attention by the policymakers from the federal and the regional education bureaus.

In addition to the above problems mentioned, the interviewees expressed their believes that there is a major problem of perception from the side of the federal/regional government higher officials on low students' achievement as a threat. Because of this, the assessment results may be earmarked as politically sensitive and turn out to be hard to fetch in making them public.

Another problem, as to the researcher, which may possibly cast its shadow, onto the learning assessment practices and their results was the nature of the assessment being sample-based. The results of sample-based learning assessments can never help conclude for every and each school and student in the country. This, in turn, entails the inability of the assessment system to loss its external validity-failure to make conclusions for the population based on the sample data. Hence, this requires the introduction of census-based learning assessment so as to make accountability viable up to the schools level.

Item-10: The National Learning Assessment executive summary reports of the last ten years were easy to access by every one in need.

Item-10		
Response Categories	Freq.	%
AGREE	4	10
UNDECIDED	12	30
DISAGREE	24	60
	40	100



This concomitant item was included so as to amplify one of the major problems in the Ethiopian NLA practices-the NLA report dissemination problem. The item was found, by the researcher, to be conversely consistent with items 1, 2, 7 and 8. Both of the items were responded by significant percentage of respondents as agreed

upon matters. For this item, though, the agreement of 60% of the respondents on the inaccessibility of the NLA reports to everyone in need clearly indicated the relative non-participatory behavior of the NLA practices in the country. Given that most of the respondents of the questionnaire were from the regional education bureaus, it was not surprising that this had become the result. The writer of the study, for instance, observed lots of packs of the 2008 reports in MoE store, which were the latest of the time, waiting for being obsolete before disseminating to departments of the ministry.

According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2004), nevertheless, the availability of reports of appropriate length in appropriate language geared to the interests and needs of policymakers and decision makers, the availability and use of adequate channels of communication and the interest, ability, and willingness of decision makers to absorb, interpret, and apply the findings and recommendations of learning assessment are amongst the critical ones to succeed in an NLA effort.

Chapter 5 – Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary and Major Findings

Summary

It was made clear that the study investigates the impact of the National Learning Assessment recommendations so far anticipated by the three successive assessment studies carried out by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. To deal with this objective the following key research questions were considered:

- To what extent have the National Learning Assessment recommendations so far forwarded addressed the ETP implementation?
- What observable interventions were made as a result of recommendations forwarded?
- How have the learning assessment results contributed to enhance learners' achievement?
- What major problems were encountered in conducting the three successive National Learning Assessments?

In order to answer these guiding questions of the research, the writer of the study used descriptive survey method of research by mainly employing qualitative approach of data collection-individual interviews and document analysis, and a quantitative description using a questionnaire data in order to amplify the data obtained from the other two instruments. The data sources included were five higher officials from the Ministry of Education for interview protocol and forty heads, vices and experts from regional education bureaus who have enough experience in the learning assessment matters, for the questionnaire response. The researcher has attempted to answer the key questions and achieve the objectives of the research through such a mixed way of data generation, which he believes that enabled the study to offset the limitation of one approach by another.

Hence, on the basis of the above procedure, the researcher was able to identify the following major findings of the study.

Major Findings

This section presents the views, perceptions and beliefs of the respondents of the instruments in terms of percentages one to one with each interview guide and the items of the questionnaire. Moreover, the section reveals the results obtained from the document analysis. Based on this, the following major findings are drawn.

- Although there was inconsequential variation between respondents, there is a clear perception of a significant impact of the NLA recommendations on the ETP. This result was indicated by 80% of questionnaire respondents and 60% of the interviewees. Besides, this was complimented by a document analysis that presented enough data to augment the informants' perception.
- It was shown significant by the majority (60%) of the respondents of the questionnaire that the NLA recommendations so far forwarded were practically utilizable.
- 60% of respondents of the questionnaire believe that the NLA recommendations so far forwarded have been given due attention by the concerned bodies.
- There is a wide-range of consensus between the informants of the interview guide that clearly observable interventions were in progress on the basis of the NLA recommendations. This agreement is highly strengthened by the data from the document analysis. But there is a perception of the respondents for a need of a national learning assessment policy framework, as an intervention tool, for a maximum use of the NLA results.
- The three NLA exercises so far made in the past ten years are perceived by 100% of the respondents of the interview as not contributing to students' scores, except some commendable offerings of information to the top management of the sector for better educational policy and decision making. This stand of the respondents was also verified by a presentation of the decline of the mean composite scores of 4th and 8th graders overtime by comparing the 1st, 2nd and 3rd NLA results of each grade.

- 64% of the questionnaire respondents and 60% of the interviewees evidenced that there were a number of problems which the conducts of NLA were encountered with in the last decade. However, the problems enumerated were found by the researcher as not halting types.
- The marked dissemination problem of the NLA summary reports as perceived by 60% of the questionnaire respondents was found to be critical.

5.2 Conclusions

The above findings of the study show that:

- ◆ The NLA practices were playing a considerable facilitating role in the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy implementation without a need to make a substantial change on the policy.
- ◆ The NLA recommendations were practically implementable, and this enabled them to be given attention by the Ministry of Education and frequently considered in various policy intervention tools development.
- ◆ The Ethiopian national learning assessment effort has to be supported by a national policy framework for maximum utilization of the recommendations of the practices.
- ◆ Taking other issues invariable, the national learning assessment efforts did not help to achieve proficiency in students' achievement; students' achievements are rather declining.
- ◆ The introduction of census-based assessment is essential rather than the sample-based assessment practice, for it makes possible responsibility and accountability at every level.
- ◆ There is a significant problem in the dissemination of the summary reports of the national learning assessment to every one in need.

- ◆ In general, it is possible to conclude from the study that the national learning assessment results have a reasonable impact on the country's education and training policy implementation. Be this as it may, there are areas of concern in the policy framework which still need attention by the federal and regional governments even if there are rudimentary reform efforts being carried out.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are proposed:

- **A national policy framework on learning assessment is vital.** *The major source of the problem on the strength of the impact of the NLA recommendations is a matter of responsibility and accountability issues from both sides of the federal and regional levels of the sector. Therefore, as suggested by the study, a nationally agreed-upon policy framework helps augment the effectiveness of the over all endeavor.*
- **The dissemination of the NLA reports to all interested needs due concern.** *The availability of NLA reports of appropriate length in appropriate language geared to the interests and needs of policymakers and decision makers, the availability and use of adequate channels of communication and the interest, ability, and willingness of decision makers to absorb, interpret, and apply the findings and recommendations of learning assessment are amongst the critical ones to succeed in an NLA effort.*
- **Electronic means, such as website, needs to be used for NLA reports dissemination, in addition to hard copies.** *Rather than sticking as ever to the hard copies, it is advisable to supplement by electronic means of dissemination, so as to reach the needy in time.*

- **The country needs to participate in regional/international assessments for better benchmarking of best practices.** *Participating in international assessments provide information on how students in an education system perform on an achievement test relative to students in other countries. The assessment may also provide comparative information derived from curriculum documents and on the amount of time or emphasis accorded domains of achievement.*

- **The introduction of census-based assessment is essential.** *The current need of the assessment practice so as to appropriately manage the implementation of the NLA recommendations through the assignment of responsibility and accountability to each level is the introduction of census-based assessment.*

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**ትምህርት ሚኒስቴር (1999 ዓ/ም) የአጠቃላይ ትምህርት ጥራት ማረጋገጫ ፓኬጅ።
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School of Graduate Studies College of Education
Department of Educational Planning and Management

Questionnaire for Region Education Bureau Heads, Vice Bureau Heads and NLA/Planning Experts

The objective of this questionnaire is to collect data for the study on the impact of the National Learning Assessment (NLA) recommendations on the implementation of the Ethiopian Education and Training policy (ETP), and to identify some of the major problems that the NLA exercise encountered so far. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

PART ONE

Personal data

1.1 Experience in the education sector

Over 10 years

5 – 10 years

Below 5 years

1.2 Your current Position: _____

1.3 Experience in your current position: _____ years

1.4 Level of Education:

Diploma

BA/BSc

MA/MSc

PhD

PART TWO

Instruction: There are 10 statements listed below. You are sincerely requested to show how you feel about each statement by putting "X" mark in one of the five given columns under '**Strongly Agree**' (SA), '**Agree**' (A), '**Undecided**' (UD), '**Disagree**' (D), or '**Strongly Disagree**' (SD), and by adding supplementary listing where required.

(Please turn over)

No	ITEMS	Response Categories				
		SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	The impact of the National Learning Assessment effort on the implementation of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy is high.					
2	The National Learning Assessment recommendations so far forwarded have been given due attention by the concerned bodies at each level of the education sector.					
3	A number of observable program interventions were in place as a result of the recommendations of the three rounds of National Learning Assessment.					
4	If your answer for question number 3 above is 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree', please mention the program intervention(s) so far in place by any responsible body in the sector.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
5	The National Learning Assessment recommendations so far forwarded are contributing to the improvement of students' achievements.					
6	If your answer for question number 5 above is 'Strongly Disagree' or 'Disagree', please mention three major points you think are the reasons.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
7	Practically utilizable recommendations were forwarded by the three rounds of the National Learning Assessment reports.					
8	While conducting the three National Learning Assessments during the past ten years, the process was being encountered by different problems.					
9	If your answer for question number 8 above is 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree', please mention three of the problems you think are major?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
10	The dissemination of the National Learning Assessment executive summary reports of the last ten years were easy to access by every one in need.					

Interview Guide:

- 1) Have you any idea on the extent to which the NLA recommendations so far forwarded addressed the ETP implementation?

- 2) What observable program interventions do you think so far in place as a result of the NLA recommendations?

- 3) Do you agree that the NLA results contributed to enhance students' achievements?

- 4) What major observable problems would you mention encountering the three NLAs so far?

**Collated recommendations of the three NLA studies
in nine major thematic areas;**

Curriculum, textbooks and other instructional materials:

1. The need for the improvement of the curriculum and instructional materials (In relation the students' capacity & pace to learn); (1st NLA)
2. The priority to the availability of textbooks in a manner that providing each pupil with a full set; (1st NLA)
3. The need for better supply of school curriculum materials so as to improve student scholastic performance; (2nd NLA)
4. A comprehensive school reform has to be introduced to improve the academic performance of the school system taking curriculum and instructional support reform into account (Availability); (3rd NLA)

Teacher development:

5. Special attention to teacher quality and behavior as a priority area for improvement of students' learning; (2nd NLA)
6. Strengthening the instructional practice of teachers and instructional support in the classroom are vital to improve student learning;(2nd NLA)
7. A comprehensive school reform has to be introduced to improve the academic performance of the school system taking teacher reforms into account; (3rd NLA)
8. Residences for teachers have to be built around schools; (3rd NLA)

Gender and regional disparity, with special emphasis on girls' education:

9. The concern to enhance girls education, in addition to the affirmative actions, by increasing the proportion of female teachers in schools; (1st NLA)
10. Disparity of performance by region and sex of students in subjects other than English and Mathematics needs improvement;(2nd NLA)
11. Regional disparities in student achievements need to be improved; (2nd NLA)

12. The over all performance of girls as measured by their academic achievement needs improvement; (2nd NLA)
13. Disparity between boys and girls still needs attention and there is a need to provide additional support to girls; (3rd NLA)

School management and leadership:

14. The improvement of student achievement, first and foremost, requires improvement in school management;(2nd NLA)
15. With in a comprehensive school reform, school leadership need to be reformed (Needs as a principal); (3rd NLA)
16. A comprehensive school reform has to be introduced to improve the academic performance of the school system taking reforms on school management into account (School income generation); (3rd NLA)
17. Teacher-to-student support systems have to be strengthened;(3rd NLA)
18. School, community and local governments have to work together;(3rd NLA)
19. Differences in terms of quality of education within (government) schools have to be eliminated in order to maintain equity in student performance; (3rd NLA)

Student home background and personal behavior:

20. The improvement of student home background and personal behavior needs concern so as to positively attain in the improvement of student achievement;(2nd NLA)
21. The performance of rural students needs improvement; (2nd NLA)
22. Parents have to be sensitized to avail home materials that support academic achievement; (3rd NLA)
23. A comprehensive school reform has to be introduced to improve the academic performance of the school system taking into account reforms on student conditions (Training parents & parental committees) and home and parental conditions (Lowering/Freeing cost); (3rd NLA)
24. Pupils in urban schools need more support than what is provided at present; (3rd NLA)

English, Mathematics and mother-tongue instruction:

25. The special attention recommended to strengthen the quality and attractiveness of learning materials, and teacher preparation in the subjects of English and Mathematics; (1st NLA)
26. The emphasis on the urgency of the deployment of adequately trained teachers, sufficient textbooks and reading materials for the policy of local languages of instruction to succeed; (1st NLA)
27. Performance of students in core curricula (English and Mathematics) requires special attention; (2nd NLA)

Experience sharing among schools:

28. The advice to share experiences between schools on the basis of best practices of attaining proficient student achievement.(1st NLA)
29. Transfer of experience that contributed to the effectiveness of socially relevant issues (life skills) is required for the improvement of student academic achievement in the various subjects; (3rd NLA)

The need for school feeding:

30. School feeding has to be encouraged; (3rd NLA)

Attention to the recommendations of NLA:

31. Learning from national learning assessment is required. (2nd NLA)
32. There is a need to progress in academic achievement overtime by making use of the recommendations given by the previous and the current national learning assessments. (3rd NLA)

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this National Baseline Assessment of achievement in Grade 4 provide, first and foremost, a series of measures against which progress in learning achievement over the coming years can be monitored as Ethiopia's educational reform program is internalized and the new curricula and instructional materials are strengthened in the regions and mastered in schools across the country. As such, these Assessment results suggest strongly that all regions have room for improvement in all key subject areas, some more than others.

Based on these general findings and on those which provide some orientation with regard to the specific input and process factors that can support higher academic achievement, the following specific recommendations are offered:

1. In general, Grade 4 teachers report that the curriculum is too difficult for the pupils. Indeed, to the degree that the achievement measures developed for this assessment reflect this curriculum, the relatively low scores in English, Maths, and Science confirm this observation. Clearly, continuing attention needs to be devoted to improving the curriculum and instructional materials to ensure that they are adapted to the capacities and learning pace of children.
2. Second, overall pupil interest in the subjects of English and Maths are lower than their interest in other subjects. To the extent that pupil interest in a subject is associated with learning the subject, special attention should be devoted to strengthening the quality and attractiveness of the curriculum,

learning materials, and teacher preparation in the subjects of English and Maths. //

- ✓ 3. Regular or frequent use of radio for supplementary instruction was strongly associated with higher achievement in grade 4. Since radio lessons are available only in certain subjects and in certain areas of the country, high priority should be given to expanding the number and availability of radio lessons as well as improving their quality. //
- ✓ 4. Likewise, the availability of textbooks is an important contributor to higher pupil achievement. And yet, one in every four Grade 4 classroom has few or no books available for pupils. Textbooks are one of the least expensive components of the instructional process yet they have the greatest impact. High priority should be placed on providing each pupil with a full set of textbooks. //
5. While all regions and zones have room for improvement, schools using languages of instruction that have been recently introduced, most notably Agnuak, Dagago, Gedeo, Sidama, and Wolayita languages, produce mean achievement scores that are considerably below the national mean in all key subjects. The policy for local languages of instruction in the first cycle of primary education is courageous and commendable. If this policy is to succeed, however, it is essential that teachers employing these "new" instructional languages receive adequate training to do so; that sufficient textbooks, supplementary reading materials, and other instructional materials are produced in these languages, and that these materials are equivalent in content and quality to materials available in the more well-established print languages such as Amharic and Oromifa. //

6. In all regions and in many schools, the average level of girl's achievement is lower than that of boys (though in a handful, the average achievement of girls is greater than or equal to that of boys). Girls tend to do better in schools that have good facilities (sound buildings, water, and electricity) and experienced teachers several of whom are female, and that also foster high achievement in boys. It may be that girls expect more of schools than boys. But so should we all. So an important condition for reducing the gender gap is to strengthen the overall quality of schools and to increase the proportion of teachers who are female.

7. The high correlations found across achievement measures indicate that pupils doing well on one subject at a school also tend to do better in the others. It therefore, seems relevant to examine more closely how "high-achieving" schools are functioning, and to share these experiences among schools and across regions. Phase Two of the National Assessment program addresses these issues.

In closing, let us remember that education, and all educational reform efforts, are an investment in the future. Their most important impacts will not be visible overnight. In view of the many new innovations in the curriculum and the commitment to accelerating the pace of learning, it will be important to continue to carry out a program of regular, systematic assessment of pupil learning over time. The findings of the FY2000 assessment constitute an initial benchmark, against which improvements in the quality of Ethiopian education in the coming years can be measured.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following specific recommendations are given.

1. ***The overall performance of the education system as measured by student achievement at Grade 4 needs improvement.*** The low level of overall achievement of students requires to be improved at least to a reasonable level of 50% as planned by MOE. Schools where students attain less than half of what they are expected to learn are in serious trouble.
2. ***The overall performance of girls in Grade 4 needs improvement.*** The overall achievement of girls requires to be improved in relation to that of boys. This is required in all subjects. The current results indicate that concern for gender equity in schooling needs to extend beyond access to the provision of quality education that supports and encourages girls' achievement as well. Eventhough there is an indication of increment in girls' achievement since the baseline study, the gap between male and female students achievement has widened from the baseline.
3. ***The performance of rural students in Grade 4 needs improvement.*** The performance of rural schools in comparison to urban schools requires improvement. Given that the majority of primary schools are rural, it is an alarming condition that should be addressed since achievements are already low at the national level.
4. ***Performance of students in Grade 4 core curricula (English and Mathematics) requires special attention.*** Mathematics and English achievement results were extremely lower than the other subjects. Some regions and girls achieved less than other regions and boys. These problems require solutions with reference to quality and equity.
5. ***Disparity of performance by region and sex of students in other Grade 4 subjects needs improvement.*** Although students' achievement scores were more in the national mean for environmental science and reading comprehension tests, they were significantly favoring boys and some regions. Attention must be given to bringing the equity among both sexes and regions.
6. ***The improvement of student achievement in Grade 4, first and foremost requires improvement in school management.*** School management with particular reference to teachers taking class attendance, director's experience in school leadership, and how often the directors supervise teachers showed significant positive relations with student achievement in Grade 4. Therefore it is required to encourage teachers to take class attendance, appoint and retain experienced school principals, and encourage principal's supervision of teachers.
7. ***Improvement of student achievement also depends on the improvement of student home background and personal behavior.*** Student interest in subjects, meals per day, agreement between home and instructional language, and students' sense of ownership in school property had significant positive relations with student achievement while time spent by listening to radio and watching television, distance from home to school and absence from school had significant negative relations with student achievement. Therefore, improving student interest towards subjects, improving the nourishment conditions, the use of home language in schools, and student participation in school affairs need to be improved. Moreover, the construction of nearby schools to reduce distance and discouraging wastage of time

by listening to radios and watching TV, and encouraging students' classroom attendance need special attention.

8. ***Better supply of school curriculum materials for Grade 4 needs attention to improve student scholastic performance.*** This factor is one of strongest predictors of student achievement in Grade 4. Among these, the availability of teacher's guides and the availability of the syllabus to teachers stands top in the degree of order. Therefore, it is vital the teacher's guides and subject syllabi are made available to schools.
9. ***special attention to teacher quality and behavior is the other priority area for improvement of students' learning in Grade 4.*** Teacher training on new teaching methods and assessment techniques, average teacher training level, and teacher's perception of student learning attitudes are important conditions for the improvement of student learning. Thus, organizing training programs on new methods of teaching, conducting teacher training on new assessment techniques, improving the average level of teacher training (pre-service), and encouraging teachers to learn about their students are some of the measures required.
10. ***Strengthening the instructional practice of teachers and instructional support in the classroom are vital to improve student learning in Grade 4.*** The director's perception of the overall instructional quality or his/her knowledge and judgment of how teachers instruct their students has significant positive relation with student achievement. This means both the quality of the teachers as instructional leaders and the director's position to acknowledge performance as an instructional leader have to be strengthened. This can happen if the capacity of the principal and the teachers is developed using different trainings or other programs.
11. ***Regional disparities in student achievements in Grade 4 need to be improved.*** There are considerable variations in regional mean scores in each subject. Variation within each region also tended to be high, with standard deviations ranging from 12 to 24 in every subject. This means that regions that achieved less on the test scores need to improve their learning outcomes as the responsibility to plan and implement primary educations is theirs.
12. ***Learning from national learning assessment is required.*** Regular, reliable and timely assessments are key to improve learning achievement. Such assessments provide information about the level of performance of the education system at different levels and the main factors that influence learning. Therefore, it is a major requirement for all concerned bodies to learn from the current national learning assessment and make sure that the recommended improvements are realized in the years to come.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **A comprehensive school reform has to be introduced to improve the academic performance of the school system taking each subject into account.**

The observed low academic achievement scores call for immediate actions in the nation. It is not possible to expect higher academic performance under conditions that are not structured to produce such results. Overall, there is a large number of variables that contributes to the achievement of students. If school performance has to change, attention needs to be given to variables related to socio-economic status of parents, students individual and social characteristics, student self-concept, teacher variables, school variables and the medium of instruction. As already indicated in the findings, a comprehensive school improvement program in terms of school achievement requires addressing a block of variables indicating comprehensive school reform. Reforms/actions are required to effect the following:

- Parents (single parents) who can not provide their children with instructional materials, and uniforms should be supported.
- The schools need to introduce at least a one time school feeding per day (lunch) for poor children in schools. Those who can afford have to be encouraged to bring their own food, preferably lunch.
- Parents/parental committees need to be trained on how to support and encourage their children to study well, provide sufficient chore-free time at home and develop self-confidence and good self image.
- School regulations need to be enforced in order to control student absenteeism and parental obligations to provide children with the opportunity to learning.
- Provision of textbooks for students and school libraries that offer common access to dictionaries and supplementary reading materials need to be strengthened.
- School construction has to take into account the amount of time it requires to walk from home to school. It is suggested that schools have to be constructed as close as possible to students' homes and these schools have to foster cultures/traditions which encourage children to build positive self-concept and self-confidence.

- Teacher reforms that encourage the shortening of home-school distance for teachers (construction of teacher homes close to the schools) are required. Moreover such reforms should emphasize frequent teacher supervision, teacher punctuality or time on task, and teachers' continuous professional development particularly with reference to different methodological and psychological training.
 - School curricular management reforms which strengthen lesson planning for each subject, time devoted to learning, student support for those in need, the regular use of pedagogical centers and availability of teachers' guides need to be put in place.
2. **Disparity between boys and girls still needs attention and there is a need to provide additional support to girls.**

All the three Ethiopian National learning Assessments have demonstrated that girls are at a disadvantage compared to boys. This study has shown that parental conditions, student personal and social conditions, provision of text books and learning materials, teacher reforms, school reforms all influence students' learning. The Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus have to develop a Girls' Quality Education Assurance mechanism which makes sure that girls are availed additional support from the comprehensive school improvement proposed above.

3. **Pupils in urban schools need more support than what is provided at present.**

Both the Ethiopian Second and Third National Learning Assessments indicate that urban education has been at a disadvantage in relation to rural areas. Since the current findings suggest that the variables contributing to variations in learning are based on parental, student, teacher and school issues, it is recommended that these comprehensive school reforms are carried out fully in urban schools. Since problems in urban education might be different than what is commonly observed in all schools, there is a need to specially study problems in urban education and address those additional issues. As the constitution of the nation and the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy are based on the principle of equity, such inequality does not need to be tolerated in Ethiopia anymore.

4. **Transfer of experience that contributed to the effectiveness of socially relevant issues is required for the improvement of student academic achievement in subjects.**

The high achievement in developing positive attitude towards socially relevant issues (life skills) is probably due to the priority given in the Education Sector Development Program. The Ministry of Education has to pay similar attention to raising the level of achievement in academic subjects as a strategy to the improvement of academic performance.

5. **Using local language as medium of instruction needs to be encouraged across the nation.**

Although the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy stipulates the use of the mother tongue in primary education, there are still deviations from the policy. Some regions provide primary education in languages other than the mother tongue using the pretext that local languages will not serve the purpose of country-wide communication. Others shifted to English after using the mother tongue for instruction and claiming that the effect has been found negative (e.g. Amhara). Like in the Second National Learning Assessment, this study has also confirmed that learning in the mother tongue enhances student achievement. Therefore, regions have to be encouraged to teach in local languages rather than in other languages.

6. **There is a need to progress in academic achievement over time by making use of the recommendations given by the previous and the current national learning assessments.**

Although three National Learning Assessments have identified the main conditions determining student learning in Ethiopia, the extent to which these conditions have been acted upon by regional offices is not clear. Some regions like Tigary, however, have taken clear actions to make learning assessment a tool for improvement. Others will have to emulate this example, and the Ministry of Education has to encourage and promote such actions.

7. **Schools should be encouraged to generate their own internal incomes.**

It has been reported in the Ethiopian Second National Learning Assessment that schools that generate their internal incomes have better performing students. This is because such school can compensate deficiencies very easily from their own incomes. The same trend has been observed in the current study. Schools have to be

encouraged and situations need to be arranged for them to generate their own income using different means such as land rent, recreational centers, community contributions, donations, etc.

8. Within the comprehensive school reform, the school leadership and management needs change in order to:

- emphasize the creation of positive relationships among students and orderly school environment.
- ensure high morale of teachers and their emphasis on academic activities.
- control students' and teachers' absenteeism, uphold high level student-teacher relationships, and foster respect among the school community.
- reduce and discourage student repetition by means of continuous assessment, arrangement of student support system, motivation of students to work hard and attain their objectives.
- allocate proper workload to teachers per week. This allocation needs to permit teachers sufficient time to provide special support to students, use pedagogical centers, make preparations for teaching and do action research.

9. School, community and local governments have to work together to:

- control the development of bad habits among students.
- support schools in areas of their needs including finance, curriculum, safeguarding school property, school and teacher supervision and labor.
- control situations that lead to student repetitions and dropouts, particularly girls.

10. Differences within (government) schools have to be eliminated in order to maintain equity in student performance.

Unexpectedly, the current findings have shown that the contribution of inter-school differences to differences in academic performance has been high. It should be remembered that the samples of this study were selected from government schools. The implication is that there are wide variations among government schools in terms of quality of education. Thus, the government has to give priority to creating equal access for all schools in all regions to conditions that facilitate the improvement of quality education in general and students' academic performance in particular.

11. Priorities for comprehensive school reform require to be holistic.

Government reforms to improve the quality of primary education in general and that of students' learning in particular does not matter much unless otherwise all factors which have shown positive relationships with performance are focused. These factors include school level factors, teacher factors, student factors as well as parental and community factors. However if these factors have to be prioritized the most powerful areas for consideration were found to be learning in the mother tongue, teacher supervision, distance from the directors home to the school, class repetition, teachers load per week, student absenteeism, availability of Teachers' Guide, and student interests towards schooling.

Questionnaire Data processing Sheet

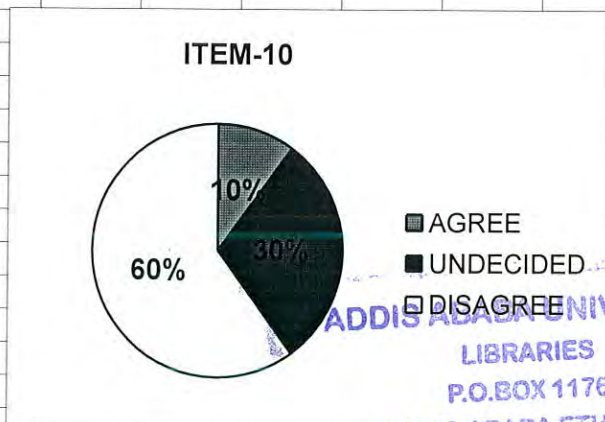
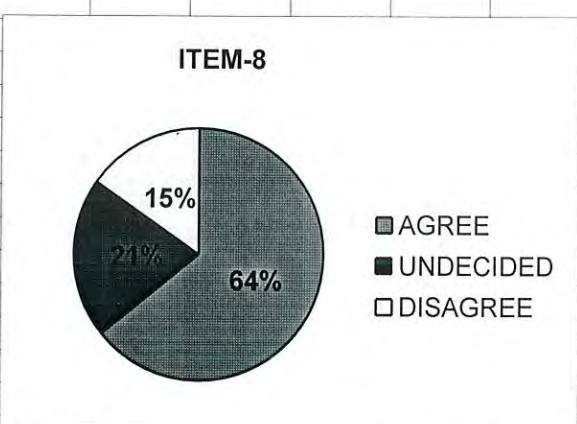
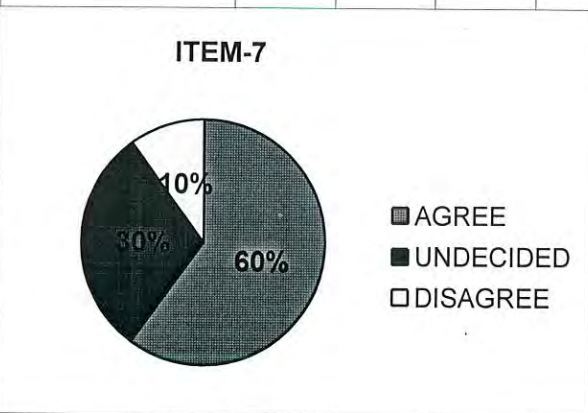
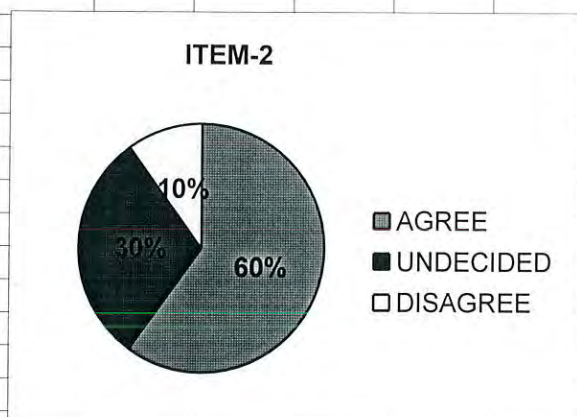
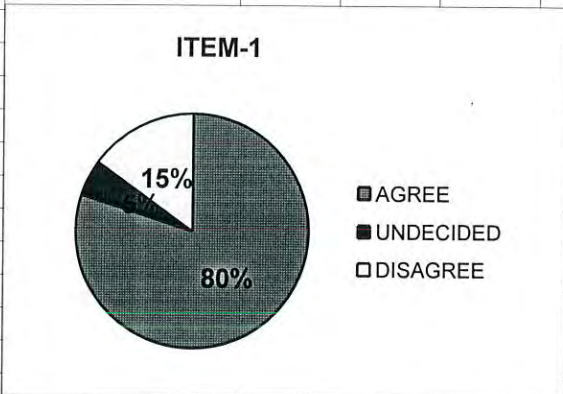
Annex-4

ID	POSITION	Q1	Q2	Q7	Q8	Q10
01	Curr. Expert	3	2	2	2	4
02	Assess. Exp.	4	3	2	4	4
03	Assess. Exp.	1	3	1	2	4
04	Planning Exp.	1	4	3	3	3
05	TDP Expert	2	3	2	2	3
06	Assess. Exp.	2	3	5	-	2
07	Planning Exp.	4	4	2	4	4
08	Assess. Exp.	1	2	1	3	4
09	Curr. Expert	1	2	1	1	5
10	Curr. Expert	2	3	3	3	2
11	Exam. Expert	1	2	2	2	4
12	Exam. Expert	1	1	2	2	3
13	Assess. Exp.	4	2	4	2	4
14	Planning Exp.	1	2	2	1	4
15	Planning Exp.	1	1	3	1	5
16	REB Head	2	2	2	4	3
17	Exam. Expert	2	2	3	3	3
18	Assess. Exp.	1	1	2	2	5
19	Assess. Exp.	4	3	1	4	4
20	Exam. Expert	1	4	2	2	5
21	TDP Expert	1	3	2	2	4
22	REB Head	2	2	3	2	3
23	V.REB Head	2	2	2	3	3
24	Curr. Expert	2	2	5	4	3
25	Curr. Expert	2	3	2	2	2
26	Exam. Expert	1	1	3	3	5
27	Exam. Expert	4	4	2	4	4
28	V.REB Head	1	2	2	3	4
29	V.REB Head	1	2	2	3	4
30	Planning Exp.	4	2	4	2	4
31	Assess. Exp.	1	2	1	1	5
32	REB Head	1	1	2	2	3
33	REB Head	2	3	3	2	3
34	REB Head	1	2	3	2	4
35	Assess. Exp.	3	2	2	2	4
36	REB Head	2	3	3	1	5
37	Curr. Expert	2	3	3	1	3
38	REB Head	1	1	3	1	3
39	REB Head	1	2	2	2	5
40	Exam. Expert	2	3	3	2	2

Responses Categories	ITEM-1		ITEM-2		ITEM-7		ITEM-8		ITEM-10	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
SA=>1	19	48	6	15	5	13	7	18	0	0
A =>2	13	33	18	45	19	48	18	46	4	10
UD=>3	2	5	12	30	12	30	8	21	12	30
D =>4	6	15	4	10	2	5	6	15	16	40
SD=>5	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	8	20
	40	100	40	100	40	100	39	100	40	100

Questionnaire Data processing Sheet

Merged Responses Categories	ITEM-1		ITEM-2		ITEM-7		ITEM-8		ITEM-10	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
AGREE	32	80	24	60	24	60	25	64	4	10
UNDECIDED	2	5	12	30	12	30	8	21	12	30
DISAGREE	6	15	4	10	4	10	6	15	24	60
	40	100	40	100	40	100	39	100	40	100



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