



**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Graduate Studies**

The role television can play in Early Childhood Development:  
an in-depth investigation of *Tsehai Loves Learning*

By Tsion Issayas

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# Abstract

*This study is an inquiry into the use of television as a tool for education. The area of early childhood development is taken as a particular case of the study for the reason that it is an under-researched field. To gain a deeper understanding of the issue, the study is based on a local children's television program called Tsehai Loves Learning.*

*The study is guided by theories of child education. The different approaches taken in the education of the child are seen as relevant literature for the purpose of this study.*

*The researcher has collected data using qualitative research methods of in-depth interview and document analysis. Accordingly, interviews were carried out with key informants from the Ethiopian Television and Whiz Kids Production to shed lights on the issues affecting them. Also, documents such as the Education and Training Policy, the Kindergarten Syllabus and Whiz Kids objectives and missions documents have been analyzed.*

*The study has found out that Early Childhood Development, which is included in the preschool education system in Ethiopia, is a grossly neglected field and solutions and alternative routes of educating children have not been exploited. also, through the process of this study, it has been discovered that the government is not doing its share in supporting the initiatives of the private sector in an attempt to expand Early Childhood Education.*

*It has also been revealed that using television as an educational tool for children is not yet appreciated and the Ethiopian Television itself does not give due attention to programs for children.*

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

This chapter is aimed at providing introductory information that could serve as a base for understanding later chapters. The subject of the study and why the researcher found it important to investigate have been discussed in the coming sections.

### 1.1 Early Childhood Development and Television

Early childhood is a challenge that is facing many governments in both developed and developing countries wishing to promote a holistic approach to the growth of the child. It is usually the concern of many government sectors; notably the education, social affairs and health sectors. In Ethiopia, the responsibility of promoting Early Childhood Development falls on NGOs and the private sector (Study Report on ECCE 2006).

The field of early childhood goes by various names in different countries as well as within individual countries where different stakeholders may use different references. International agencies too do not have a commonly agreed upon term. Researchers have tried to unify the field under a single label, but without success (UNESCO Policy Brief 2002).

Of all the terms used, Early Childhood Development (ECD) has become increasingly popular in the past few years. It emphasizes a holistic approach attending to the child's physical, emotional, social as well as cognitive development. Though because of its comprehensive nature it is difficult to capture its essence, ECD is gaining ground as one of the most generic terms for the field (Ibid).

The phase regarded as early childhood also differs in different countries although the most common reference is the age starting from birth to 6 years old when usually children start primary education (Torkington 2001).

ECD encompasses a series of learning processes during which the child learns about the environment and himself/herself. This helps for the young child's physical growth to be accompanied by an appropriate learning process. According to UNESCO's *Policy Brief on Early Childhood* (2002), learning and growth should not come one after the other; they should together be integral parts of the process of nurturing a child's holistic development.

In this regard, media as an essential way of spreading information is now being increasingly recognized. Children's media has also emerged and been acknowledged as significantly affecting children's lives (UNESCO Policy Brief 2006). The media, and especially television because of its visual and auditory nature, play an integral role in ECD. Since children tend to learn better from "concrete visual presentations" television fits their learning style (Huston & Wright 1998: 16).

Also, research shows that the benefits of ECD television are long lasting. Studies show that children that follow ECD programs show better language scores than non-viewers, better math scores, better science scores, more enthusiasm for reading, and a higher motivation to achieve better grades (Ibid).

Despite a colossal amount of evidence that educational programming has constructive effects on social, intellectual, and educational growth of young children, and recent evidence that such viewing experience during the preschool years promote both increased school readiness for formal schooling and superior high school grades in English, science, and math, many scholars still believe that television viewing in general is harmful to children's educational progress (Huston & Wright 1998: 9).

The proposed study deals with ECD and how television can be employed as an alternative to formal schooling in promoting the holistic development of the child. In doing this, the study tries to ascertain different factors that may contribute to the positive development of the child and what ECD television programs should contain as components in order to achieve the desired

effect. It also assesses the different conditions that should be created and/or improved to promote ECD in Ethiopia.

## **1.2 The Case of the Study: *Tsehai Loves Learning***

The study takes as its subject *Tsehai Loves Learning*, a television program created and produced by Whiz Kids Workshop. It is selected for the purpose of this study for the reason that it is the first and only research based children's educational television program using Amharic in Ethiopia and it targets children between the ages of 3-6. Very little is being done to educate children of this age in Ethiopia (Study Report on ECCE 2006).

*Tsehai Loves Learning* (6/8 minutes duration episodes) started to be broadcast bi-weekly in partnership with the national broadcaster, Ethiopian Television (ETV) in 2005. It was discontinued after a year and four months because the ETV administration proposed to come up with a new regulation concerning programs that are produced by private content providers, or "outsourced" programs as they are commonly known. At this point in this study, details on this issue are not available to the researcher but it is hoped that in the course of the study these details will be revealed.

Nevertheless, Whiz Kids is still making episodes of *Tsehai Loves Learning* so that it can be transmitted whenever the situation is resolved.

*Tsehai Loves Learning* is targeted at fostering "democracy and freedom of expression by encouraging children to be inquisitive, increasing their thirst for knowledge and empowering them to be self-confident." (Whiz Kids Project Proposal)

Whiz Kids co-founders, Bruktawit Tigabu and Shane Etzenhouser, personally see to the implementation of the project with the assistance of volunteers from Ethiopia, the United States and Canada. Whiz Kids has also partnered with ETV for the broadcast of its production.

### 1.3 The Ethiopian Television: a brief introduction

Television started broadcasting for the first time in Ethiopia in 1964. According to the Ethiopian Demography and Health Survey it presently reaches 53% of the total area of the country.

The Ethiopian Television is a state owned broadcast agency. By category, it falls under the public broadcasting service (*The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy 1997*). In the 2007 Broadcasting Service Proclamation, “public broadcasting service” is defined as “a radio or television transmission service established, for the purpose of educating, informing and entertaining the public, in the federal or regional state to which government budget is allocated in full or in part and is accountable to the Federal House of Peoples Representatives or to Regional Councils” (No. 533/2007).

Under this category, the public service broadcaster has the duties to (Ibid):

1. *Enhance the participation of the public through the presentation of government policies and strategies as well as activities related to the development, democracy and good governance;*
2. *Present programs which inform, educate and entertain the public;*
3. *Present programs which reflect unity of peoples based on equality;*
4. *Promote and enhance the cultures and artistic values of the public;*
5. *Serve political parties operating in accordance with the Constitution and the electoral laws of the country on the basis of fair and just treatment.*

To fulfill these duties stated in the proclamation, the Ethiopian television gives the following services (<http://www.erta.gov.et/etvprofile/aboutus.htm>):

- *Introduces proclamations, policies and strategies of the government*
- *Gives information – broadcasts local and foreign news*

- *Produces and transmits programs that build public understanding of democratic rights*
- *Receives and broadcasts public opinion to listeners and viewers*
- *Airs entertainment programs on holidays and weekends*
- *Prepares and transmits educational /instructional/ programs which raise awareness of the public*
- *Broadcasts advertisements from the public, private business and non-business sectors*
- *Provides dubbing services*

Currently, the Ethiopian Television transmits in two channels and includes a variety of programs from news to entertainment to informative programs. It also has an in house children's program. This program is an assortment of news, movies, and dramas produced locally. The children's program takes up 2.08% of the whole airtime (Leykun 1997: 195).

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

Early Childhood Development is seen as the last frontier to be conquered in order to complete the picture of an education system when it should be considered as an “integral, indispensable part” (Torkington 2001). In Ethiopia, very little is being done in the field (Study Report on ECCE 2006). Preschool education is a field entirely left to NGOs and the private sector. In this regard there is a problem of integration between the concerned bodies arising in gaps of communication in the field (Ibid). The effect of these gaps will reflect on implementation of programs and should be recognized as a major problem in the field. This will also extend into television programs for ECD and the design of objectives for and the ultimate success of the programs.

Also, very little research has been done in this area that could serve as background for policy makers and program designers that they have to rely on research done in other countries. That creates problems in understanding the context under which local programs should be designed.

The main issue focused upon in this study is how to build upon the existing resources such as the preschool syllabus of Ethiopia to come up with content for media; the main difficulty is how to survive in the present policy situation concerning ECD and explore alternative routes other than the formal school setting.

## 1.5 Objectives

In general, the objectives of the proposed study are:

- To examine existing policy and policy gaps if any regarding Early Childhood Development
- To assess how television is being used as a tool in Early Childhood Development in Ethiopia.
- To analyze how *Tsehai Loves Learning* is faring under the existing circumstances

## 1.6 Research Questions

The proposed study starts with an assumption that television can play an essential role in promoting ECD. To this end, there are a couple of research questions that have to be asked in order to reach at a reliable conclusion for the study. The questions are:

1. How can television be exploited as an alternative to formal schooling to aid the area of ECD in Ethiopia?
2. How can existing ECD policies or the lack of them impact a program such as *Tsehai Loves Learning*?

By answering these questions, the researcher hopes to discover something significant that could be a basis for further research.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The area of children's education in relation to media is a grossly under-researched area in Ethiopia as well as in other African countries (UNESCO Policy Brief 2002).

By doing this study, the researcher hopes to contribute to the field of ECD as well as children's media. The researcher believes that it is very important to advocate and promote ECD programs and children's media. Identifying the essential components to a successful ECD program would help program designers and policy makers in incorporating them into their designs and ultimately achieving a desired goal in enhancing children's education.

## **1.8 Scope and Limitation of the research**

The study focuses on the program *Tsehai Loves Learning* and tries to see what the program and episodes try to do in facilitating children's holistic development. It also goes into investigating what problems and pitfalls the production faces if any under the existing policy landscape in Ethiopia regarding ECD.

The study however does not go into analyses of audience reception and reaction due to the constraint of time and other resources in dealing with the delicate age group of the audience involved.

# Chapter Two

## Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, some of the existing literature in the area of this study has been discussed. The theories and concepts are brought forth in the hope of providing background for the interpretation and analysis of data in later chapters.

### 2.1 Early Childhood Development: the concept in general

Early Childhood development (ECD) deals with the wellbeing of the child from a holistic perspective incorporating physical, emotional, social, as well as cognitive development. ECD programs encompass different learning processes that can help the child construct knowledge about their environment and their own self (UNESCO Policy Brief 2002).

There are a number of programs that cater to the field of early childhood. These programs go under various names and references although most are similar and have common elements unifying them. One such program goes under the reference of *Early Childhood Education* (ECE). This reference works well with those who regard early childhood from an educational point of view. This tradition emphasizes learning as a central phenomenon to the phase of early childhood (Ibid).

Another program of early childhood goes under the term *Early Childhood Care and Education* (ECCE). Here, the 'care' element is added in an attempt to emphasize that not only the mental but also the physical and emotional needs of children should be taken into consideration in programs designed for them (Ibid).

Yet another program is *Early Childhood Care* (ECC) which underlines the components of health care and/or social services available to children (Ibid).

The essence of these terms may be understood in different ways from one place to another, and in different social contexts. In some places, these programs are used to mean different, independent things, while in others they are regarded as being similar and are used interchangeably. Still in others, as in Ethiopia, Preschool Education is used as a generic term for all early childhood programs (UNESCO Policy Brief 2002).

At the heart of all these early childhood programs, including ECD is the wellbeing and proper development of the child and from this perspective, these concepts cannot be treated independently from each other. If the ultimate concern is to provide the child with a holistic development, then all the components of the above discussed concepts must come together to achieve that purpose. While it is obvious that the proper environment should be provided for the proper physical development of the child, it should also be remembered that this physical growth should be supported by a learning process appropriate to the child's mental growth. "Learning and growth cannot occur in sequence. They are integral parts of the process of nurturing a child's holistic development." (Ibid)

## **2.2 The Field of Early Childhood Development in Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, the field of ECD goes under the term Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The concept is defined by professionals in the field as "the developmental process of cognitive, physical, emotional and social aspects of children that starts at infancy and ending at about five, six, or seven years of age." (Study Report on ECCE 2006). The field is divided into two phases. Phase one deals with the period of infancy (three months-three years) where the main concern is to provide the child with care, safety and health services while phase two deals with what is called 'childhood' (four-six years) where the emphasis is on preschool education (Study Report on ECCE 2006: 11).

Although the government and other stakeholders in the area understand the importance of this field, there have not been any concrete efforts to expand it and the field is entirely left to NGOs and the private sector (Ibid).

But it is not to be forgotten that the Government still has the responsibility of taking initiatives. The Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program of the government states “the government plays the crucial role in policy development and standard setting. It develops the curriculum, provides supervision, sets standards for facilities and issues licenses for institutions. The government also promotes the sub-sector through appropriate policies in investments in pre-primary programs by the private sector, NGOs and the communities.” (Study Report on ECCE 2006: 7)

Furthermore, the government and stakeholders have a strong commitment to implement international and regional resolutions and declarations to improve ECCE such as the *Dakar Declaration on Education for All by the year 2015* which upholds the expansion and improvement of “comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” and also the expansion of “early childhood care and developmental activities, including family and community interventions...” (Study Report on ECCE 2006: 4)

The government has also accepted and ratified the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child* of November 20, 1995 (Study Report on ECCE 2006: 5) which reaffirms article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the report of the Third Committee). Similarly, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* of December 9, 1991 has also been adopted (Ibid).

Regarding the recognition of international declarations, *The Developmental Social Welfare Policy* of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the country states that “all efforts shall be made to implement all international and regional conventions and legal instruments concerning the rights of children, which Ethiopia has already acceded to...” (Ibid). The document also upholds that any attempt in promoting child welfare and development by appropriate bodies should be given support (Study Report on ECCE 2006: 13).

Regardless of these policy statements and the commitment to implement international declarations concerning ECCE and the rights of the child, the Ethiopian government falls short when it comes to actual implementation and enforcement of policy (Study Report on ECCE 2006: 13).

In light of the facts discussed above, this study takes ECD under the Ethiopian context with the main focus on preschool education. In accordance with this, ECD will hereafter be discussed from the point of view of education. Consequently, it is found relevant to discuss the different approaches taken in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The next section is an attempt at a discussion of these approaches and theories.

## **2.3 Recurrent Theories and Approaches in the Field of ECE**

### **2.3.1 Cognitive Theory**

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was the inventor of the “cognitive stages” of development. He believed that as children get older, they pass through different stages of cognitive “maturation” and these steps always come in the same order (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 17). One of the stages Piaget describes is the sensorimotor stage in which children learn through their senses, by interacting with their surrounding and by taking in experience through concrete representations (Mooney 2000: 64). The sensorimotor feature of learning positions television as being a strong tool of educating children since children can be presented with vivid sensory experiences through television.

As to the acquisition of knowledge, Piaget stressed that it happens “through action upon things and the relations which exist between them” (Lavatelli 1970: 43) and that children’s reasoning abilities grow as they interrelate with their surroundings and try to understand them (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 17). He also stressed the importance of “pretend playing” in the education process helping children taking a step towards “symbolic development” (Ibid).

### **2.3.2 Behaviorism and Learning Theory**

John B. Watson (1878-1958) was regarded as the “father of modern behaviorism”. At the heart of his philosophy was the belief that all behavior is learned and it changes through training (Gonzalez-Mena 2001:19). B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) supported this view. They both believed that ‘outward behavior’ is the most important component that should be studied because it can be measured and seen. This excludes anything else that cannot be seen or measured (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 21).

According to behaviorists, “all behavior is learned through the consequences of the individual’s actions: a child will repeat behavior that is reinforced and cease behavior that is not reinforced.” (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 21). This is to say that any encouragement, be it verbal or rewards in the form of objects, will lead to the retention or behaviors while discouragement has the opposite effect.

Another element that characterizes behaviorists is that they excluded the Piagetian theory of developing in stages (Ibid).

### **2.3.3 Social Learning Theory**

This is a branch of behaviorism which has its center in the belief that “modeling” and “imitation” are core for the development of the child (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 21). The theory states that in addition to “reinforcement” as a key factor that shapes the learning of the child as stated in behaviorism, children also learn by watching and choosing to imitate or not imitate others (Ibid).

### **2.3.4 Socio-cultural Theory**

This theory mainly takes into account the effect of culture and social context on the development of children (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 21). The Russian researcher Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) is the pioneer in this school of thought. He believed that social frameworks played a great role in the construction of meaning. At the heart of this philosophy is the belief that “the influences of other people on children, together with the events, places and the cultural context in which children

grow up are of prime importance to their development...” and that “the social relationships children engage in may cultivate development, or constrain and damage it.” (Bruce 2004: 65)

Like Piaget, Vygotsky believed in the cognitive stages of childhood and that knowledge was constructed rather than absorbed recognizing children as active learners instead of passive absorbers of content; they ‘construct’ meaning instead of merely taking it in (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 21).

These theories, and others, have made a large contribution to the field of Early Childhood Education. All have different approaches and philosophies and there is no right or wrong theory (Gonzalez-Mena 2001: 22). Since no one theory covers all aspects of development, scholars in the field find it wise to have an “eclectic approach” whereby one selects different relevant points from the different theories to apply for specific circumstances (Ibid). But being “too eclectic” might have its own problems. Bruce states:

*While there are different ways of looking at how children develop and learn, this does not mean that all perspectives are as good as each other. If we are too eclectic, we shall find ourselves using approaches that contradict each other. That leads to a thoroughly confused practice, with no inner logic to our view of children...The best way forward is to find converging evidence, which forms areas of solidarity between different theories... (Bruce 2004: 66)*

Keeping this in mind, the researcher of this study has chosen to use some of the elements of the theories of child education discussed above in an eclectic approach.

This study has two major components: the field of Early Childhood Education and the role television can play in the field. The parts so far have been dedicated to the discussion of ECE. The coming sections will deal with the role television can play in this field.

## **2.4 Television as an Educational Tool for Children**

Television is seen by many as being a great tool to educate children. This emanates from the reasoning that television is an appealing medium for children hence, they will voluntarily watch and learn in the process. Also, the way information is presented on television, combining visual and auditory signals, makes it appealing to children's levels of comprehension (Huston & Wright 1998: 10).

The benefits of educational television for children have been proven to be positive and long lasting. Many researches show that children that are exposed to early viewing of educational and informative television show better competence at school (UNESCO Policy Brief 2006). Huston & Wright suggest that this long lasting effect could be due to the fact that "early learning starts a cycle or cascade in which children enter school prepared, have initial success, gain confidence, and are perceived by teachers as being bright and competent." They believe that this contributes to successful learning at school confirming the philosophies of social learning theory that the more children are rewarded and their behavior reinforced, the more they develop that behavior (Huston & Wright 1998: 13).

As there are those who believe television is a positive tool in teaching children, there are many scholars that are convinced that the harm is greater than the good (Huston & Wright 1998:14). The most common criticisms are discussed below with corresponding counter criticisms.

### **2.4.1 Television's "passive" nature**

This criticism states that television engenders passivity in viewers. Passivity can be seen in two ways: physical and mental. Physical inactivity suggests that children are physically inactive while watching television which usually is an incorrect assumption since children's programs have numerous activities inside them like singing, clapping, and the like (Chen 1994:106). And even if they were inactive, inactivity is not seen as an obstacle to learning as "similar inactivity while reading a book does not connote absence of high-level intellectual activity. In fact, we usually assume that learning is promoted by sitting quietly and attending to a teacher, a book, or a written assignment." (Huston & Wright 1998:15). This statement stands in sharp contradiction with the Piagetian view of active learning and Vygotsky's constructionist view.

The suggestion of mental inactivity takes into account that children are seen not to interact with the content (Huston & Wright 1998:14). But many studies show that children are cognitively active and interact with content as they attempt to understand the content (Chen 1994:106).

#### **2.4.2 Shortened attention span**

This argument states that rapid transitions between scenes and shortness of segments on television make children have a reduced attention span (Chen 1994:108). This leads children to be “easily distractible” when they join schools and will expect school programs to be as short (Huston & Wright 1998:15). Huston and Wright argue that there is no evidence to support this criticism. In the contrary, there are studies showing that, if anything, television viewing improves attitude towards school environments (Ibid).

#### **2.4.3 Television suppresses imagination and creativity**

This criticism asserts that since television provides both visual and auditory cues, it leaves no space for children to train their imagination and go beyond the content provided in the program (Huston & Wright 1998:16). As a counter argument Huston and Wright state that “the content of television rather than the medium itself seems to account for some of these effects” (Ibid). Quoting a study by Valkenburg and Van der Voort (1994), Huston and Wright also state that it has been found that programs designed to foster imagination and creativity usually meet their goals (Ibid).

#### **2.4.4 Television for entertainment not education**

Television is primarily seen as a tool of entertainment rather than education. Because of this reason, children will not take learning seriously if it is on television. Huston and Wright quote Salomon (1983) in saying that “the strong association of television with entertainment is a result of the ways we as a society have chosen to use it, not of something inherent in the medium itself.” (Huston & Wright 1998:17)

This line of criticism also upholds that since children expect to be entertained in educational programs on television, they will also expect their teachers at school to sing and dance while they are teaching. But there is no research to support this and studies show that even children understand what to expect in various contexts (Chen 1994:112).

It is also important to keep in mind in considering this argument that when children watch television they don't strictly seek education (Lowery & De Fleur 1983:282). Lowery & De Fleur quoting Shramm et al. state that the learning that takes place from television is mostly "incidental" to mean 'learning that takes place when a viewer goes to television for entertainment and stores up certain items of information without seeking them.' They believe that children learned "while being entertained; however, the children usually did not seek out television strictly for informational purposes." (Lowery & De Fleur 1983:282-283) This can testify to the fact that unless education programs for children are at the same time entertaining, learning may not take place.

#### **2.4.5 Cumulative content**

Educational television programs cannot be structured in a way curriculums are i.e. in a sequential manner (Huston & Wright 1998:15). In schools, one can keep track of students' attendance of previous lessons while that is impossible on television programs. This means that television programs cannot be structured in sequence where succeeding episodes are built upon previous episodes. As a solution for this problem, Huston and Wright suggest presenting content "at varying levels of difficulty in hopes that a particular viewer will find at least some of it comprehensible and appropriate." (Huston & Wright 1998:16)

Overall, the positive aspect of television tips the negative based on the evidence and study outcomes available. The range and magnitude of its benefits is undeniable. Huston and Wright have put it this way:

*Television can teach academic and social skills; it can help viewers to understand social issues, feelings, and perspectives; it can bring about understanding of ethnic diversity and reduce stereotyped attitudes, to name only a few domains. The visual character of television is a plus for most kinds of learning. It helps to engage children, and it offers them a mode of representation that complements and clarifies messages that are carried by language as well. Children can learn factual and conceptual information from television, and they can generalize what they learn. By means of television, children can travel in time and space to the "not here" and the "not now." Variations in pace and segment length can be carefully crafted to hold children's interest without leading to problems in attention span. Television does not necessarily displace more valuable activities; educational programming can be "part of a balanced breakfast," operating in concert with many other beneficial experiences. The effects of television on many aspects of learning are more a function of program structure and content than of the medium itself (Huston & Wright 1998:19).*

## **2.5 What is Educational Television?**

In talking about educational television for children, it becomes important to define what is to be considered an educational program because most often than not, the programs that are considered educational and informative by broadcasters do not match with what scholars believe are educational (Huston & Wright 1998:11).

Through the years, there have been attempts at finding a definition and setting criteria for the content of children television in general. Some of those attempts are discussed below.

### **2.5.1 The Bratislava Resolution**

*The Bratislava Resolution* for children's media was adopted in November 1994 in Bratislava, Slovakia on a gathering of representatives from 30 countries all over the world with an interest in production for and by children.

In the introduction to the resolution it is stated that all of us live in a “changing and dynamic” world where every day new heights are reached in “knowledge and achievement”. It goes on to state that “children who are our hope for the future, have the right to benefit from these general developments” (Felitzen & Carlsson 1999:407).

Some of the resolutions reached at are stated below (Ibid).

- *Good quality films and television programs for children can and must carry positive fundamental human values. These will help and support the development of a personal conscience in young people, and add new dimensions to their basic social behavior and their knowledge of the world.*
- *Good quality films and television programs for children can and must encourage the process of creative thinking, of deciding and of acting in full liberty in order that children can build their own personalities and their future.*
- *Good quality films and television programs for children can and must reveal and stress the basic values of each people and of each nation, according to their traditions, the social and cultural backgrounds upon which they are founded, and the national identity of each country. At the same time, these nations must share these values with others in a general harvest of human spirituality.*

### **2.5.2 The Children’s Television Charter**

*The Children’s Television Charter* was adopted at the first World Summit on Television and Children in Melbourne, Australia in March 1995. It was revised and readopted in Munich in May 1995. The following are some of the articles that focus on content of production for children (Felitzen & Carlsson 1999:407).

- *Children should have programs of high quality which are made specifically for them, and which do not exploit them. These programs, in addition to entertaining, should allow children to develop physically, mentally and socially to their fullest potential. (Article 1)*
- *Children's programs should promote an awareness and appreciation of other cultures in parallel with the child's own cultural background. (Article 3)*

### **2.5.3 Africa Charter on Children Broadcasting**

This charter was adopted on the first All Africa Summit on Children's Broadcasting which was held in Accra, Ghana in October 1997. It mainly sanctioned *The Children's Television Charter* of May 1995. But it came up with some additional points. Among which, one that deals with the content of children's educational media is Article one of the charter. It states (Felitzen & Carlsson 1999:413):

*Children's programs should create opportunities for learning and empowerment to promote and support the child's right to education and development. Children's programs should promote an awareness and appreciation of other cultures in parallel with the child's own cultural background. To facilitate this there should be ongoing into the child audience, including the child's needs and wants.*

Many of these resolutions go hand in hand with general standards of education for children. Many educational programs targeting children are designed to create socially accepted behaviors that involve the creation of knowledge and awareness into what is socially desirable and not. These behaviors may include concepts of "cooperation, sharing, helping, nonviolent conflict resolution" and the like (Chen 1994:14).

These educational goals are listed in the Goals 2000 document. The document states that the goals of education should contain (Chen 1994:12).

*...physical well-being (for example, health, nutrition), motor skills, social skills (for example, cooperation, conflict resolution, knowledge about different cultures), emotional development (for example, understanding feelings), creativity, language and literacy, positive attitudes about learning, critical thinking, problem solving, quantitative skills, cognitive skills (for example, inference, concept formation), and knowledge about theatre, history, social science, and natural science.*

These declarations and resolutions may serve as a basis for children's educational programs.

## **2.6 The Role of the Parent/Guardian in the Education of the Child**

According to Bruce, the role of adults in the child's learning process should be in accordance with the child's 'biological developments' along with:

- *Supporting the child's interest*
- *Extending the child's interests into deeper, wider and consolidated learning, with a small amount of new learning*
- *Using this to plan what that child needs to involve them in participation in their culture and society and the wider world (Bruce 2004:30).*

Parents can involve in the education of the child only if they are seen as "partners" instead of "clients" Curtis quoting Wolfendale (1983) states (Curtis 1998:136). She further points out that, traditionally, parents have been regarded as "clients" and not "partners". According to Curtis, the client concept includes the thoughts that:

1. *Parents are dependent upon expert's opinions (paid professionals, books, official sources of information)*
2. *Parents are passive in the receipt of services*

3. *Parents are apparently in need of redirection*
4. *Parents are peripheral to decision making*
5. *Parents are perceived as 'inadequate, deficient'*

On the other hand, the partner concept includes these characters:

1. *Parents are active and central in decision making and its implementation*
2. *Parents are perceived as having equal strength and equivalent expertise*
3. *Parents are able to contribute to, as well as receive, services (reciprocity)*
4. *Parents share responsibility, thus they and professionals are mutually accountable.*

Curtis goes on to say that this view of partnership "is about professionals respecting the knowledge and understanding that parents have of their children and about parents acknowledging that staff know about children and their development. Children can only benefit when each partner talks and listens to the other." (Curtis 1998:136-137)

The integration between parents and educators is a crucial concept in the development of the child. If parents and educators do not share similar values in the outcome and process of education for the child, the development process of the child will ultimately suffer (*The Education and Training Policy*, 1994).

# Chapter Three

## Research Methodology

Discussion of methods is necessary at least for two reasons. One reason could be to provide readers with the essential information of the procedures of the research so that they can better understand the results of the study. Another reason is to supply details of the process of data collection to the researcher that wants to reproduce the study (Stempel & Westley 1989:390).

In this chapter, some research literature has been revised in order to come up with the appropriate methods to answer the research questions stated in chapter one. The specific context of the study as well as the issues that are studied should be the basic factors in deciding on the methods of data gathering (Maxwell 2005:79). Taking this fact into consideration, the qualitative research design and in particular, the interview and document analysis methods have been selected for the purpose of this study. The coming sections will discuss why these methods have been selected and how they can best be used in answering the paramount questions of this research.

### 3. 1 The Qualitative Method

The qualitative method includes different tools of data gathering among which are: participant observation, interviewing, document analysis, and ethnographic study (Jensen & Jankowski 1991). But according to Maxwell, the qualitative data is not strictly dependent on the outcomes of “specified ‘methods’”. This is to say that the researcher serves as the research “instrument” in a qualitative study, and informal data gathered through observation and simply “‘hanging out’, casual conversations, and incidental observations” can be used as input towards the final research outcome (Maxwell 2005:79). This aspect of qualitative data is especially useful in a study involving the interview since it provides contextual information and can serve as a support for information gleaned through interviewing (Ibid).

And according to Van Maanen, the qualitative data are attractive for the reasons that they are “rich, full, earthy, holistic, “real”; their face validity seems unimpeachable; they preserve chronological flow where that is important, and suffer minimally from retrospective distortion; and they, in principle, offer a far more precise way to assess causality...” (Van Maanen 1983:117)

The primary objective of this study being to reveal the conditions under which ECD television programs are doing in the existing broadcasting and education policies in Ethiopia, the qualitative method is seen as suitable because the data to be collected entails it. In order to fulfill the objectives of the study and answer the research questions, different policies and regulations need to be analyzed. In addition to this, key informants in the concern areas of the study have to be interviewed for the purpose of clarification of details and to get personal perspectives on the overall situation.

While it could be possible to get similar data through other methods, the qualitative method and especially the interview and document analysis tools of data gathering, the researcher believes, lend the study more depth and context.

### **3.1.1 The Interview**

According to Jensen & Jankowski, the interview has a number of advantages. One is that it can cover a wide range of outlooks on a given subject. This could be done either by interviewing different informants in order to get diversified opinions or by preparing interview questions that range over a wide area of subjects. Also interview information can be useful as “heuristic devices”; leading to new perspectives and generating questions for later inquiries (Jensen & Jankowski 1991:101).

Another benefit of the interview is that it leaves the researcher space to be flexible and expand on the area of inquiry and to follow and use already gleaned information as a basis to change the direction of the investigation (Ibid).

Thomas (2003) states that there are four types of interview techniques: the loose, tight, the converging question approach, and the response-guided approach.

The loose approach is open-ended and flexible while the tight approach is rigid and limited. The converging question approach is the combination of the loose and tight. It combines the two approaches by asking broad and open-ended questions first in order to gauge the primary area of concern in the respondent's mind regarding the issue under discussion, and then going to the more pointed questions to get more focused answers.

The response-guided approach on the other hand, does not have a structured way of inquiry; it begins with a prepared question, and then creates follow-up questions that are based on answers given to preceding questions.

Thomas' response guided approach is the equivalent of Grix' (2004) semi-structured or in-depth interview technique which is flexible enough to follow unexpected lines of inquiry.

In this study, two of the approaches described above have been employed as methods of interviewing the selected respondents: the converging question approach and the in-depth or the response guided approach.

The converging question approach has been used to interview an informant in the Ethiopian Television. This approach is selected because of its structure; the open-ended, broad questions at the beginning can create a comfortable environment and the later pointed questions can come without breaching this state of comfort. This approach was deemed appropriate by the researcher after a preliminary assessment revealed that the informant might be unwilling to give out information needed for the study.

The in-depth or the response guided approach has been used to interview the second informant in the Ethiopian Television and the informant from Whiz Kids to gain in-depth information about the situations under which they operate.

The researcher has taken notes in the process and used recorder tapes to record the interviews so that it can serve as a documentation of the information gained.

### **3.1.2 Document Analysis**

Another method of data gathering used in this study is document analysis. According to Ritchie & Lewis (2005) document analysis involves the revision and examination of relevant documents.

The purpose of analyzing documents could be to uncover underlying meaning to issues being covered as well as to understand the full content of the documents in relation to the subject of the study. Most importantly, documents reveal "a person's or organization's viewpoint or policy" (Grix 2004:131).

In this study the documents analyzed include:

- a. The Education and Training Policy of the transitional government of Ethiopia.
- b. The Ethiopian Television Editorial Policy (special emphasis on broadcasting for children)
- c. Whiz Kids objectives and visions document

The first two documents are analyzed in the hope of revealing what the government's and Ethiopian Television's view point is concerning the subject of the study. The third document is analyzed in order to understand how much the objectives and visions of Whiz Kids, and in particular *Tsehai Loves Learning*, coincide with the education objectives and goals set by the government and also to find out if *Tsehai Loves Learning* can be regarded as complementary to the government's policy stand. By doing this, the researcher hopes to reveal whether or not ECD television programs such as *Tsehai Loves Learning* can be used as substitute or supplement to the formal schooling system.

## **3.2 Sampling**

In this study, purposive sampling is employed to identify the subject to be studied. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method (Buddenbaum & Novak 2001:74) and it can come in handy when the researcher has a specific reason to select the subject of the study.

Buddenbaum & Novak state that purposive sampling is a technique of selection used when a researcher has some special reason for choosing the subjects. They also mention that the goal of purposive sampling is to choose subjects who can be expected to provide useful information (Ibid).

In the case of this study, it was not difficult to identify the subject of the study as there is no other organization that focuses on delivering an ECD program by using television as a medium.

### **3.3 Data Analysis Procedures**

According to Maxwell (2005), the primary way of categorizing data in qualitative research is coding. In this research too, coding is used in order to break down data into analyzable chunks.

Maxwell quoting Strauss states that the goal of coding data in qualitative research is not as such to count and establish pattern of data but to ‘fracture’ it into categories that “facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts.” (Maxwell 2005:98). Maxwell goes on to state that data could also be categorized by organizing it into similar themes and issues.

Maxwell also comes up with three general categories of data. One is the organizational category in which anticipated broad areas of issues will be identified before gathering data. Another category is the substantive category which “stay close to the data categorized, and don’t inherently imply a more abstract theory.”(Ibid). According to Maxwell, the substantive technique is descriptive in nature and takes into consideration participants’ “concepts and beliefs” (Ibid). Maxwell’s third category is the theoretical category which places the coded data into a “more general or abstract framework” (Maxwell 2005:97) and usually represents the researcher’s instead of participants’ concepts.

In this study, the data is categorized into distinct areas that have emerged in the process of analyzing documents and conducting interviews. These issues will be discussed in light of each other by presenting the different viewpoints provided by respondents. The categories can fall under Maxwell’s substantive category in that they stay close to the collected data and focus on the participants’ rather than the researcher’s concepts and views.

## Chapter Four

### Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents analysis of data in view of the literature discussed in chapter two of this study. It also discusses findings of the analysis and the interpretation of the researcher. The chapter is divided into three major categories. The first section deals with policy issues while the second one deals with the editorial policy and decisions of the Ethiopian Television and the reflection of those decisions on programs for children. The last section deals with *Tsehai Loves Learning* and the issues involved in the production and distribution of the program.

#### 4.1 The government's policy on education

In this section, policy issues pertaining to ECD in Ethiopia are discussed. These policy issues are limited to the *Education and Training Policy* of the government and the syllabus issued accordingly.

In Ethiopia, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is divided into two phases. Phase one deals with infants between the ages of three months and three years. The main area of focus of this phase is to provide health care for the child. Phase two is concerned with providing education for children between the ages of four and six. Phase two corresponds with the focus area of this study. Accordingly, the analysis centers upon the educational aspect of ECD. To this end, it will be imperative to examine what the existing education policy details about this phase and also what provisions, if any, are made to execute the policy.

Accordingly, the discussion of policy in this section is limited to the two interrelated documents, i.e. *The Education and Training Policy* and the *Kindergarten Syllabus*.

#### 4.1.1 The Education and Training Policy

The 1994 Education and Training Policy of the transitional government of Ethiopia is a new and improved version that was issued to remedy the shortcomings of the previous policy.

The previous policy was discarded for various reasons among which are lack of quality and relevance, limited access and undemocratic content (*The Education and Training Policy and its implementation* 2002).

The 1994 Education and Training Policy describes issues ranging from the broad contextual objectives of education, to detailed discussions of what each level of education from kindergarten to higher education should be able to achieve. Other issues such as training of teachers and budgeting are also explained.

The major goal of the *Education and Training Policy* is the “cultivation of citizens with an all-round education capable of playing conscious and active role in the economic, social, and political life of the country at various levels.” (*The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002:15). In addition to this, it also strives to produce “citizens endowed with humane outlook, countrywide responsibility and democratic values... [so that they can] participate fruitfully in the development and the utilization of resources and the environment at large.” (*The Education and Training Policy* 1994: 6)

Apart from these universal goals of education, the policy also states a number of broad objectives. Some of these are (*The Education and Training Policy* 1994:7-8):

- a. *Develop the physical and mental potential and the problem solving capacity of individuals by expanding education...*
- b. *Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely...by raising the private and social benefits of education.*
- c. *Bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline.*

- d. *Bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society.*
- e. *Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs.*

These objectives are meant to apply for every level of education from preschool to higher levels.

The objectives mentioned above overlap with universal standards of education such as those discussed in chapter two of this thesis. For instance; the *Goals 2000* document details that the objectives of education should contain the development of critical thinking, problem solving abilities, conflict resolution skills, creativity, cognitive skills and appreciation for education among others (Chen 1994:12).

The objectives also correspond with international charters and resolutions on children's television such as the *Bratislava resolution* and the *Children's Television Charter* discussed in chapter two of this thesis. Overall, what these resolutions state and hold as a goal is to help children develop critical thinking and creativity, respect for nature and others, and a better knowledge of the world in general.

The *Education and Training Policy* recognizes that preschool education serves as a foundation for formal education (*The Education and Training Policy* 1994:14). Thus, the process of achieving these goals must start at that level of the education system.

In the division of the levels of education in the policy, kindergarten or otherwise referred to as preschool, is the first stage. It is stated that this stage is to focus on the "all round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling." (Ibid) The concept of an all rounded development incorporates the well-being of the child from the perspective of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development (UNESCO Policy Brief 2002). This is the holistic perspective of ECD constituting both the physical and mental growth of the child.

According to the *Education and Training Policy and its Implementation*, a document prepared to explain the *Education and Training Policy*, preschool education should provide “fun-like” education that would make it easier for children “to express their feelings, to appreciate beauty, and to learn to distinguish and form letters and numbers.” (*Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002:76) This approach of educating children corresponds with Piaget’s Cognitive Theory that states children learn from playful interaction with things that surround them (Lavatelli 1970:43).

The policy also states that the process of education should be student-centered. The student-centered approach is described in the *Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* as involving exercises, student-teacher interaction, and encouraging inquisitiveness of individuals (*Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002: 29).

All this being in accordance with universal and international standards of education, as the *Education and Training Policy* strives to be, the problem comes when it is time to understand the full extent of the importance of preschool education. In the policy, preschool is seen as being elective; a child does not have to go through preschool or kindergarten education to enroll in primary schools. It is stated in the policy that while the benefits of preschool education are well recognized, “it cannot equally be asserted that it [preschool education] should be mandatory.” (*The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002:77)

Although this study cannot fully assert that preschool should be made mandatory, the existing situation dictates it. The policy states that one major problem in the Ethiopian education system is the number of dropouts every year. As many studies show, Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays an essential role in decreasing the probability of later dropping out. Failures in formal schooling are usually attributed to deficiencies during the early years (Lavatelli 1970:18). And if the policy is striving to reduce the number of dropouts each year, one route to take could be to focus on ECE.

Also, ECE is seen to increase readiness and a positive outlook towards formal education (Huston & Wright 1998). And throughout the *Education and Training Policy*, this readiness and positive

outlook towards education is discussed as a significant issue. This fact goes to demonstrate that ECE should be considered as a serious way out to the problems the education system is facing.

One major justification provided in *The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* for the slack focus on preschool education is that preschool education needs high investment and, taking into consideration “Ethiopia’s economic capacity, the opening of kindergartens as involving massive expenditure cannot be a top priority, as regular universal primary education has not yet been achieved.” (*Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002:77) The document further explains that why setting up kindergartens is relatively more expensive is because children need a safe environment where they can play which entails playgrounds and toys and other play instruments, where they can sleep when tired, where they can eat when they are hungry, etc (Ibid).

It is true if all these factors are considered that the cost of establishing a preschool facility could be immense. Nevertheless, it should be considered that the only way of providing preschool education is not through kindergartens and other formal school systems. The same content that is given through a school system for children, can be transmitted via other means such as the media. The media, especially television, is seen as an effective tool of educating children (Huston & Wright 1998) and if used as an alternative, may avoid the complication of setting up kindergarten infrastructure and could be cost effective.

This point is even more relevant if seen in relation to the duties and responsibilities of the government regarding ECE. It is stated in *The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* that because it is expensive, the area of ECE is left to private investors, religious organizations and for parents “who can afford to pay the fees” and the involvement of the government is limited to training professionals, developing the preschool curriculum and supporting initiatives of individuals that desire to work on ECE (*Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002:77).

This demonstrates that since the government is not directly involved in preschool education, if the focus is spread between formal school structure and employing television for the same purpose, the cost would be significantly less for the government. This is so because the content

will be provided by those who are directly concerned with the area of ECE such as NGOs, religious organizations and other concerned individuals. The government merely supports these initiatives.

Apart from the economic aspect of ECE, another reason mentioned in *The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* for not focusing on it is that it is believed the same sort of education that children acquire from preschool settings can be given to them by parents and guardians. Be it as it may that the family has a duty of raising the child as a happy and productive citizen, this line of reasoning presupposes a lot of issues such as the literacy of parents and/or guardians. The *Education and Training Policy* itself states that basic education is yet another aspiration in the strategy of spreading literacy in Ethiopia and that approximately 80% of the population is still illiterate. Under this situation, to fully assert that children will get the preschool education they need solely from parents and the family in general seems to be precarious.

This being the fact, the influence of parents/ guardians and the home environment cannot be denied and is given a wide coverage in ECE studies. Weinberger (1996) quoted in Curtis states that parents can involve in promoting their children's literacy in many ways. One way could be by making available reading materials such as magazines, story books, etc. to their children intentionally or unintentionally, telling them stories and providing them with games such as jigsaw puzzles that can stimulate their minds. Another way could be for parents to "act as model for literacy". If parents involve themselves in different literacy activities such as reading and writing in the home, children will model their behavior. This is an echo of the Behaviorism Theory that has its core in learning by imitation (Curtis 1998:143).

But seeing these three realms: the school environment for preschool, the home environment and television as disparate elements instead of complementary may be wrong. Television may be seen as providing supplementary material to the school system building on what children learn at school. Similarly, parents may support the education children get at school by "supporting the child's interests" and "extending the child's interests into deeper, wider and consolidated learning, with a small amount of new learning" (Bruce 2004:30).

All in all, the preschool education is not seen as a priority or given the importance it deserves in the *Education and Training Policy*. In the whole 33 pages of policy description, it is given just one line. It is only explained in *The Education and Training Policy and its implementation* that was issued 9 years later.

Also, the focus in the policy is formal education given in school settings; other routes or alternatives are not exploited. With the lack of resources in the country, alternatives such as television could play an essential role.

#### **4.1.2 The Kindergarten Syllabus**

Discussing the kindergarten syllabus is important in this study because it is the only document in Ethiopia elaborately describing how the process of education should be handled during early childhood. Also, it could serve as a basis in developing content for media for ECD programs such as *Tsehai Loves Learning*.

The syllabus begins by stating that the future of children is determined at the critical age of early childhood during which the values of critical thinking, creativity, understanding, persistence and diligence are to be instilled in the mind of the child (*The Kindergarten Syllabus* 1998). This statement has a considerable contradiction with the view of preschool education stated in the *Education and Training Policy* that preschool education should not be mandatory. Although the kindergarten syllabus is an implementation tool to the policy, it is nevertheless designed with the consideration that ECE is determinant to the child's proper development.

The introduction to the syllabus also stresses that the aim of the syllabus is to bring about holistic development of the child. As discussed so far, holistic development mainly involves the cognitive and physical as well as social and emotional growth of the child (UNESCO Policy Brief 2002). To this end, the syllabus provides five subject matters: Amharic, English, Mathematics, Natural Science, and Physical Education and Aesthetics. Physical Education and Aesthetics are put together because they are thought to be similar in nature in that they encourage playfulness.

Apart from the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the main objectives of the syllabus are for children to learn other social skills such as taking turns in speaking, developing memory, to develop skills of communication, and build confidence of self expression. In addition, children will learn about the environment as well as about themselves, their bodies and nature in general by studying Natural Science, and they will develop a healthy and strong physique and appreciate creativity and expression by taking Physical Education and Aesthetics.

In delivering these subject matters, it is stressed that play should be an integral element. What is meant by play in this case is not concretely defined but it is implied through the exercises given accompanying each subject matter that play should be directed at aiding learning rather than purposeless play (*The Kindergarten Syllabus* 1998). This implies that play should be directed in some way. But as studies show, in most instances, play is free-flowing and does not conform to “external rules, outcomes, purposes or directions” (Bruce 2004:149). Bruce also states that whether play is initiated by an adult or a child, adults should be aware that “every player has his or her personal play agenda (which he/she may be unaware of) and to respect this by not insisting that the adult agenda should dominate the play.” (Ibid)

However, the importance of play in the education of children is stressed by many educators. Froebel thought that (Bruce 2004:132),

*... play is the way children integrate and bring together what they know, understand and feel into a whole. Play, he believed, shows children applying what they can do and understand at the highest levels of which they are capable. Play makes it possible for very young children to think flexibly, to adapt what they know, try out different possibilities and reach abstract levels of functioning that is appropriate.*

Vygotsky too recognized the importance of play as being ‘a leading factor in development’ and that it is ‘the highest level of preschool development. The child moves forward essentially through play activity.’ (Bruce 2004:142)

*The kindergarten Syllabus* recognizes this and states that play is a means of discovery by which children learn about themselves and others. It is also a way in which they develop their societal, physical and psychological understanding. According to the syllabus, play also speeds up the learning process because children understand concepts and discussions more when they are presented to them through appealing methods.

Some of these methods are stated in the syllabus' description of subject material. Among these are songs, pictures, video, puzzles, stories etc. It is also stated that learning can be intensified through creating concrete and relatable situations. Bruce, in support of this notion states, "...it is helpful to a child's learning to emphasize learning through direct experiences (the senses and movement) and encouraging a love of narrative and story through books..." (Bruce 2004:29).

Another issue capitalized in the syllabus is how to evaluate the outcome of children's learning. It is stated that when children make mistakes or do not get the objectives of an activity correctly, telling them they are wrong is not a very good way of correcting the situation. The best way, according to the syllabus, is to help them understand and correct their mistakes by guiding them through a process of showing. Lavatelli points out "when the child makes a mistake, the teacher does not tell him he is wrong or tell him how to correct what he has done. As Piaget has pointed out, telling is not teaching and is not convincing. The child must transform the data, by revising his action... or by some other logical means." (Lavatelli 1970:46-47)

*The Educational Reform Act* calls for "a balanced and broadly based curriculum" which "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school", "prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life" and engenders "trust, motivation, interest, enjoyment and physical and social skills" in them (Curtis 1998:17-19). All in all, the *Kindergarten Syllabus* seems to correspond with these standards and requirements of an early childhood curriculum.

Its major shortcoming, however, lies in the fact that it focuses more on the cognitive development of the child and learning and understanding subject matters instead of building other skills of the child that are important at the early stages of development. *The Hadow Report on the Primary School* (1931) states that "the curriculum [should] be thought of in terms of

activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored. Its aim should be to develop in a child the fundamental human powers and to awaken him to the fundamental interests of civilized life so far as these powers and interests lie within the compass of childhood.” (Curtis 1998:19)

The syllabus also falls short in mentioning relevant source materials and detailing enough play strategies, to which it admits to. Nevertheless, it is still useful in serving as a basis of developing content for early childhood programs as it is the only document on ECE prepared with the local context in mind. The syllabus can serve as a stepping stone for expansion for programs that are media based or otherwise.

## **4.2 The Ethiopian Television: the editorial policy and children’s programming**

This section discusses the editorial policy of the Ethiopian Television (ETV) pertaining to children’s programming. ETV is the only television station in Ethiopia and thus, any content intended for television is destined to go to ETV. Hence, at this point in the study, it is important to discuss the editorial policy and actual practices in ETV to lay a basis on which understanding of later sections will be built.

Accordingly, the discussion in this section will deal with the editorial policy of ETV with special emphasis on children's programming and what is being done to implement the rules and regulations stated therein. Results of interviews conducted with the Amharic section director and the ETV children’s program producer will be incorporated to support the analysis of documentary data.

### **4.2.1 The Editorial Policy**

The editorial policy is the working document of ETV which serves as a guideline based on which programs are shaped, employees are governed, and the administration operates (*The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy* 1997). It is compiled in

accordance with government proclamations concerning broadcasting services such as proclamation number 114/87 which states that the Ethiopian Television Agency has the aims of,

- *Collecting and disseminating useful information in the form of news and other programs in different languages*
- *Make known government policies, procedures and laws to the public*
- *Receiving public opinion and producing different programs that help public understanding of democratic rights*
- *Transmitting educational and entertainment programs that enhance citizens' knowledge (<http://www.erta.gov.et/etvprofile/aboutus.htm>)*

The ETV editorial policy incorporates some of these aims stated in the proclamation indicating that the responsibilities of a state owned media such as ETV should be:

- *To explain and make clear to the public proclamations, laws and regulations issued by the government*
- *Serve as a forum of discussion between government and the public*
- *To make sure that all political parties get fair and impartial coverage (The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy 1997:24)*

It also states that the editorial responsibility of ETV should be, among others; to serve the public by standing for the public interest and in the interest of the public, and also spread democratic values by teaching human and societal rights and responsibilities, moral values, and advocating unity (*The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy 1997:20*).

The most recent broadcast proclamation, the *Broadcasting Service Proclamation No. 533/2007*, states that “broadcasting service plays a significant role in the political, economic and social development of the country by providing information, education and entertainment programs to the public”. This is acknowledged in the ETV editorial policy as the major role of a public broadcaster.

According to Ato Seyoum Zeleke, the director of the Amharic section, the educational role that television can play is very well acknowledged in the production of programs and in the priority they are given. He said that since the editorial policy dictates that as a public broadcaster ETV should have education as one major aim; each production section in ETV tries to promote those programs that are considered educational.

The responsibilities of the Amharic section, as stated in the ETV editorial policy, are to cater for a wide range of audience by preparing programs that are relevant, educative and of interest to the public (*The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy 1997:71*). The Amharic section is also responsible for the only children's program in ETV. According to Ato Seyoum, this program is considered to be educative and entertaining to children.

The ETV editorial policy states that programs designed for children should be aimed at a holistic maturation of children, support their formal education, and instill moral values desirable in the society they live in. It also states that the way to achieve this is by appealing to the senses of children by making the programs fun and interesting. (*The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy 1997:82*) This aligns with the discussion so far in this study of how education should be delivered to children and what the best way of doing this should be in order to reach the goals of education.

Concerning this, Ato Seyoum said that the children's program provides just that by giving children information that is valuable to them in their day to day activities designed in a way they can understand.

The editorial policy also states that children's programs should be about them, prepared in a language they understand, and dealing with the country and culture they live in (Ibid). The ETV children's program proposes to do that, according to Ato Seyoum.

One problem could be that children have no alternative other than this one program. *Tsehai Loves Learning* offered that alternative but it was discontinued after transmitting for one year and four months. The reason for this, according to Ato Seyoum, is that the ETV authority is in the process of formulating a new regulation by which all outsourced programs, such as *Tsehai Loves Learning*, will participate in an auction to buy a particular airtime and space for their programs. This system will, according to Ato Seyoum, promote transparency of the working process of ETV as well as avoid partiality based on benefits.

Outsourced programs are those programs that are provided by independent content providers. And concerning these programs, the ETV editorial policy states that to get into a partnership with ETV, outsourced programs should first provide a detailed project proposal that aligns with the editorial policy of ETV. This proposal will be reviewed by the deputy manager of ETV, all section managers and production managers before it is accepted and a contract signed. Once the proposal is accepted, a contract that details the start and termination of the program, as well as what the duties and responsibilities of the programs should be, will be drawn and signed. The ETV has full editorial control and previews every episode of programs to see whether they are proceeding in accordance with the values expressed in the editorial policy and the objectives they set. If not, the ETV has the right to terminate programs (*The Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency: the Ethiopian television editorial policy* 1997:80).

According to Ato Seyoum, this process by itself was found inadequate because it was not transparent enough and left space for partiality. Hence, this new auction regulation was formulated. The problem is, this regulation has not been functional yet and programs like *Tsehai Loves Learning* have no choice but to wait until that time.

**Comment:** All in all, alternative children's programs are at a disadvantage since the system is difficult to operate under. Right now, all programs that are outsourced are suspended and have no other way of reaching their respective publics. *Tsehai Loves Learning* is one such program that is barely surviving under this situation.

#### **4.2.2 The ETV children's program as seen through the eyes of the producer**

It is useful to examine the current conditions of the ETV children's program to gain insight into the outlook of ETV's administration towards programs for children. The previous sub section has shown what the editorial policy states about programming for children. This sub section tries to compare what is stated on paper with the actual practice in ETV.

The ETV children's program is composed of news for children, music, films, and a segment where letters from children are read. This is called a magazine format which means that the program has a variety of sections or segments with different contents (*The Amharic Section: its progress and current situation*1998). The target audience is not officially set but the producer, W/ro Netsanet Balcha, guesses that children between the ages of 3-15 could be ruled in. This could be a problem in content design since the content has to be made in a way that accommodates the interests of this large age group. According to W/ro Netsanet, the resources as well as the time given for the program do not allow for this to happen.

The program airs on Saturday and Sunday mornings starting from 8:30 a.m. W/ro Netsanet said that the time fixed for the program is from 8:30 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. on Saturdays and from 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. on Sundays. But in practice, it could be transmitted anytime between 8:30 to 12 a.m. This is because when there are programs that are considered to be more important by section editors, the children's program will be pushed up or down in the schedule. According to W/ro Netsanet, this poses a great problem as children are impatient by nature and they would not sit and wait for the program. "If it does not start at its usual time, they'll just turn to the next interesting thing and eventually stop following the program altogether", she said.

W/ro Netsanet said that the only good thing about this program is that it exists at all. But she mentioned a number of problems apart from the already mentioned ones. These problems are discussed below.

#### *4.2.2.1 Budgeting*

The program is allocated minimal budget and it is usually very difficult to go out and gather content for programs since transportation allowance is not available. Also, purchasing material such as DVDs and movie tapes that can be used in the program is sometimes impossible. And these things have to be bought and transmitted because there is no budget to produce local entertainment productions such as short plays and puppet shows that could be appealing to children. “I have so many times paid out of my own pocket to obtain these materials for the program but after a while, you stop bothering because nobody cares anyway”, W/ro Netsanet said. “All I think about is filling the space the program is given”.

#### *4.2.2.2 Human Resource*

According to W/ro Netsanet, the children’s program is where new and inexperienced members of the staff are sent to so that they can get the hang of the system until they can be transferred to other programs. “The children’s program is where experienced and trained people should work at. But here, it is seen as a place where newcomers are tried at. It doesn’t matter if they make a mess; this is the children’s program after all”, W/ro Netsanet said.

She also said that she herself is not trained and has no formal knowledge of what children want or how to design programs for them. “The only strong score I have is 15 years of experience in the field. I have no support of the theories or the training in the field of broadcasting for children” she said.

#### *4.2.2.3 Lack of research*

W/ro Netsanet said that there has been no research done to base this program on. According to her, this is why the program does not have a known audience base. “If a program is thought to cater to children of 3-15 years, then there must be a problem because children of 3 cannot understand the part that appeals for children of 15, and similarly children of 15 will find the part that appeals to the 3 year olds too elementary” she said.

Lack of research is also the reason why children don't find the episodes interesting, according to W/ro Netsanet. No research has been done in order to find out what children need and what the best way is to deliver that information. "We receive a lot of letters from children and parents telling us that the programs are not interesting and that we should change our approach in some way, but we don't have the resource or the training to conduct research and improve our programs" she said. The children's program is supposed to be an educative and entertaining program but there are no researched standards to base it upon.

#### *4.2.2.4 Transmission time*

As mentioned earlier, the children's program is transmitted on Saturdays and Sundays starting from 8:30 a.m. W/ro Netsanet said that this is too early for children as they're not up and alert at that hour of the morning. "The editorial policy states that children's programs should be transmitted at times where children are awake and alert, but this is completely contrary to that statement" she said.

**Comment:** These are the major issues mentioned as problems by W/ro Netsanet. The statements made by her testify to the possibility that the ETV pays the least bit of attention to children's programs unlike what is put into its editorial policy.

According to W/ro Netsanet, these problems present a great deal of difficulty for the children's program and working under this condition is becoming virtually impossible.

### **4.3 *Tsehai Loves Learning*: using television as an alternative medium for education**

*Tsehai Loves Learning* is a production for children and has as its target audience children between the ages of 3 and 6. It is produced by Whiz kids Workshop plc. which was established in 2005 as children's educational multi-media production company. The program is thought to reach approximately 5 million (12.5%) Ethiopian children.

This section of the analysis deals with *Tsehai Loves Learning*; what the objectives and mission of the production are and how they are being implemented, what problems it is facing and how these problems are dealt with, and what its overall situation is at present.

These issues will be discussed based on the Whiz Kids objectives and mission statement document and interview data gathered from the co-founder of Whiz Kids and producer of the show.

#### **4.3.1 *Tsehai Loves Learning*: description**

According to Whiz Kids co-founder W/ro Bruktawit Tigabu, they came up with the idea of an ECE television production based on an extensive need assessment survey. They looked into what was the biggest need when it came to educating children. They discovered children between the ages of 3-6 are neglected in Ethiopia and not much attention was given to ECE so they decided to set up *Tsehai Loves Learning*.

When they pitched the idea to donors, broadcasters, and other concerned bodies, they were not taken seriously. Using media as a tool of educating children is a comparatively new idea and it was not well received. “It was very difficult to make the point that television could be used as an educational tool” W/ro Bruktawit said. But finally, they were able to secure an agreement with the Ethiopian Television.

*Tsehai Loves Learning* is a puppet show with different characters depicted through animals. The main character is a little giraffe named Tsehai who is 6 years old. Tsehai is a very curious giraffe and asks a lot of questions in order to understand things around her. Her parents are supportive of her curiosity and try to help her in her journey of discovery. According to W/ro Bruktawit, the idea behind Tsehai’s character is for children to take Tsehai as a role-model and see learning as an enjoyable experience.

There are also other characters that are involved in Tsehai's quest for knowledge. These characters are described below:

- Fikir: he is Tsehai's little brother. He is 2 years old and loves to play with his sister. Tsehai generously shares her knowledge with him. This character is designed to help children follow the learning activities through the conversations and play and other interactions between Tsehai and her brother.
- Mom: she owns a construction company and is the primary provider for the family. Her character helps children develop an early understanding of gender roles and that women too can go out there and earn bread for their family.
- Dad: he is a stay-at-home father who runs a little shop on the family compound. He does this in order to stay close to home and take care of the children while mom is away at work. He also takes care of most of the household chores. Dad's character is also designed with the concept of societal and cultural roles of men and women in mind. It is intended at showing children that there is nothing wrong in doing house work and other things culturally considered as "women's jobs".
- Gash Ayli: he is a very old and wise turtle. His greatest wisdom is knowing that he has a lot to learn even if he knows a lot already. He helps Tsehai in her quest for knowledge by referring to books and the internet to answer her questions.
- Grandma: lives on a farm and she leads a very traditional lifestyle. She usually participates in episodes by telling stories and narrating anecdotes.
- Teacher: is a devoted kindergarten teacher. He knows that children learn through play and tries very hard to include various play activities when he teaches. He also puts a lot of energy into always pretending to be excited about what the children are learning and what they have accomplished in order to encourage the children to be eager about school and learning.
- Tsinat: is Tsehai's closest friend. She has been orphaned from HIV/AIDS but her character emerges as being resilient. She runs very fast and wants to be a professional

runner when she grows up. Her character is designed to help children understand the concept of HIV/AIDS and see through Tsinat that it is a common happening and children who are in her position should not be shunned and discriminated against.

- Mrs. Monkey: she is Tsinat's adoptive mother who used to be a close friend of Tsinat's biological mother. Mrs. Monkey is very poor but she loves Tsinat very much and tries to provide for her using every means she can. The community around her helps her in doing this. She also spends a lot of time gardening in order to put food on the table. This character is included to show children the social realities and different ways of life that exist around them.
- Rabbit: is Tsehai's school friend. He is mischievous and playful but often hurts other people's feelings without meaning to. Through Rabbit's behaviour, children learn socially accepted ways of behaving and develop a consideration for the feelings of others.
- Blue dog: is a very sad dog. She attacks others and is often quite angry. When Tsehai met her, she was very mean to her; but Tsehai is determined to win her friendship by being patient with her and trying to understand her. The interaction between Blue dog and Tsehai is meant to demonstrate how being patient and persistent in one's pursuit can pay off in the end.

**Comment:** from this description, it can be understood that the characters are designed to address all the components that should make up an ECE program. This is to mean that the areas of cognitive, social, and physical areas of development of the child have been explored. As can be seen from this, the program has a holistic approach in educating the child.

#### **4.3.2 The mission of *Tsehai Loves Learning***

The mission of *Tsehai Loves Learning* is “to improve the lives of children from all areas and economic classes of Ethiopia.” They propose to do this by emphasizing the importance of “character building” in their productions and “encouraging children to improve themselves so that they can better help those around them.”

This statement, in the researcher's point of view, is too broad considering the fact that *Tsehai Loves Learning* does not reach children "in all areas and economic classes" of Ethiopia. For one, it is transmitted in just one language, Amharic, and there are more than 80 languages in Ethiopia. Children who don't understand Amharic will not get the benefits of the show. W/ro Bruktawit, on this issue, said that Amharic is the most widely spoken language in urban areas central to where the broadcast takes place. But the main reason that *Tsehai Loves Learning* is created in Amharic, according to W/ro Bruktawit is because of budget limitations.

*We would love to create Tsehai Loves Learning in other Ethiopian languages as well but we can't yet hire people to do that for us. The volunteers and staff working on the production right now are all Amharic speakers. But we have so far attempted to dub a few episodes of Tsehai Loves Learning in Tigrinya. Dubbing is the process of changing the audio without redoing the video and hence is a cost effective way for us. But the voices don't synchronize with the movement of the puppets as well and the appearance that the puppets are actually speaking is a little less convincing. But still, dubbing could still serve as a reasonable option considering budget restraints.*

Another factor that has to be considered in understanding this mission statement is that children from economically disadvantaged homes may not be able to get access to the show. As Huston and Wright state:

*One major justification for public and private investment in educational television for children has been the potential of the medium to reach children growing up in environments that put them at an educational disadvantage, but some have expressed concern that children in advantaged homes watch such programs more than those in disadvantaged environments... (Huston and Wright 1998:20)*

In Ethiopia, there are only 4.9 television sets per 1000 households and these are usually limited to high and middle income families (<http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR179/FR179.pdf>). Children from lower income families do not have access to television sets and hence, cannot watch the show.

**Comment:** The mission statement is too broad in that it does not seem to take into account these important realities that have a direct effect on the production as well as coverage of *Tsehai Loves Learning*. No practical way of implementing this mission is proposed.

#### **4.3.3 The objectives of *Tsehai Loves Learning***

A very broad objective set for *Tsehai Loves Learning* is to “foster democracy and freedom of expression by encouraging children to be inquisitive, increasing their thirst for knowledge and empowering them to be self-confident.” This statement is in line with what is stated in the *Education and Training Policy* of the government that the aim of education is the “creation of a society with humane and democratic values, high-problem solving ability, and capacity to inquire and carry out research and liberate itself from the adverse pressures of nature” (*The Education and Training Policy and its Implementation* 2002:26).

All other objectives stated in the mission and objectives document of Whiz Kids are a means of achieving this general and underlying objective. Below is a discussion of some of these objectives given together with the researcher’s observations:

- Raise a generation of Ethiopians who are committed to seek an education, not only to better themselves, but to better their community, their country and the world they live in.
  - Encouraging love of education and learning is an objective stated in the *Education and Training Policy* as well. The objectives correspond in that “raising the private and social benefits of education” is one of the main goals of education stated in the policy (*The Education and Training Policy* 1994:8).

- Increase literacy in Ethiopia by increasing school enrollment and retention rates
  - The first level of education as stated in the *Education and Training Policy* is kindergarten education which is considered as being the basis of all other levels of education. Hence, it can serve as a way of decreasing illiteracy through encouraging positive outlook towards education.

It's also been discussed in previous sections that ECE could be one way of preventing later dropping out (Lavatelli 1970). This objective addresses this particular point.

- Prepare Ethiopian children for school
  - Early childhood is thought to be the stage where the basis is laid for formal education. Children are introduced to the concept of learning that will give them the basic education they need to ease the transition from preschool to formal schooling (Huston & Wright 1998).
  
- Fill gaps in the educational infrastructure of Ethiopia
  - Some of the gaps described by W/ro Bruktawit are:
    - Lack of government owned kindergartens: this by itself means that only parents that can afford to send their children to school provide ECE for their children. So *Tsehai Loves Learning*, being a television program, provides that alternative to those children that don't have access for school based education.
    - Lack of strong regulation of curriculum: "the curriculum implemented in most private kindergartens usually bends to the will of parents who want to see measurable results for the money they are spending. As a result, the curriculum focuses on cognitive aspects of education only" W/ro Bruktawit said. She added that the problem with this kind of approach is that the rest of the areas of development are completely neglected. *Tsehai Loves Learning* strives to incorporate these neglected areas.

- Provide a well rounded Early Childhood Development curriculum including areas often neglected such as social interaction, character building, and emotional well-being
  - The area of curriculum development is left for the government. But as stated in the *Kindergarten Syllabus*, the private sector and private school administrations have space to modify and fit syllabi into their own style of teaching. Especially for the kindergarten syllabus, it is stated that the activities and source materials suggested might not be enough and hence, those who use it can add upon it as they see fit (*The Kindergarten Syllabus* 1998). Although Whiz Kids cannot come up with a whole new curriculum and implement it without the consent and approval of the Ministry of Education, they can modify the existing syllabus to the benefit of the child. "Programs such as ours need to assess the existing curriculum to develop our own action plan and to find out whether our goal is to focus on a broad, well-rounded coverage of the curriculum or to support a specific area of the curriculum" W/ro Bruktawit said.
  
- Encourage children to raise up their voices and express what they have learned and their opinions
  - Instilling confidence in children so that they can speak their mind and stand up for their rights is another objective stated in the *Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (Education and Training Policy and its Implementation 2002:76)*. Whiz Kids has tried to model this starting from character design. The main character, Tsehai, is a very confident, inquisitive and communicative character. By giving her these attributes, it is hoped that children will model her.
  
- Incorporate published research in the field of educational media as a base for our programs
  - Most preschool education being given in Ethiopia is not research based and is given just like any other type of education at primary and secondary basis. It is subject-centered instead of being student-centered as the *Education and Training*

*Policy* dictates (Study Report on ECCE 2006). Thus, bringing in research that can help understand what the content and method of education at the preschool level should be is a recommendable idea.

- Prepare and provide educational materials which enhance different educational learning objectives
  - Providing educational materials that can support each episode and their learning objectives might help in strengthening the impact of the content. It will give parents something to follow up lessons with and the short television episodes will have a longer lasting impact on children.

Whiz Kids intends to conduct “formative research” to identify problem areas in their productions and improve them. They also propose to conduct “impact studies” to make sure that they are reaching their objectives.

**Comment:** The objectives of *Tsehai Loves Learning* are very similar to and complementary with those stated in the *Education and Training Policy*. This can testify to the fact that education programs, media based or otherwise, share similar objectives.

Curtis quoting Webb (1974) states that “education is... that process by which an individual is aided by informed instruction, guidance, demonstration, provision, and opportunity to pursue worthwhile activities to as high a degree of critical awareness and retains personal autonomy as possible to him.” And based on this comprehensive definition Curtis concludes that “... the aims of education are the same at all levels.”(Curtis 1998:17) The means of getting to the ultimate goal may be different, but the goal itself is the same and *Tsehai Loves Learning* can serve as an instrument of getting to the national goal of education. As Chen states “... the way to get young children interested in embarking on this process [the process of acquiring knowledge] is to expose them to the joys of learning early on. If television can help in this regard, so much the better.” (Curtis 1998:113)

#### 4.3.4 Explored areas of Learning

The objectives discussed above are supported by the areas of learning *Tsehai Loves Learning* focuses upon. These areas of learning are selected, according to W/ro Bruktawit, to bring about the desired outcomes of learning foreseen by Whiz Kids as dictated through the objectives.

In order to reach the objectives set, *Tsehai Loves Learning* has five general areas of learning. These learning areas are discussed below:

1. *Social Issues*: this area touches upon issues such as the environment, HIV/AIDS, and gender. By using the puppet characters, these important social issues are broached to children in a language they understand.
2. *Academic Development*: this area mainly focuses on developing the cognitive abilities of children. It particularly focuses upon teaching children literacy, counting, sorting, identifying alphabets and language ability.
3. *Socio-emotional development*: this learning area deals with helping children develop emotionally in accordance with what is culturally and socially acceptable. The issues discussed include self-esteem, cooperating and sharing with others, respecting elders etc.
4. *Physical development*: this area endeavors to instill the proper physical growth in children by stimulating gross and fine motor skills. This is done through various activities that encourage the physical engagement of children.
5. *Personal values*: values such as truthfulness, kindness, helpfulness, integrity etc. are the desired values that are transmitted in this particular learning area.

Each of these learning areas is supported by providing information for children about the educational topic such as why the topic is important and how the topic is applicable to their lives personally. This is done by developing content with knowledge, understanding, application and expression as guiding factors. W/ro Bruktawit, explaining what this means, said "when we develop script for each episode, we think of how best to define the topic so that children would understand the importance of it. We also consider how to help children apply what they've learnt in their everyday life and encourage them to communicate what they've learnt to their parents, siblings and friends."

According to W/ro Bruktawit, the episodes also support each learning objective by providing parents with supplemental activities which reinforce the lessons and encouraging the children to communicate what they have learnt through "verbal, written, and artistic expression".

The program encourages the involvement of parents also. It is built on the understanding that parents know their children best and in that way can play a very big role in the learning and development of their children. According to W/ro Bruktawit, they cultivate the participation of parents by using different methods. One method they employ is by running ads at prime time on Friday and Saturday evenings explaining to parents what the educational objectives of the episode to be transmitted the next weekend will be. This would help parents prepare themselves on the topic so that they can help their children better understand the content included in the episode.

Another method used is publishing activities and articles corresponding to episodes of *Tsehai Loves Learning* on newspapers and parent magazines encouraging parents to follow up the objectives of episodes with activities done at home.

This view clearly echoes Curtis' "partner concept" on parental involvement discussed in chapter two of this study. The view of partnership is all about considering parents as equally important to professionals when it comes to the education of their children and that their contribution should be seen as one key element in the process (Curtis 1998:136-137)

**Comment:** *The kindergarten Syllabus* discussed earlier in this chapter sets up an outline for children's education stating that in any program aimed at educating children, cognitive, social and physical development should be integrated in order to bring about a holistic development in the child. Children should also be able to get knowledge about the world they live in, the environment that sustains them and the culture they are governed by.

In this regard, Huston and Wright make a similar claim that educational programs for children are designed with common objectives in mind to bring about social and emotional development and "to teach such prosocial behaviors as co-operation, sharing, helping, nonviolent conflict resolution; to enhance children's self-esteem and their understanding of others' feelings and behavior; to reduce unrealistic fear and acceptance of social stereotypes based on gender, ethnic group, disability and the like." (Huston and Wright 1998:14)

The learning areas of *Tsehai Loves Learning* encompass cognitive, social, emotional and physical areas of development of the child making their approach holistic. Nevertheless, as discussed in earlier chapters of this study, the content of educational programs is not the only factor that affects the process of education. An important factor that goes hand in hand with content is the method of delivery.

The view taken on the involvement of the parent in the education of the child is also another factor that could be seen as something supportive to the environment of implementing the learning objectives of *Tsehai Loves Learning*.

#### **4.3.5 Methods of delivery**

This section will discuss the method of delivery of *Tsehai Loves Learning* and how it can impact the process of education.

*Tsehai Loves Learning* is transmitted in very short episodes of 6-8 minutes durations. This narrow time frame should be exploited to its maximum potential by capitalizing upon the strong features of the medium of transmission. Apart from taking the medium as an advantage, it is also important to understand methods that are considered to be effective in capturing the attention and

comprehension of children. Both these factors have been discussed in previous chapters of this study. This sub section will discuss to what extent the methods of delivery of *Tsehai Loves Learning* correspond with these factors.

It is proven that the greatest amount of learning from television takes place between the ages of 3-8. Lowery & De Fleur quoting Shramm et al. state that this age range is when children are going through the discovery of new experiences. They further state that at these ages “those experiences would be especially absorbing to the child.” But they believe that the bigger reason why this age is the prime age children learn from television is that television seems “real” to them. And according to them, studies have shown that the impact of television and other media content has a stronger impact on children if they thought that it had ‘really happened’. “The younger children are [the] more likely [they are] to think that the events taking place on the picture tube in front of them are real” they stated (Lowery & De Fleur 1983:283).

*Tsehai Loves Learning* targets children between the ages of 3-6. This age, according to Lowery & De Fleur is considered to be the ideal age where children learn from television. Thus, the animal characters in *Tsehai Loves Learning* such as Tsehai’s giraffe family, the wise old Turtle, and others, could be perceived as real beings and the happenings they narrate and the lessons they impart could be readily accepted by children. This could be seen as one strong point in favor of the television medium if seen from the perspective of the target age group and can be exploited to the advantage of children’s educational programs.

*Tsehai Loves Learning* is a program that is full of activities that encourage children to be active both mentally and physically. In every episode, the content is organized in a way that children can involve in the process of learning. One way of doing this that is employed in episodes of *Tsehai Loves Learning* is asking children questions so that they can participate by answering. They are then given encouraging feedback so that they can learn what the correct reply is. This strategy is a way of avoiding the passivity of children during television watching.

As stated in chapter two of this study, many scholars criticize television as a “passive” medium in the sense that it is one-way and children are dormant both cognitively and physically. Making television learning interactive so that children are cognitively involved, as *Tsehai Loves Learning* does, can avoid this passivity.

Also, the physical inactivity that is presumed in television watching can be avoided through activities such as singing, clapping etc. (Chen 1994:106) These features are included in Episodes of *Tsehai Loves Learning* helping children to involve physically as well as mentally.

These features also make learning entertaining to children. According to Bruce, “children develop and learn better when both their interests and needs are met.” (Bruce 2004:29) If children are not entertained, it might not be possible to grab their attention and retain it for the duration necessary. *Tsehai Loves Learning* tries to make the content and presentation entertaining by including songs, stories, and different play activities. As the concept of “incidental learning” states, children do not seek television for the primary purpose of being informed or educated (Lowery & De Fleur 1983:282). They turn to television mainly to be entertained. If they don’t find the entertainment they seek, then they might not learn from content of educational programs.

The importance of play in education as an “integrating mechanism which allows flexible, adaptive, imaginative, innovative behavior” (Bruce 2004:150) has also been emphasized in earlier discussions. In *Tsehai Loves Learning* there are modes of play constituted into episodes such as sorting colors and shapes using blocks, counting candies etc. This strategy, when presented on television, might require prior notice for parents to prepare the objects needed for their children to participate. But there are also play activities that do not require preparation such as songs, games of guessing etc. These play activities help children to “coordinate their ideas and feelings” (Ibid) and by doing so develop their cognitive abilities.

Whiz Kids evaluates the impact of the content and delivery of each episode by using the “distracter test”. In order to determine where in an episode children lose interest, they are shown an episode of *Tsehai Loves Learning* on one television, while a slide show is presented on another attempting to distract the child’s attention. The total percentage of children watching or distracted at a given time is then charted out to show where the children are captivated, and where they lose interest. This method helps them determine what parts of the show capture the attention of children and which parts don’t. By doing this, they can determine where changes need to be made in each episode and also to come up with guidelines for the effectiveness of subsequent productions.

#### **4.3.6 How can *Tsehai Loves Learning* serve as a contributor to the Ethiopian education system?**

One objective of *Tsehai Loves Learning* is to fill the educational gap in Ethiopia. Although the *Education and Training Policy* itself admits to leaving unaccountable gaps in the system (*The Education and Training Policy* 1994:2), the biggest gap goes to preschool education (Study Report on ECCE 2006). As mentioned earlier, preschool education is left to the private sector: NGOs, religious organizations, and other interested bodies. This is mainly for the reason that the setting up of a school for preschoolers is expensive and the government cannot afford it; and the area of priority for the government is expanding primary and basic education. Nevertheless, the government has a responsibility of “supporting initiatives” and fully cooperating with those who wish to expand the field of ECE.

It has been argued earlier that the objectives and goals of the *Education and Training Policy* can be supported by expanding ECE. What *Tsehai Loves Learning* does is add to that endeavor. The fact that it does not do this through formal means of a school setting, should not be an element of prejudice. Television can be a means of providing education for children especially in a system such as the Ethiopian education system where it might otherwise be unavailable. It can also serve as a support for the education children get at school.

As the findings indicate in this regard, the objectives of *Tsehai Loves Learning* correspond with the fundamental objectives of education as stated in the *Education and Training Policy* as well as those stated in international resolutions such as the ones stated in chapter two of this study. It also goes hand in hand with the values of education as stated in *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) under the right to *Human Rights Education* (Article 29). It is stated therein that the education of the child should be targeted at:

- *The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*
- *The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;*
- *The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;*
- *The development of respect for the natural environment*

These values are constituted in the production of *Tsehai Loves Learning*. This can be taken as a proof that *Tsehai Loves Learning* is designed with the sole objective of educating the child.

Seen from the point of view of delivery, *Tsehai Loves Learning* incorporates interactive content in order to encourage cognitive and physical activity in the child. This could be seen an attempt at working around television's one way information flow; the medium's major disadvantage.

All in all, *Tsehai Loves Learning* could serve as a valid support to the formal education provided to children and justifiable gap filler in the Ethiopian System of education.

### **4.3.7 Problems facing *Tsehai Loves Learning***

Providing an ECE program by using television as a medium is a fairly new idea when it comes to the education and media system of Ethiopia and as such faces a number of problems. Some of the problems, as mentioned by W/ro Bruktawit are discussed below.

#### *4.3.7.1 Budgeting*

The biggest problem according to W/ro Bruktawit is to get budget for productions. Whiz kids, being an independent content provider, has to find fund to sustain the production and airing of *Tsehai Loves Learning*. The partnership with the Ethiopian Television was built on an understanding that Whiz Kids will pay for the space and time it gets. For that, Whiz Kids has to secure fund from different sponsors such as UNESCO, Save the children/USA, UNICEF and other concerned bodies 60% of which will go to the Ethiopian Television. But getting the budget for producing and airing the program is not always easy, according to W/ro Bruktawit. Donors which mainly are international NGOs do not usually have a working budget for ECE like they have for healthcare, basic education etc. So when they are willing to sponsor, they don't sponsor whole segments but just episodes that go with their working theme. For instance, UNESCO has so far sponsored episodes on the use of water and planting trees together with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) because these issues correspond with their working plans. According to W/ro Bruktawit, this creates a big problem for the sustainability of the program.

#### *4.3.7.2 Human resources*

According to W/ro Bruktawit, it is very difficult to find people who have the technical and conceptual training in children's production. And hence, a lot of the technical as well as the content design is made by very few people who are improvising to come up with good quality ECE production for children. Whiz Kids also gives trainings with the support of different sponsors in order to produce people who are trained in both the creative and technical aspect of children's education programs.

#### 4.3.7.3 Misconception of an ECE television program

A television ECE program is a new concept for the Ethiopian education and media scene. Because of this, it is difficult to get its merits across. According to W/ro Bruktawit, it is especially difficult to convince the media administration. “We are treated like any other program that buys space and time, like an advertisement” W/ro Bruktawit said. For the broadcaster, in this case the Ethiopian Television, the main area of concern is profit, according to W/ro Bruktawit. “The Ethiopian Television administration should see *Tsehai Loves Learning* as an education program that has actual benefits to children, not just an entertainment program of no value that can be discarded any time they wish” W/ro Bruktawit said.

#### 4.3.8 *Tsehai Loves Learning*: current situation

Currently, *Tsehai Loves Learning* is off the air after running for a year and four months because the Ethiopian Television is in the process of formulating a new regulation concerning all outsourced programs. Concerning this, W/ro Bruktawit said that this shows "lack of concern for quality and social value of content". She also said that "content should be evaluated by the benefit it gives society and air-time should not just be sold to the highest bidder regardless of the content of programs."

Whiz Kids now makes episodes of *Tsehai Loves Learning* to be released on cinema. They are also planning to make these episodes available on DVD. Concerning this, W/ro Bruktawit said:

*Parents and kids have been writing letters to us asking why Tsehai Loves Learning has been discontinued. Parents tell us that their children were actually enjoying learning. They also tell us that it made them involved in their children's first experience in learning. On the other hand, children tell us they miss Tsehai and this tells us that they have developed an attachment to Tsehai and see her as a friend/model. So we've made the decision to make episodes available using all the means we can. Another reason for us to do this is, of course, survival. The production has to survive and we are doing all we can to make that happen.*

*Tsehai Loves Learning* has so far been recognized as the best children’s education program and won the Prix Jeunesse International Children’s Television Festival’s “Next Generation Prize”. It has also won the Japan Prize for children’s television. “This tells us we must be doing something right and gives us a little bit of encouragement” W/ro Bruktawit said. “But there is something disappointing about not being recognized or appreciated by the Ethiopian government and institutions such as the Education Ministry and the Ethiopian Television. That would have made our job a lot easier” she said.

#### **4.4 Summary of analysis**

This chapter has discussed the state of ECE in Ethiopia; what the *Education and Training Policy* of the government states and what the reflection of that is on a television ECE program such as *Tsehai Loves Learning*. This is done in an attempt to reveal the findings of the study in a clearer light and context.

As a result, it has been revealed that the objectives of education and the goals of learning are for the most part similar for all levels and types of education, regardless of the medium used. The objectives of *Tsehai Loves Learning*, as seen in the analysis, are complementary to the objectives and goals of learning stated in the *Education and Training Policy* as well as the *Kindergarten Syllabus*. The method of delivery also corresponds with that described in the *Kindergarten Syllabus* and other approved methods of delivery supported by studies such as those discussed in the review of literature as well as analysis of this study. This can testify to the fact that *Tsehai Loves Learning* could be seen as a tool that can support the overall educational system of the country and fill the gap in ECE.

Through out this study, it has been continually demonstrated that the benefits of ECE cannot be denied and that television is indeed a handy tool to employ in the process. But as seen through the analysis of document and interview data in this chapter, ECE is part of the educational system that is neglected and the concept of employing television as an alternative medium of education is far from being acknowledged.

In general, the analysis has shown that:

- ECE is a neglected field in the Ethiopian education system
- Alternative routes of educating children have not been exploited
- The idea of an ECE television is not appreciated
- The Ethiopian Television does not give due consideration for children's programs
- The government is not doing its share in supporting the initiatives of the private sector in attempting to expand ECE
- *Tsehai Loves Learning* is barely surviving under the existing situation

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

This thesis has looked into how television in Ethiopia is being exploited for the well being and education, and for the general development of the child. In doing so, it has assessed the areas of educational policy, the values of television as an educational tool, and the outlook and practice towards television ECD programs such as *Tsehai Loves Learning*.

The discussions have revealed that ECE is the least focused upon area in the education system of Ethiopia. It is also an area left to NGOs and the private sector to invest upon. Nevertheless, with universal primary education still an elusive goal in the education system of Ethiopia as in many developing countries, it is most likely that ECE is not going to be the primary focus of investment yet (UNESCO Policy Brief 2008).

In light of this fact, every alternative route should be explored in order to cater for this fundamental provision of education at an early age. Alternatives such as the media and especially television should be considered as a legitimate medium to exploit for the education of the child. In the Ethiopian context, the government is given the responsibility of seeing to it that any initiative to expand ECE has full support by government bodies. But as discussed in previous sections, the one and only ECE television program in Ethiopia, *Tsehai Loves Learning*, is having a difficult time coping with the regulations in the Ethiopian Television which is a government station.

Also, the benefits of education via the medium of television has not yet been recognized by the broadcaster. The nature of *Tsehai Loves Learning*, being a puppet show, is seen by the broadcaster as being strictly entertaining rather than educative and hence is treated as other entertainment programs.

In the Ethiopian context, there is a lot to be done in the area of ECD and there needs to be a deeper investigation as to the solutions and directions to take to fill this gap. The lack of awareness and knowledge of the benefits of ECE as well as training in the area (Study report on ECCE 2006) could be one major reason that has resulted in the loose focus on child development and education. Lack of research that contributes towards filling this gap and that can provide a picture of the local context is another reason that can be cited. And as the *Education and Training Policy* ascertains “education does not operate in isolation, rather it has to be integrated with research, practice and development to contribute towards an all-rounded development of society” (*The Education and Training Policy* 1994:2).

If the government's aim policy-wise is to “formulate a comprehensive and coherent education policy that would be in the service of development and democracy”, the area of ECE is an area worth considering as a way of fulfilling that aim.

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# Appendix I

## Interview Guide for Informants in the Ethiopian Television

### Informant 1- Ato Seyoum Zeleke

1. Does ETV have programs for children?
2. What kind of programs for children does ETV have?
3. Does ETV provide educational programs for children?
4. Are educational programs given priority?
5. Do you know the ECE program *Tsehai Loves Learning*?
6. Why was the program taken off air?

### Informant 2- W/ro Netsanet Balcha

1. Do you consider ETV's children's program educational?
2. What does the program constitute inside it?
3. What are the problems, if any, that you face in the production and airing of the children's program?
4. Do you think children are benefiting from your program?
5. Do you know the ECE program *Tsehai Loves Learning*?
6. Do you think *Tsehai Loves Learning* makes a contribution towards the development of children?

## **Appendix II**

### **Interview Guide for Whiz Kids Informant**

1. When was Whiz Kids established?
2. When did you start producing *Tsehai Loves Learning*?
3. How did you decide to involve in the area of ECD?
4. What is the scope of your involvement in ECD?
5. What were the problems you faced in setting up?
6. How wide is the reach of the program in terms of transmission?
7. What are the underlying values that the program is built up on?
8. Where do you get support from (budgetary or otherwise)?
9. What problems do you face in producing and airing the program?
10. What areas of improvements do you see in the field of ECD?

# Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the source materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

**Name:** Tsion Issayas

**Signature:**

**Date of Submission:** October 30, 2008

**Place of Submission:** Addis Ababa