



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE
CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO MOTHER TONGUE PRIMARY
EDUCATION:
THE CASE OF BENISHANGUL GUMUZ REGIONAL STATE**

**BY
MESERET GENETI**

**JULY, 2014
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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**BY
MESERET GENETI**

ADVISOR: KALKIDAN ABERRA

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
MASTER OF ARTS IN HUMAN RIHGHTS**

**JULY, 2014
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis entitled: *“Children’s Right to Mother Tongue Primary Education: The Case of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State”* submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Master of Arts in Human Rights to Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, College of Law and Governance through the Center for Human Rights, prepared by Meseret Geneti, ID No. GSR/2485/05 complies with the regulations of the university and submitted with my approval as a member of board of examiners.

Examining Board

Kalkidan Aberra

Advisor

Signature

Date

Fasil Mulatu

Internal Examiner

Signature

Date

Mitiku Mekonnen

External Examiner

Signature

Date

DECLARATION

I, Meseret Geneti, declare that this thesis is the result of my own effort and all sources that are used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. Hence, I confidently declare that this thesis has not been submitted to any other institutions in the same form to merit Master of Arts.

Meseret Geneti Bedesso

July, 2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis aimed at exploring the implementation of children's right to mother tongue education in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State. To achieve this objective, the data were collected through qualitatively designed interviews and focused group discussion from students, teachers, principal, parents, focal persons and key government actors from woreda to regional level. These data's were triangulated and verified through observation and a review of relevant documents.

As far as the analysis is concerned, data were analyzed thematically and the finding reveals that almost all the participants appreciated the multi-dimensional significance of mother tongue education. The legal instruments of the region also recognized it from the inclusion in to the regional constitution to the extent of the formulation of regional mother tongue education strategic plan despite its exclusion of the exogenous nations and nationalities. As a result, the number of students who are enrolling school by their own mother tongue is increasing through time. However, the program is being challenged by socio-cultural, economic and political factors despite efforts are being made to resolve them.

Based on its findings, the research called the stakeholders to develop the program. Hence, increasing the awareness regarding the significance of mother tongue education, developing a sense of ownership and contributing as much as one's ability is allowed to do so are a few among the recommended measures to be taken.

Key Words: *Linguistic human rights, Mother tongue and Mother tongue education.*

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At first and last, thanks may be to the one who deserve, the HOLY GOD through his son JESUS CHRIST and his gift HOLY GHOST.

Who am I, Lord GOD,...that You have brought me this far?
2Sam 7:18-19

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the children's of exogenous nations and nationalities living in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State who are being called "others" despite they have their own identity and who are under a tragedy of looking for the violation of their right to mother tongue education.

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ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
BGRS	Benishangul Gumuz Regional State
CDE	Convention against Discrimination in Education
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CRC	Convention on the Right of a Child
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ESDP	Education Sector Development Programs
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GEQIP	General Education Quality Improvement Package
HDI	Human Development Index
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
MTE	Mother Tongue Education
NDRP	National Democratic Revolution Program
NEAEA	National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NLA	National Learning Assessment
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDLR	Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Linguistic human rights in education are a prerequisite for the maintenance of diversity and harmonious relations between different language communities throughout the world.¹ Different commentators' states that education is not only a right but also a means to realize other rights since it helps to promote personal development, strengthen respect for human rights and freedoms, enable individuals to participate effectively in a free society, and promote understanding, friendship and tolerance.² Taking this value in to account, the universal declaration on linguistic rights (UDLR) affirms that everyone has the right to education in its own language.³ The term "everyone" include children's among others.

Moreover, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) declares that children have a right to education which shall be directed to the development of their personality, cultural identity, language and other values. This right belongs to all children irrespective of their parents' race, political opinion, ethnic origin, birth status and other grounds.⁴ The international community committed itself to implement this right and as a result meets in various global forums of which the millennium declaration is one of its results. The declaration stated that, "by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling."⁵

Today, the international community is left with a year from the timespan of this declaration. As far as the achievement of the goal is concerned, in the foreword of the 2013 human development report, Helen Clark, head of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) states that,

*Although progress was uneven within and between regions... all countries accelerated their achievements in the education to the extent that no country for which data was available had a lower Human Development Index (HDI) value in 2012 than in 2000.*⁶

¹ Skutnabb-Kangas Tove, *Rights to Language: Equity, Power, and Education: Celebrating the 60th Birthday of Skutnabb-Kangas*. (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.2000), 11.

² UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All* (USA: New York, 2007), 7.

³ UNESCO, *Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights*, (Spain: Barcelona, 1996), Arts.3 and 23.

⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *General Assembly Resolution*, 44/25/1989. Arts. 2, 28 and 29.

⁵ Millennium Development Goals, *General Assembly Resolution*, 55/2/2000, Goal 3, Target 3.

⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report: The Rise of the South* (USA: New York, 2013), IV.

Numerous studies have shown that meeting a minimum of standards, including increasing access to schooling, improving school facilities and having teachers who are sufficiently trained can significantly improve education. But while these may have increased enrolment rates and provided positive quantitative data, they failed to consider the qualitative issues inside of schools.⁷ As United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated, “the choice of the language or indeed the languages of instruction is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education.”⁸

The result of Ethiopian National Learning Assessment (NLA) which is conducted in 2013 at grades 4 and 8, for instance, pointed language of instruction as one of the major factors that improve the quality of education among others.⁹ Moreover, as Wollf, quoted by Heugh [et.al] argued, “[L]anguage is not everything in education but without language everything is nothing in education.”¹⁰ The extension of this words means that, it is impossible to transfer knowledge to the pupils without the medium of education that they understood well.

Beyond serving as a medium of education, as Tove noted, “human rights oriented educational system is central for the maintenance of languages and for the prevention of linguistic genocide.”¹¹ Cummins further argued that,

*To reject a child's language in the school is to reject the child itself. When the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is ‘Leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door’, children also leave a central part of who they are-their identities-at the schoolhouse door.*¹²

Thus, teaching a child by the language other than his own mother tongue especially in early classes is a violation of linguistic right of a child in education.¹³

⁷ Dyer, *Management challenges in achieving education for all: South Asian perspectives*. In: Desai Vandana and Potter Robert, eds. *The Companion to Development Studies* (London: Arnold, 2002), 419.

⁸ UNESCO, *Education in Multilingual World* (France: Paris, 2003), 14.

⁹ NEAEA, “Ethiopian 4th National Learning Assessment of Grades 4 and 8” (Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, 2013), 35.

¹⁰ Ekkehard, In: Katherine Heugh, et al. “Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia” (MoE, 2007), 8.

¹¹ Skutnabb-Kangas, *Language Policy and Political Issues in Education*. In: Stephen May, and Nancy Hornberger, *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd ed. Vol.1. (USA: New York, 2008), 107.

¹² Jim Cummins, *Bilingual Children’s Mother Tongue* (SPROGFORUM NR, 2001), 19.

¹³ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art.1., Cultural Charter for Africa, 1976. Art. 19., The Constitution of FDRE, Proc. No.1/1995. Art.39., The Revised Constitution of BGRS, Proc. No. 1/2003. Art.6.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Mother tongue is the language that a child learns at home in early childhood, understands well and use as a medium of socialization.¹⁴ Moreover, as Voulab noted, it is “a chain that binds one to its own history, the most valuable inheritance of human beings and the treasure of knowledge.”¹⁵ Further, as noted in UNESCO’s “[T]he Use of Vernacular Languages in Education”, there is strong evidence that the use of children’s mother tongue in school will psychologically, relieve students from psychological shock and give them an opportunity to express their opinion freely; sociologically, it helps as a means of identification among the community to which she/he belongs and educationally, it enables the child to learn quickly than unfamiliar linguistic medium.¹⁶

Various studies have shown that children who begin their education in their mother tongue make a better start and continue to perform better than those for whom school starts with other tongue.¹⁷ However, since it confronts with the issues of history, politics, economy and other factors, the international community though recognize the right to education from the very beginning of their first meeting at United Nations (UN) level, the right to mother tongue education (MTE) remains a “hot potato”¹⁸ in human rights discourses.

The abundance of languages in Africa also caused enormous problems despite the effort of the governments to implement an educational system that directed to the development of positive African values.¹⁹ The same is true in Ethiopian context, usually, being attached with the multi ethno-lingual nature of the country.²⁰ However, cognizant of the pedagogical significance of mother tongue based education of children, the government of Ethiopia issued an educational policy called Education and Training Policy in 1994. This policy declares the use of nationality languages as medium of instruction at primary level of education.²¹ This is further reflected in the

¹⁴ Wolfgang Herrlitz, Sigmund Ongstad, and Piet-Hein van de Ven, “Research on MTE in a Comparative International Perspective” (Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 15.

¹⁵ Skutnabb-Kangas, *Rights to Language: Equity, Power, and Education*, 13.

¹⁶ UNESCO, *The use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (France: Paris, 1953), 11.

¹⁷ UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 77.

¹⁸ Skutnabb-Kangas Tove, “The Right to Mother Tongue Medium Education: The Hot Potato in Human Rights Instruments.” *Mercator International Symposium*, (Denmark: University of Roskilde, 2004), 2.

¹⁹ Lodhi Abdulaziz Y. “The language situation in Africa today” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 2(1), (Sweden, Uppsala, 1993), 80., Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, (OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49/1990), Art. 11.

²⁰ Katrin Seidel and Janine Moritz, “Changes in Ethiopia’s Language and Education Policy - Pioneering Reforms?” *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Trondheim, 2009), 1125.

²¹ Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Education and Training Policy, (Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, 1994), Art.3 (5).

1995 Constitution of the country which is stated as: “Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language...”²²

Furthermore, the revised Constitution of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) declares that, “Nations and nationalities of the region has a right to learn by their own language or by the language of their choice.”²³ The Constitution also affirms the international children’s human right instruments which are ratified by Ethiopia and has binding obligation of which CRC is worth to mention. The obligations urge the states or their sub-regions to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of the child.²⁴

However, despite the recognition of the right to MTE and the duty that the regional government bears, the reality on the ground is different in the study area. Hence, this study has been inspired from the rights of children’s of the region to mother tongue primary education and the efforts of the government in implementing this right.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to explore the implementation of children’s right to mother tongue primary education in BGRS. More specifically, the study will embrace the following specific objectives.

- ❖ To examine how children’s right to mother tongue primary education is perceived;
- ❖ To assess the extent to what children’s right to mother tongue primary education is recognized in the legal instruments;
- ❖ To ascertain the practices of the government in implementing children’s right to mother tongue primary education;
- ❖ To scrutinize the challenges of implementing children’s right to mother tongue primary education and
- ❖ To identify possible solutions for the challenges of implementing children’s right to mother tongue primary education.

²² The Constitution of FDRE, Art.39.

²³ The Revised Constitution of BGRS, Art.6.

²⁴ Mégret, “Nature of Obligations, in International Human Rights Law.” In: Moeckli, et al. eds. *International Human Rights Law* (London: Oxford University, 2010), 130.

1.4. Research Questions

This thesis is intended to answer several questions. The main question being: Is the right to mother tongue primary education being implemented to all children of BGRS? Under the umbrella of this broad question, the following specific questions would be addressed.

- ◆ How children's right to mother tongue primary education is perceived?
- ◆ To what extent children's right to mother tongue primary education is legally recognized?
- ◆ How the government is implementing children's right to mother tongue primary education?
- ◆ What are the challenges of implementing children's right to mother tongue primary education?
- ◆ What are the possible solutions for the challenges of implementing children's right to mother tongue primary education?

1.5. Significance of the Study

In general, this study has an exploratory purpose since it is aimed at investigating commonly held beliefs about children's mother tongue primary education and its practical implications.²⁵ More specifically, the study is believed to provide firsthand information for policy makers, human rights activists and advocates to review their decisions and take action for the implementation of children's right to mother tongue primary education.

Most prior research works on mother tongue are partial treatments of its role on the pedagogical effectiveness of children's by ignoring human rights approach. Some of these works include: "Educating Learners in their Home Languages" by center for applied linguistics, "Students' attitude towards mother tongue instruction as a correlate of academic achievement" by Adamu Assefa, and "An assessment of the impact of medium of instruction on non-Amharic linguistic background students in selected primary school in Addis Ababa" by Daniel Taye.

In addition, most research works in Ethiopia of which "Study on medium of instruction in primary schools in Ethiopia," conducted by Heugh [et al] is worth to mention, neglects BGRS considering it peripheral. Hence, this study has been hoped to fill these gaps and also inspire further study.

²⁵ Yitayew Alemayehu and Wondemagegn Tadesse, *Human Rights Research: A practical Guidebook on Methodology and Methods* (Addis Ababa University: Center for Human Rights Studies, 2013), 16.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study has been intended to investigate the human rights approach to children's primary education in their mother tongue. However, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the human rights, it is not limited from addressing the multi-dimensional significance of MTE. In addition, most studies on the area are interested on mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education while this study is interested on the base or MTE without contradicting the significance of bilingualism or multilingualism.

Primary education in accordance to Ethiopian curriculum falls in to two categories such as first cycle (1-4) and second cycle (5-8). Thus, the first cycle of primary education is emphasized in this study by considering the shift from MTE to English medium of education in grade five in the study area. This would be done without denying the necessity of MTE in the first 8 school years with the rational of the expectation of its encompassing very young children who enter the school gate for the first time and the current effort of the regional state to realize the children's right to MTE at this level.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

In an effort to achieve its objective, the study has passed through time and financial constraint as well as shortage of important and up to date data. However, the researcher has dealt with such shortcomings by managing the allotted time, by adding extra fund to the research budget and by using multiple sources of data and triangulating it to increase its validity.

1.8. Operational Definitions

Mother Tongue: Also known as (L1) is the first language of a child that she/he learns at home and easily understood.

Other Tongue: Also known as second language (L2) is a language/s that a child learns out of home.

Mother Tongue Primary Education: Is an education that uses mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction, covers grades 1-8 and ages 7-14.

Medium of Instruction: Is a language that is used as a means to deliver knowledge in educational system.

Indigenous Nations and Nationalities: Are the nations and nationalities that are granted the ownership of the regional Constitution as per article two of the revised Constitution of BGRS.

Exogenous Nations and Nationalities: Are the nations and nationalities that are living in BGRS and do not granted the Constitutional ownership as per article two of the revised Constitution of the region.

1.9. Organization of the Paper

The thesis would have five chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction of the study which includes: background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, limitation and operational definitions. In the second chapter, a review of related literatures would be presented from a point of view of conceptual, historical, theoretical and practical frameworks. Chapter three addresses the research design and methodology of the study. Data presentation, analysis and discussion would be undertaken in chapter four. The fifth and the last chapter would present summery of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The main concern of the study is to explore children's right to MTE. To this end, this chapter deals with a review of related literatures. The chapter comprises six major sections. The first part deal with the conceptual framework of children's right to MTE. Thus, it conceptualizes what children, rights, mother tongue and MTE would mean. In its second part, the chapter presents the historical overview of MTE in international, regional (African context) and national contexts. The third section concerns with the theoretical lenses of the study. For this purpose, the cultural historical activity theory towards which the study has been rooted and the mother tongue based approaches would be addressed to show the direction to where the study foresee. The fourth section deals with the pedagogical, sociological and psychological benefits of MTE. Following, the educational, political, economic and socio-cultural challenges as well as their respective responses will be presented. The final part presents ways of implementing MTE.

2.2. The Concept of Children's Right to MTE

Conceptualizing children's right to MTE is a broad and combination of terms such as children, rights, mother tongue and education. A working definition of the terms is elaborated as follows.

2.2.1. Children

According to the convention on the rights of the child, "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."²⁶ As Krogh and Slentz cited in French quoted, these human beings were conceived by John Locke, as "a tabula rasa" or empty vessel needing to be filled with knowledge, skills and dominant cultural values and to be made ready to learn and for school.²⁷

However, this view is challenged by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence as cited in French, who conceive a child as a co-constructor of knowledge; a researcher actively seeking to make meaning of the

²⁶ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art.1.

²⁷ Krogh and Slentz, *Early Childhood Education*, In: Geraldine French, *Children's early learning and development* (NCCA, 2007), 9.

world.²⁸ As far as this study is concerned, it lies between the two conceptions that children's are active investigators of the environment to which they belong and acquire the knowledge, skill and values they come across.

2.2.2. Rights

Rights are entitlements that are morally good, justified or acceptable where as human rights are rights which are believed to belong to every person by virtue of humanity.²⁹ The term "every person" includes children among others. As CRC elaborated, these rights underlined four core principles such as non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to participate.³⁰ As far as this study is concerned, all principles are concerned directly or indirectly except the selection of educational development in the case of the third principle for its purpose without denying the interdependent nature of the rights

2.2.3. Mother Tongue

Mother tongue is a contested concept and there is an ongoing debate on its meaning as well as choosing it among alternative terms such as first language (L1), home language, vernacular language, native language and best known language. According to Skutnabb-Kangas, mother tongue is defined based on four criteria as illustrated in the following table.

Criterion	Definition	
1. Origin	The language one learned first	
2. Identification	I. Internal	The language one identifies with/as a native speaker of
	II. External	The language one is identified with/as a native speaker of, by others
3. Competence	The language one knows best	
4. Function	The language one uses most	

Table 1: Definition of Mother Tongue³¹

²⁸ Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, In: French, *Children's early learning and development*, 9.

²⁹ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 11th ed.

³⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12.

³¹ Skutnabb-Kangas Tove, *Linguistic Genocide in Education or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000), 106.

Though the above definition is widely used, there is a contentious debate among scholars. Herrlitz, Ongstad and Ven for instance argued that, the first and the second criterion neglects the possibilities of bi or multilingual language acquisition and identification in the case of the prevalence of different languages in the family or the direct environment that the child belong to.³² As far as this study is concerned, the term “Mother Tongue” is used being defined in line with Skutnabb-Kangas as a language that a child learned first, identified with, knows best and uses most in spite of the questions raised against.

2.2.4. Mother Tongue Education

Education is “the theory and practice of teaching, the process of educating or being educated, and information about or training in a particular subject.”³³ MTE is an educational system that uses mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction or teaching of and the teaching through it.³⁴ Similarly to this view, this study conceives MTE as an educational system that is based on solid ground or which speaks the language that the learners speak and reduce difficulties of adopting new environment. This is important especially for the children who enter the school gate for the first time or at the first eight years of primary education as numerous commentators recommend.

Generally, children’s right to MTE is conceived by this study as children’s right to use their mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction. This right encompasses what Clapham referred as '4As' approaches, which are interconnected to each other: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability which are elaborated as follows.³⁵

- ❖ **Availability:** Refers to formally opening schools, fulfilling school facilities and above all employing mother tongue as a medium of instruction in this context. The lack of such facilities will mean that less attraction of schools for the children and the failure of the government in their obligation to provide quality education.³⁶
- ❖ **Accessibility:** Has two dimensions. First, it means *non-discrimination* or a right to equal treatment of all children’s and second, it means *economic accessibility* or a right to free MTE.³⁷

³² Herrlitz, Ongstad and Ven, “Research on MTE in a Comparative International Perspective,” 15-16.

³³ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 11th ed.

³⁴ UNESCO, *Education in a multilingual world*, 14.

³⁵ Andrew Clapham, *Human Rights: A very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 123-127.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

- ❖ **Acceptability:** Is the concept used to describe the importance of ensuring that education is conducted in a way that is acceptable to children's. Denying mother tongue which is the best interest of the child is thus, violating their right. Hence, the environment has to tackle not only material conditions but it must also enable children to develop and learn.³⁸
- ❖ **Adaptability:** Raises fundamental questions about education such as what is education for and who decides it? As long as education is geared solely to admission to the next stage, some children will be ill-equipped for life. This occurs when the educational systems ignore the multi-dimensional development of children of which language is the one.³⁹

2.3. Historical Overview of Children's right to MTE

2.3.1. MTE in International Context

The right to education has been declared in 1948 and since then attempts to make it available to all has been a priority for development agencies and governments.⁴⁰ As the UN agency with a mandate to cover all aspects of education, UNESCO convened a committee of experts to consider the question of the language of education on a worldwide basis in 1951. The committee reported its findings in 1953 and noted that, "We take it as axiomatic that every child of school age should attend school...We take it as axiomatic, too, that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil."⁴¹

Consecutively, UNESCO adopted a Convention against Discrimination in Education (CDE) in 1960, which aims at eliminating any forms of discrimination in education.⁴² This is further reflected in the 1965 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) which obliges the states to guarantee the right to education of everyone.⁴³ The 1966 Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), reaffirmed the right to education and the direction towards it shall be framed which were reflected in UDHR.⁴⁴

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Kagure Gacheche, "Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy: Policy and Practice in Kenya," POLIS Journal Vol.4. (2010), 2.

⁴¹ UNESCO, *The use of Vernacular Languages in Education*, 6.

⁴² UNESCO, *Convention against Discrimination in Education*, (France, Paris, 1960). Art. 3.

⁴³ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, *General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX)*, (1965), Art. 5 (E) (V).

⁴⁴ Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI)* (1966), Art. 13.

This is further elaborated in the 1989 CRC which explicitly recognizes children's right to education and recommended that it shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. The convention also affirms the primacy of children's interest in all matters that concerns them which is MTE by implication and its applicability without discrimination of any kind.⁴⁵

A year later, the international community meets in Jomtien, Thailand for a Conference on Education for All and committed itself to ensure the universal right to education for "every citizen and every society." This is reaffirmed at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal where the Dakar Framework for Action which underlies the right to quality education was adopted. By the same year, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been established, to ensure that, by 2015, "children everywhere... will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." In 2002, governments reaffirmed these commitments and agreed to a range of strategies to achieve, in "A World Fit for Children", the outcome document from the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children.⁴⁶

Today, the international community is about to celebrate the deadline of the commitments stated above. The analytical overview of the late progresses in the right to education could be seen in two ways, quantitatively and qualitatively. As Gacheche argues, the initial response was increasing enrolment rates and providing positive quantitative data.⁴⁷ In this regard, responding to the question-‘will we make it?’ Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO in foreword of 2013/14 "Education for All Global Monitoring Report" replied that, ‘we will not’ and recommends that ‘all governments must invest in education as an accelerator of inclusive development.’⁴⁸

The second response is the qualitative issues inside school which is appropriate language-in education policies among others. According to Gacheche, teaching pupils through the language they speaks most at home and understands well enough or their mother tongue improves their critical engagement with content and foster an environment of mutual learning.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Arts. 2, 3, 28 and 29.

⁴⁶ UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 1.

⁴⁷ Gacheche, "Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy," 20.

⁴⁸ UNESCO, *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All*. Summary Report, (France: Paris, 2014), 3-4.

⁴⁹ Gacheche, "Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy," 3.

2.3.2. MTE in African Context

All languages develop through usage and time, and African languages are no exception of this trend.⁵⁰ Prior to colonialism, as Alidou quoted by Benson argued, there were many examples of how people used their own languages educate their children. These include the Tuareg people of Mali, Mauritania and Niger have long used their own writing system known as Tifinagh for writing Tamajeq, their language. Hausa speakers and their neighbors who also used Hausa as a language of wider communication, having been exposed to Islam, used Arabic transliteration (known as Ajama) to write Hausa.⁵¹ In addition, Ali and Mazrui cited in Desai noted as there were ancient literatures in Ethiopia and the Islamized city states of East and West Africa.⁵² Alidou further argued that, “the medium-of-instruction problem emerged in Africa in the late 1800’s with the introduction of Western education.”⁵³

During colonialism, as Tekeste argued, education was carried mostly by missionaries and it stressed on the acquisition of a foreign (European) languages as privileged value at the expense of African linguistic and other values. The investment on education was based on the type of policy and practices of the colonial rule, the extent of the length they stay and resource base of the colony. The educational programs were designed not in the way that would be accepted and appreciated by the majority of the Africans. They were rather designing in the European footsteps so that African education shall follow it.⁵⁴ He further argues that, “in many aspects the record of colonialism in the field of education in Africa was *dismal (emphasis added)*.”⁵⁵

Postcolonial educational system of Africa is characterized by Tekeste as crisis-ridden since it is inherited from the colonial times.⁵⁶ Cited in Desai, Alidou points the causes as they are the view of multilingualism as destabilizing for fragile new states and the view of European languages as

⁵⁰ Zubeida K., Desai, “A case for Mother Tongue Education?” (South Africa: University of Western Cape, 2012), 100.

⁵¹ Alidou, *Medium of Instruction in Post-Colonial Africa*, In: Carol Benson, “Language “Choice” in Education” *PRAESA Occasional Paper No. 30*, (2008), 8.

⁵² Desai, “A case for Mother Tongue Education?” 95.

⁵³ Benson, “Language “Choice” in Education,” 9.

⁵⁴ Tekeste Negash, “Education in Ethiopia: From Crisis to the Brink of Collapse.” *Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Discussion Paper 33, Elanders Gotab AB*. (Sweden: Stockholm, 2006), 7-8.

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

“neutral” in these contexts, and the lack of planning of indigenous languages which were underdeveloped during colonial period.⁵⁷

However, despite these initial obstacles as well as challenges in developing MTE, today, there are numerous MTE systems in Africa. How did this happen? A number of factors may be raised for such dynamic change of which human rights movement is the highest value of this paper. At the dawn of independence of many of African states in the early 1960's, governments committed themselves to the promotion of human rights. Of the many human rights instruments, the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa are worth to mention for the purpose of this study. ACHPR recognizes the right to education of every individual without distinction of any kind.⁵⁸

Moreover, ACRWC recognizes children's right to education and points as it shall be directed to the full development of child's personality and the preservation of positive African values among others. The charter also affirms children's right to education without discrimination of any kind and the primacy of their best interest in all matters that concern them.⁵⁹ Regarding to MTE, though the charter did not explicitly express, the extension of the direction of education might mean that, it shall consider children's linguistic value. In addition, Kaime argued that, education according to the ACRWC is the best interest of the child and its decision remains to the child themselves.⁶⁰

Further, the Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa stated that,

*The African States should prepare and implement reforms for introduction of African languages into the education curriculum. To this end, each state should extend the use of African languages taking into consideration the requirements of social cohesion, technological progress, regional and African integration.*⁶¹

Thus, according to the African Human Rights system, children have a right to MTE and the states are duty bound to this right by the aforementioned legal instruments.

⁵⁷ Alidou, et al., *Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa: The Language Factor* (ADEA, 2006), In: Desai, “A case for Mother Tongue Education?” 115.

⁵⁸ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, (OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3/1981), Arts. 2 and 17.

⁵⁹ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Arts. 3, 4 and 11.

⁶⁰ Thoko Kaime, *The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Socio-Legal Perspective* (South Africa: PULP, 2009), 115-116.

⁶¹ The Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa, AUCMC/EXP.CHAR.1(I), (Kenya, Nairobi, 2005), Art. 17.

2.3.3. MTE in Ethiopian Context

For much of colonial and postcolonial language in education politics around the world, the fight has largely been between a foreign (colonial) language and dominant local language(s).⁶² As many scholars acknowledged, this is not true for Ethiopia where the development of education has long history by contribution of Orthodox Church using Geez, Quranic school of Islam using Arabic and Missionaries using foreign and local languages as a medium of instruction.⁶³

Despite its long history, however, modern education system was established in the country by the opening of Menelik II School in 1908 by Emperor Menelik and the intervention of foreign religious missionaries. French was introduced as a medium of instruction while English, Italian, Arabic and Amharic were given as a subject.⁶⁴ Fisseha as cited in Adamu argues that, the intervention of the missionaries was by introducing MTE as a means of spreading Christianity.⁶⁵

During the emperor Haile Selassie period, beside the need to strength national unity by using one-language policy, the provision of education in European languages was also encouraged with the ambition that Ethiopia would acquire Western knowledge and be modernized through foreign languages. However, when Fascist Italy occupied Ethiopia (1936), it changed the language policy to multi-lingual and as a result, about seven languages (Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Arabic, Harari, Kaficho and Somali) were used as medium of education.⁶⁶

After the Ethiopian liberation (1941), educational reconstruction began and shifted the previous French medium of instruction to English while Amharic was taught as a subject in all government schools. According to Seyoum cited in Alemayehu, in 1963, the medium of primary education was switched into Amharic while English was limited to secondary schools. He asserted that,

These measures were all accompanied by the policy of assimilation into Amharic culture and imposition of Amharic language intentionally excluding languages of

⁶² Ruanni F.T. Tupas, "The New Challenge of the Mother Tongues," *Kritika Kultura* 16. (Ateneo de Manila University, 2011), 1.

⁶³ Alemayehu Jote, "The Contribution of Mother-Tongue Education to Promote Indigenous Knowledge: The case of Bale Zone in Oromia region," (Unpublished MA thesis, AAU, 2012), 27.

⁶⁴ Pankhurst, "Education, Language, and History," *Ethiopian Journal of Education*, Vol. 7 No: 1, (1974), In: Mammo Ketti, "Management Problems of Multilingual Education in the Primary Schools of SNNP Region," (Unpublished MA thesis, AAU, 2001), 25.

⁶⁵ Fisseha, *Teaching in a Regional Language*, In: Adamu Assefa, "Students' Attitude towards MTE as a Correlate of Academic Achievement: The case of Sidama" (Unpublished MA thesis, AAU, 2002), 17.

⁶⁶ MCNab, "The changing pattern of Language use in Ethiopian Education," *Institute of Ethiopian studies*, Vol. 1, (1988). In: Mammo, "Management Problems of Multilingual Education," 26.

*major ethnic groups, typically Oromo Language, for fear they would be dangerous for the nation-building purpose.*⁶⁷

Coming to power in 1974, the Derg regime by its proclamation known as National Democratic Revolution Program (NDRP) recognizes the equality of all nations with the spirit of socialism. As a result, according to MaCNab cited in Daniel, fifteen languages were promoted as instructional medium. These languages include Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Walayitagna, Sidamigna, Gedogna, Somaligna, Hadyigna, Kambatigna, Kunamigna, Afarigna, Kafa, Mochigna, Siltigna and Sahogna. However, languages in the time were not standardized from the points of view of script, material preparation and trained manpower.⁶⁸

With the fall of Derg, Transitional Government of Ethiopian has replaced the Marxist-Leninist ideology by ethno-linguistic-based federal system in 1991. Based on this premise, Education and Training Policy was formulated in 1994, in which the use and status of local/regional languages in education has been addressed.⁶⁹ The education and training policy in Article 3.5 (1), asserted that:

*Cognizant of pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the uses of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.*⁷⁰

Moreover, the 1995 Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) explicitly affirms the rights of all languages to enjoy equal state recognition as well as the right to speak, to write and to develop once language.⁷¹ Regarding to the right to education, however, as Aman and Seyoum argued, the Constitution does not explicitly recognize it. But they do not deny the fact that, it affirms the right to equal access to publicly funded social services of which one is education, the priority of the best interest of the child, not to be subject to works that are harmful to her/his education and to be free of inhumane treatment in schools.⁷²

⁶⁷ Seyoum, (1997) *Language Policy and Access to Education in Ethiopia (1997)*, In: Alemayehu, "The Contribution of Mother-Tongue Education to Promote Indigenous Knowledge," 34.

⁶⁸ MaCNab, *The changing pattern of Language use in Ethiopian Education*, In: Daniel Taye, "An Assessment of the Impact of Medium of Instruction on Non-Amharic Linguistic Background Students in Selected Primary School in Addis Ababa," (Unpublished MA thesis, AAU, 2008), 38.

⁶⁹ Alemayehu, "The Contribution of Mother-Tongue Education to Promote Indigenous Knowledge," 36.

⁷⁰ Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Education and Training Policy. Art.5.3 (1).

⁷¹ The Constitution of FDRE, Arts. 5 (1) and 39 (2).

⁷² Getahun Kassa, ed. "The National Human Rights System in Ethiopia." *Ethiopian human rights law series, Vol. V.* (AAU, 2012), 184-186.

Subsequently, in 1997 the government developed a twenty- year education sector indicative plan which is divided in to a serious of five-year Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs). The first five-year ESDPI, (1997/98 to 2001/02) was derived from the goals of education and training policy.⁷³ ESDPII, (2000/01-2004/05) was developed in line with Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP), education for all and MDGs.⁷⁴ ESDP III, (2005/06-2009/10) was developed with an objective to achieve the MDGs and national development plan. Among the progresses made at this time span, the General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) strategy are worth to mention.⁷⁵ The fourth and which is approaching to its deadline, ESDPIV (2010/11-2014/15) is developed based on priority areas of which improving quality and increasing access are identified at primary level of education.⁷⁶

The government, beside the development of the programs, sets mechanism of evaluating its progress in quality of education and factors that challenges it. This mechanism is called National Learning Assessment (NLA) and carried out every three years since 1999/2000 at grades 4, 8, 10 and 12. For instance, as the fourth or the 2013 NLA of the student's achievement shows, the key factor of low student learning outcome in grade 4 and 8 (primary education) is the language of instruction which is mother tongue of children's in this context.⁷⁷

In reaction to this, though efforts are being made to realize children's right to MTE by the government, as Gideon argued,

*The division of the country into regions defined by language is problematic because of the lack of actual linguistic boundaries and the high degree of contact and mixing between the various peoples that inhabit the State.*⁷⁸

Moreover, as Aman and Seyoum noted, the federal Constitution does not expressly provided that the federal government will administer the educational system.⁷⁹ Rather it reserved for states according to Art.52 (1).⁸⁰

⁷³ MoE, *Education Sector Development Program I* (1997/8-2001/02), 1.

⁷⁴ MoE, *Education Sector Development Program II* (2000/01-2004/05), 27.

⁷⁵ MoE, *Education Sector Development Program III* (2005/06-2010/11), 4.

⁷⁶ MoE, *Education Sector Development Program IV* (2010/11-2014/15), 13.

⁷⁷ NEAEA, "Ethiopian 4th National Learning Assessment of grades 4 and 8," 35.

⁷⁸ Gideon P.E. Cohen, "Mother-Tongue and other Tongue in Primary Education." (___2007), 3.

⁷⁹ Getahun, "The National Human Rights System in Ethiopia," 184-186.

⁸⁰ The Constitution of FDRE, Art. 52 (1).

2.4. Theoretical Lenses to MTE

2.4.1. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was founded by a psychologist, Vygotsky and developed by Leontèv and most recently by Engeström.⁸¹ The central thesis of this theory is that the development of human cognition is determined by historically developing and culturally mediated practical activities. As cited by Alemayehu, Vygotsky stated that,

*Higher psychological processes develop in children through enculturation into the practices of society; through acquisition of society's technology, along with its signs and tools; and through education in all its forms.*⁸²

As Alemayehu argues, in particular reference to education, this theory claims that the source of learning is the local knowledge that the learners gain via the interaction they make with their community. Thus, integration of the knowledge that is acquired through informal education in to formal education is pedagogically sound.⁸³ As far as this study is concerned, this theory elicited the pedagogical effectiveness of the integration of local knowledge (mother tongue) that children's acquire through their interaction with the community into formal education.

2.4.2. Mother Tongue Based Approaches

Once the mother tongue of children is integrated in to formal education, the next possible step is employing theoretical frameworks which are called mother tongue based approaches. These approaches include bilingualism and multilingualism, and elaborated as follows.

I. **Bilingualism:**

Bilingualism is a dual medium education such as mother tongue and regional or national and international language.⁸⁴ As Desai argues, this approach is divided in to two contradicting situations which are influenced by contextual factors such as the status of the mother tongue,

⁸¹ Wolff-Michael Roth, "Cultural-Historical Activity Theory: Toward a Social Psychology from first Principles." (Canada: University of Victoria, __), 2.

⁸² Alemayehu, "The Contribution of Mother-Tongue Education to Promote Indigenous Knowledge,"16.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ UNESCO, *Education in a multilingual world*, 17.

power relations in that society with regard to speakers of different languages, the quality of teaching, and the availability of resources.⁸⁵

The first situation is *additive bilingualism*, which refers to the condition where a second language (L2) is acquired without any loss of the first language (L1). This was first coined by Lambert, based on his immersion experiments in Canada in the 1960's. The experimental project was to improve children's French who were English-speakers by having them immersed in French as a primary language of instruction. The investigation found that at the end of the fourth grade, the experimental classes were doing just with no accompanying deficits in home-language skills. The second situation is *subtractive bilingualism*, which refers to a condition where the L1 is gradually (but often, not so gradually) replaced by a more prestigious L2 usually in areas where the mother tongue is not a dominant language.⁸⁶ According to Desai, children from immigrant communities in the USA, UK, and many African countries would fall in to this category.⁸⁷

II. Multilingualism

Multilingualism refers to the use of three or more languages- the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language as a medium of education.⁸⁸ As Desai argues, the pull of the force of globalization (linguistic globalization in this context) in the 21st century makes it almost impossible for any country to even contemplate any isolationist policy of ignoring global influences.⁸⁹ This view is further elaborated in an introduction of a collection on multilingualism edited by Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas cited in Desai.

*There are no serious proposals anywhere in the world which suggest that children at school in the 21st century can do without substantive access to a language of power, usually one of the big international languages. ... There is, quite simply, no other choice than to proceed with strong, additive bilingual and multilingual options.*⁹⁰

As far as this study is concerned, it is believed that the argument over bilingualism whether it is additive or subtractive or multilingualism is when the foundation (mother tongue) is built first.

⁸⁵ Desai, "A case for Mother Tongue Education?" 72.

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ UNESCO, *Education in a multilingual world*, 17.

⁸⁹ Desai, "A case for Mother Tongue Education?" 74.

⁹⁰ Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas, eds. *Multilingual Education Works: From the periphery to the Center*. In: Desai, "A case for Mother Tongue Education?" 75.

Once the foundation is built, the study also believes on the significance of multilingualism to be followed over subtractive or additive bilingualism. However, as stated in chapter one, section six, the focus of this study would be the foundation-MTE.

2.5. Benefits of MTE

Even though, MTE could not escape from criticism as most of the social science discourses, a number of scholars advocate the advantage of using mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction especially at the early age of education. UNESCO's committee of experts on the use of MTE asserts that, the use of children's mother tongue in school has three advantages such as pedagogical, sociological and psychological.⁹¹

2.5.1. Pedagogical Benefit

Pedagogically, MTE enables the child to learn quickly than unfamiliar linguistic medium of instruction. As Chumbow (1990) cited in Adamu argued, the use of mother tongue in the early children's educational life will give permanence in their course of learning and which in turn enhance its cognitive development. On the other hand, early switch of language from mother tongue to second or foreign languages will create feeling of insufficiency and low self-esteem, develop dislike towards her/his teachers and school and prefer to drop out.⁹²

2.5.2. Sociological Benefit

Regarding to the sociological benefit, MTE helps a child as a means of identification among the community to which she/he belongs. Supporting this idea, Makulus argued that, education fails when it fails to make the child understand her/his social and cultural life of the society. Thus, in order to keep one of the pillars of education which is sociological value; children shall be instructed by the language in which her/his society uses to explain itself and its culture.⁹³

2.5.3. Psychological Benefit

Psychologically, MTE relieves students from psychological shock and give them an opportunity to express their opinion freely. This argument is favored by Fishman as cited in Tadesse, who stated

⁹¹ UNESCO, *Education in a multilingual world*, 17.

⁹² Chumbow, *The Place of Mother Tongue in the National Policy on Education*, In: Adamu, "Students' Attitude towards Mother Tongue Instruction," 12.

⁹³ Makulu, *Education, Development and National Building in Independent Africa*, In: Tadesse Akalu, "Assessment of Mother Tongue Education Policy in relation to its Implementation in Gambella Town: The Case of Agnuak Language" (Unpublished MA thesis, AAU, 2011), 14.

that, to expect a child to deal with new environment presented in new language is to impose on her /him a double burden which result in slow progress of the child. He raises a solution that softened this burden as nothing else other employing MTE.⁹⁴

As far as this study is concerned, it is believed that, teaching children's by their own mother tongue have invaluable significance. Therefore, any decision and action concerning them as Cummins argued,

*Whether we do it intentionally or inadvertently, when we destroy their language and rupture their relationship with parents and grandparents, we are contradicting the very essence of education.*⁹⁵

Thus, children's education shall be directed not towards any other aspect than their full (educational, sociological and psychological) development and a means of achieving this is their mother tongue medium education.

2.6. Challenges to MTE and their Responses

2.6.1. Educational Challenges

The vehicle of any educational system in general and MTE in particular is its policy and strategy. The rationality beside this is the principal, teachers and students acts towards the assumption of policy makers. If the policies are inadequate and partially formulated, the schools would become to reproduce the inequalities by missing their original mission. The responses for this critical challenge of MTE are the formulation of the policies by taking in to account the needs of the stakeholders in a bottom-up scenario, the consideration of the required resources and the negative impacts that it might cause.⁹⁶

The other educational challenge of MTE is the quantitative and qualitative inadequacy of instructional materials such as textbooks, reference books, teachers guide and other supportive materials. The lack of such materials in MTE is most of the time associated with the prevalence of many languages in the setting under question, the lack of political will and poor resource

⁹⁴ Fishman, *Readings in the Sociology of Languages*. In: Tadesse, "Assessment of Mother Tongue Education Policy in relation to its Implementation in Gambella Town," 12.

⁹⁵ Cummins, "Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue," 16.

⁹⁶ Gacheche, "Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy," 19.

allocation, the inadequacy of language in education policies and other socio-economic and political factors. Thus, increasing the awareness of the stakeholders, working on changing attitude related problems and involving the local communities are among others, the necessary measures that help to overcome the aforementioned challenges.⁹⁷

The last, but by no means the least educational challenge is the issue of teachers. The efficiency, effectiveness and numeral sufficiency of the teachers are essential to successfully deliver knowledge to the children in their mother tongue. As Bensen cited in Gacheche argues, when teachers are not native speakers of the mother tongue of the children or lack sufficient training on how to carry out it, they avoid the ‘unknown good’ and regress to the ‘known bad’. This means that, the teacher would turn to teach in the way she/he understood the concept which may be extremely different from the reality. Thus, to resolve such problems, the necessary measures should be taken at the initial stage of the program.⁹⁸

2.6.2. Political Challenge

According to Bullivant cited in Gacheche, most educators recognize the advantage and the right of diverse groups to receive MTE system which meets their demand over its counterpart submersion system. The policy-makers on the other hand, argued that L2-based linguistic educational policy is the best way to prevent ethnic division and contribute to the construction of a nation-state. But the educators have a fear of disruption of the development of nation building which states claims and struggle to reconcile the claims of this group. The policy makers also have a fear of political instability. He refers this as “pluralist dilemma.”⁹⁹

As far as the response is concerned, national unity can be built through acknowledging, not denying the existence of different languages in a country.¹⁰⁰ As Gregersen cited in Gacheche argued, “the one nation- one language ideology assumes that a single language will ensure a country’s unity and equal development.”¹⁰¹ Taking Ethiopia for instance, he noted that, “despite a majority of the population speaking Amharic, this has not contributed to the entrenchment of

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Bullivant, *The Pluralist Dilemma in Education: Six Case Studies*, In: Gacheche, “Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy,” 27.

¹⁰⁰ Desai, “A case for Mother Tongue Education?” 93.

¹⁰¹ Gregersen, *Language in Africa: An Introductory Survey*, In: Gacheche, “Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy,” 27-28.

peace, improved participation or prevented retreat into ethnic or local factionalism.”¹⁰² Thus inclusive language policies are necessary to enable citizens to participate meaningfully in political discourse and to protect the state from problems arising from such issues.¹⁰³

2.6.3. Economic Challenge

Economic assumption is the other challenge in implementing MTE and the question is whether using either local languages or languages of wider communication. In the world of business, the assumption is, it makes sense to use the languages that are currently in use in a low expenditure and advanced technology. Further, as Fasold (1984) argued, the difficulty to train competent teachers, to produce teaching materials and to distribute them under the conditions of great distances hinder the realization of children’s right to MTE.¹⁰⁴

As far as the response is concerned, however, it is important to look the link between education and children’s aspirations as well as the role of education in the economic growth itself. As the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment No. 13 reflected;

*... Education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities.*¹⁰⁵

In addition, according to the economic theorist Amartya Sen, as quoted by Skutnabb-Kangas, linguistic skills trigger economic values like creativity, divergent, alternative thinking, flexibility and innovation if such things actually exist in the culture. Thus, the protection of linguistic rights in education represents a long-term asset for future investment.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Fasold, *The Sociolinguistics of Society*, In: Dessalew Abawa, “Factors that Affect the Implementation of Using Awgni as a Medium of Instruction in the Lower Primary Schools of AWI Zone,” (Unpublished MA thesis, AAU, 2002), 18.

¹⁰⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 13: *The Right to Education*. Article 13 E/C.12/1999/10, Para. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Skutnabb-Kangas Tove, “The Stakes: Linguistic Diversity, Linguistic Human Rights and Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education or Linguistic Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity and an even faster Destruction of Biodiversity and our Planet ” (2009), 16.

2.6.4. Socio-Cultural Challenge

As Bull cited in Desai argues, the assumption of culture is that many languages lead to division in society and ethnic rivalry might result if some local languages are given preference over the others. Moreover, she asserted that:

*What is best for the child psychologically and pedagogically may not be what is best for the adult socially... what is even more significant for the child and the adult may not be best or even possible for the society.*¹⁰⁷

As a response to this challenge, Mialert and Makulu cited in Dessalew argued that,

*The use of mother tongue in instruction stems from on the one hand, the urge to inculcate the attitudes, values and knowhow of the society and on the other hand to show how education has come to be perceived as an integral part of social and cultural development, which enables the children's to take part in the social life.*¹⁰⁸

2.7. Implementation of MTE

After reviewing successful MTE programs in 13 countries with linguistically diverse populations in 2000, the Center for Applied Linguistics identified the following steps involved in implementing MTE program and the ingredients needed for its success. These include building the foundations, developing the program and evaluation.¹⁰⁹

I. Building the Foundations for the Program

The milestone in establishing MTE is *understanding* its importance. This is followed by *program development* which could be done by either the government or NGOs whose agendas include community development and the expansion of literacy. These bodies engage in a wide range of activities to develop MTE program of which creating support at the national and local levels is the key of its success. At national level, political will and legislative support to develop or modify national education policy and provide a support to ministry of education are important for ongoing

¹⁰⁷ Bull, *Vernacular-language education*. In: Desai, "A case for Mother Tongue Education?" 91.

¹⁰⁸ Mialert, *The Child's Right to Education* And Makulu, *Education, Development and National Building in Independent Africa*, In: Dessalew, "Factors that Affect the Implementation of Using Awgni as a Medium of Instruction," 15.

¹⁰⁹ Center for Applied Linguistics, "Educating Learners in their Home Languages: Establishing and Maintaining Successful Programs" (USA: Washington DC. 2004), 1-7.

expansion as well as sustainability of the programs. At local level, winning community support is necessary since the school could not work without them.¹¹⁰

Then after, *language development and planning* will takes place and it involves selecting languages to be used for education if the country is multilingual and decide to begin MTE in only a few of its languages and add others later; deciding which language variety to use for education based on their attitudes, beliefs, and values; writing the language if the language does not yet have a written form; standardizing the language or establishing norms for the written language; and expanding and elaborating the vocabulary.¹¹¹

II. Development of the Program

Once the foundation is built, the stage for program development takes the next step and here attention needs to be given to the development of the program itself. Among the most important considerations, the development of curricula and materials; human resource development and allocation; the adoption of a teaching model; and the establishment of a system for assessing students' progress are worth to mention. Thus, the curricula design as well as the availability of teaching materials should be welcoming to the children's. The success of MTE programs also depends on recruiting, placing, training and providing professional development for teachers so as to make them fully proficient in the language and skillful at using that language for teaching and learning. This should be supported by effective and efficient administrative systems. The teaching method should be child centered and finally, assessment of children's learning is a vital element to monitor their progress and to identify those who need additional assistance.¹¹²

III. Evaluation of the Program

Up on successful development of MTE program, the next step to be taken is running of the program and this is equipped with evaluation of its effectiveness. Evaluation is important to examine the achievement of children, the attitude of the parents and community towards the program and the efficiency (cost benefit analysis) of the program. These information further help to decide what program modifications need to be made and to expand it.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the design of the research and the methodology it employed. In doing so, it begins by discussing the approach and paradigm to which the study has been rooted. In the section that follows, an overview of the study site and the rationale of selecting it would be discussed. The sampling design, methods of data collection and analysis would be discussed in the subsequent section of the chapter. Finally, the ethical considerations that take place pre-data collection, at the time of data collection and post-data collection would be discussed.

3.2. Research Approach and Paradigm

To recall once again the objectives of the study, it was aimed at exploring the perceptions, legal status, practical overview, challenges and solutions for the challenges of implementing children's right to mother tongue primary education in BGRS. In doing so, the study would follow qualitative research approach. The rationale of choosing qualitative over its counterpart quantitative approach is as Mason stated:

*It is possible to explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world through qualitative approach, including the texture and wave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginations of research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, relationships work and the significance of the meanings that they generate.*¹¹⁴

According to Creswell, qualitative research design begins with philosophical assumptions. Thus, this study is rooted in epistemological assumption and as a result, knowledge is acquired by "getting close to the research participants".¹¹⁵ This rationale leads the researcher to employ constructive research paradigm. One of the ways in which constructivism is manifested is grounded theory—"in which the researcher roots her/his theoretical orientation in the views of research participants."¹¹⁶ Hence, the theoretical foundation of this study is grounded theory.

¹¹⁴Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2002), 1.

¹¹⁵ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 2nd ed. (London: SAGE 2007), 18-21.

¹¹⁶Ibid

3.3.The Study Site

The study has been conducted in BGRS, which was established in 1994 by the Constitution of FDRE, which created a federal system of governance with 9 regional states and two city administrations. Administratively, the region is divided into 3 Zones, 19 Woredas and 1 special Woreda, 1 city administration and 475 Kebeles.¹¹⁷ Its capital city, Assosa is about 752 km from Addis Ababa, the capital city of the country.¹¹⁸

Geographically, the region is estimated to cover an area of 50,380 Km² and it is found between 8.9⁰ N and 12.01⁰ N latitude and 34.10⁰E and 37.04⁰E longitude. It accounts about 4.48% of the total land area of the country. The region is bordered with Amhara regional state in the North and North East, with Oromia regional state in the East and South East, with Gambella regional state in the South and with Sudan and South Sudan in the West and South West.¹¹⁹ The mean annual temperature of the region is found between 23-33⁰c in the low land and 10-15⁰c in the highland with a slight variation of temperature by months. February- May is the hottest months while October-January is the coldest months. For most of the areas of the region, the rainy seasons start in March-October with the highest concentration in June-August.¹²⁰

According to the population and housing census of 2007, the total population of the region is 670,847 composing 50.74% male and 49.26 female. The projection of the 2007 population and housing census made in July 2012 indicates 982,004 populations of which 50.8% are males and 49.2% are females. The region is highly characterized by its ethnic diversity. The major indigenous ethnic groups include Berta (25.9%), Gumuz (21.11%), Shinasha (7.59%), Mao (1.9%) and Komo (0.96%). The “other” major ethnic groups include Amhara (21.25%), Oromo (13.32%), Agew (4.24%), Tigre (0.68%) and others.¹²¹

According to the data obtained from the educational bureau, the region has achieved an impressive progress in construction of schools, students’ enrollment and qualification of teachers. As of 2013/4, there are 497 primary schools enrolling 194, 156 students and having 108, 147 teachers. Currently, insuring the quality of education has become the timely issue of the region.

¹¹⁷ Kebele is the 5th, Woreda is the 4th, Zone is the 3rd, and region is the 2nd level in administrative tree of Ethiopia.

¹¹⁸ BGRS Communication Bureau, *Facts about Benishangul Gumuz Regional State*, (2013), 2-6.

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ FDRE, *Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census* (Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, 2008), 96.

It is from this aspiration that this study is emanated. The rationale of choosing this site is due to the familiarity of the researcher to the area which makes entry easier. The administrative atlas of the region has been showed as follows.

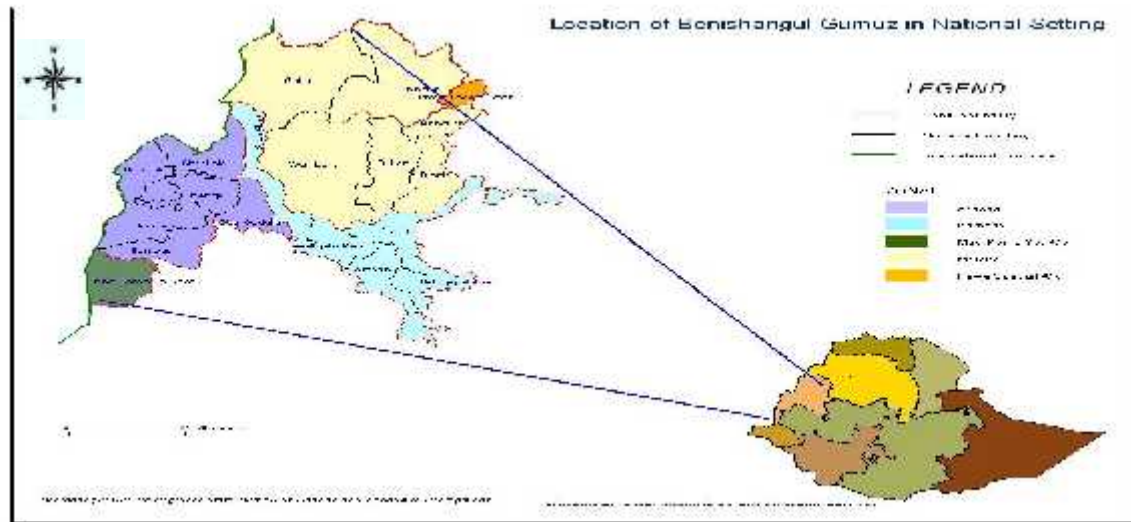


Figure 1: Administrative Map of the Study Site¹²²

3.4.Sampling Design

The sampling of this study is designed based on two notions of qualitative research approach. The first idea is that qualitative research rarely determines the number of population from which the sample is taken.¹²³ Hence, *non-probability* sampling has been used in this study. The second argument is according to Creswell, qualitative research will select the participants purposefully with the understanding of the research problem and questions.¹²⁴ In accordance of these notions, respondents will be selected in a *purposive or judgmental* sampling technique.

Based on this rational, education bureau officials, children's rights experts under Women, Children and Youth Affairs Bureau, Language Expert under Culture and Tourism Bureau, MTE and donor organizations focal persons, and legal experts has been selected at the regional level. At zonal and woreda level, the education officials and MTE focal persons has been selected with the rational of their practical relevance to the MTE related laws, policies and strategies.

¹²² Atlas of BGRS Bureau of Finance and Economic Development, 2007.

¹²³ Lawrence Neuman, *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Pearson Education, Inc. 2007), 141.

¹²⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. 3rd ed. (London: SAGE, 2009), 175.

In addition to these settings, Berber primary school principal, teachers, parents and two out of four grade one classes (one in which children's learn in their mother tongue and the other in other tongue) has been selected. The school is found in Metekel Zone, Dibati Woreda, Berber town and it is selected for the sake of comparing the children's performance considering the beginning of the program as a medium of instruction in this academic year.

3.5. Method of Data Collection

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is the use of multiple data sources.¹²⁵ Thus, in order to obtain rich and reliable data, the study has been used primary and secondary sources of data in multiple techniques of data collection. The technique that has been employed to gather data include in-depth interview, focused group discussion, observation and document review.

3.5.1. In-depth interview

In-depth interview has been carried with key informants to gather firsthand information. The informants were selected based on their position and experience in their institution. The procedure of data collection has begun by preparing the interview guides before contacting them and this was followed by selecting the informants, adjusting conducive time and place for the interview and finally administering it.

3.5.2. Focused Group Discussion

Focused group discussion has been carried with teachers and it is appropriate for this study since it enables to gather firsthand information from individuals who are very familiar with the day to day academic performance of the children. The procedure of data collection has begun by preparing discussion guideline and this is followed by adjusting conducive time and place for the discussants and finally administering it.

3.5.3. Observation

Participant observation has been carried out as additional tool to collect firsthand information. Here, with a focus on the facts on the ground at Berber primary school, it has been carried equivalently with interview at woreda, zone and regional levels. The procedure of data collection in this technique would be based on the predesigned observation guideline and this would be followed by taking field notes and photographs during data collection.

¹²⁵Ibid

3.5.4. Document Review

Document review would be employed to gather secondary data so as to strengthen the firsthand information's gathered in the aforementioned techniques. The documents that would be used in this study include: declarations, conventions, Constitutions, policies, strategic plans and others which were relevant to children's right to MTE.

3.6. Method of Data Analysis

After the data has been gathered in the above mentioned tools, it will be organized systematically in accordance with the objective of the study, research questions and questions asked to the participants. In this process, transcribing of the interviews, observation notes and images, and focused group discussion memos will be undertaken based on extensive reflection of participants view. In addition, triangulation of primary and secondary data's would be carried. Then, through reading of each transcript of data, coding of the data would takes place to determine analytical themes or categories. This would be done with the rational of increasing the reliability and validity of the findings. Finally, data presentation, analysis and reporting of the findings would be undertaken.

3.7. Ethical Consideration

This study would be conducted in accordance with widely accepted ethical principles. Thus, prior to traveling to the site selected for the study, the researcher holds official letter which would be prepared by Addis Ababa University, Centre for Human Rights Studies. The study participants would be included voluntarily up on their willingness and informed consent. To do so, the researcher has clarified the official letter; the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of the data's forwarded by them and the rights they have such as the right to voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time and the right to remain anonymous. Throughout data collection process, the respondents has been treated in full respect and at the closing of the motion, they had been thanked for their kindness to take part in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and discussion of data which were collected from primary and secondary sources through interviews, focused group discussion, observations and document reviews. The data presentation is based on the objective, research questions and the theoretical frameworks underlying the study. To recall ones again, the general objective of the study was exploring the implementation of children's right to mother tongue primary education (here in after also referred as the program) in BGRS while the main research question is whether this right is realized to all children's of the region.

Regarding to the analysis, many scholars of whom Creswell is the one argued that, qualitative research data analysis involves moving deeper and deeper in to understanding it and make manageable themes to interpret it.¹²⁶ Following this rational, the study draws themes by through reading of the transcribed and coded data. The themes will fall in to main themes which are illustrated below and sub-themes which shall be discussed later under each category.

- I. The perception towards the program;
- II. The legal status of the program;
- III. The practical overview of the program;
- IV. Challenges of realizing the program and
- V. Solutions for the challenges of realizing the program.

Discussion of the finding would be undertaken equivalently with the analysis based on the above themes and their sub-themes. In this aspect, an endeavor would be made to include research findings in other settings and relevant documents with the assumption to provide readers an opportunity to examine the relation between the finding of this study and other studies and literatures. However, the original view of the research participants in which the study was founded would never modified for the purpose of associating this study with others.

¹²⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 183.

4.2. The Perception towards the Program

The underlying question of this main theme is: *How you perceive MTE in primary level schooling?* The data for this question were obtained from the students, teachers, principal, parents, MTE experts and woreda to regional officials. Regarding to the tools of data collection, this theme is based on the in-depth interview, focused group discussion, observation and a review of relevant documents. Proceeding to the responses, the participants of the study provide different views and as a result, this theme is divided in to sub-themes such as the student's perception, academicians' perception, official's perception and the social attitude, and discussed as follows.

4.2.1. The Student's Perception

As recalled from the sampling design section in chapter three, two out of four grade one classes, one who learn through their mother tongue which is Shinasha language and the other through Amharic language which is mother tongue for Amhara children¹²⁷ and other tongue for Oromo children were the sample of this study. The rational of selecting these classes was considering the beginning of education of and through mother tongue in this academic year and for the sake of comparative analysis. The data were collected through interview and participant observation methods, and discussed here in under, after general background information.

In the case of the first class, there were 42 Shinasha children out of which 4 students were dropped out and one returned back at the time of data gathering. This class learns five subjects such as Shinasha language, English language, Environmental Science, Mathematics and Esthetics (Borna, English, Gal Dani Sayinsi, Tana and Estetiksi respectively). As far as the second class is concerned, there were 60 students- 33 Amhara, 20 Oromo and 2 Gumuz out of which 2 Amhara, 3 Oromo and 2 Gumuz were dropped out and none of them returned back at the time of the study. This class also learns five subjects such as Amharic, English. Mathematics, Environmental Science and Esthetics ("Amaregna", English, "Hisab" "Akebab Sayins" and Esthetics respectively). According to the school principal, the reason for the drop out of the children were

¹²⁷ Even though the government does not officially recognize, the researcher believe as it is MTE since the students are learning their and through their mother tongue and the discussion here in after is in accordance of this fact without contradicting the respondents view.

the unfamiliarity of medium of education, the distance of the school from their home and their own personal problems.¹²⁸

The following sample pictures which were captured during the observation period that was carried out from March 17-19/2014 demonstrates the appearance of the students in the classroom.



Figure 2: Sample Photograph of Shinasha Children¹²⁹

Figure 3: Sample Photograph of Amhara & Oromo Children¹³⁰

The figure at left hand side illustrates a Shinasha children's learning Borna (Shinasha language) subject which is their own mother tongue while the figure at right hand side shows Oromo and Amhara children learning environmental science in Amharic language which is mother tongue for Amhara children and other tongue for Oromo children.

Coming back to the question, the majority of those who are learning by their own mother tongue (Shinasha and Amhara children) perceive as MTE is interesting since it eases the difficulty of their education. Moreover, one Shinasha child responded that,

I am happy and chanceful to hear and speak my home language in the classroom.

*While my teacher teaches me I understand at least what he is talking about.*¹³¹

The result of the observation of the researcher- learning actively, freedom to ask and respond to the questions and participatory group work were also verifies the idea of the students. On the other hand, almost all of the Oromo children who are learning by other tongue (Amharic) responded as they are dissatisfied by the medium of instruction. The students raise the difficulty to participate

¹²⁸ Interview held with Berber Primary School Principal on March 18, 2014 at 2:30-3:00 PM.

¹²⁹ Captured by the Researcher, 18/3/2014.

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Interview held with Student of mother tongue medium instruction on March 19, 2014 at 10:00-10:15 AM.

actively in the class, to do home works after class, to compete for ranks and hesitating to ask and respond to the question which the result of the observation of the researcher also signifies. Further, one Oromo child stated that,

*The students will laugh at me when I made mistake while speaking. As a result, I hesitate to participate in the class. How it was nice if I learn through my own mother tongue.*¹³²

This view corresponds with the finding of a study conducted by Daniel on “the assessment of the impact of other tongue medium instruction in the selected schools in Addis Ababa.” The study comes up with the result as the students do not have constructive attitude towards learning in other tongue as they cannot communicate well and as they lap at least a semester to fit to certain academic norm. The reasons that the study argues include, the poor participation in group work, weak presentation activities, passiveness in peer learning, difficulty in asking and answering to the questions which are almost similar to the finding of the present study.¹³³

However, regarding the overall perception of students towards the significance of MTE, the positive feeling of the students who are learning through their mother tongue as well as the wish of those who are not lucky to learn through their mother tongue indicates as they appreciate it. This result confirms with the study conducted by Adamu, on “Students' attitude towards mother tongue instruction with particular reference to Sidama language in Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia.” His finding indicates that, the majority of students had positive attitude towards Sidama language as medium of education.¹³⁴

4.2.2. Academician's Perception

The research participants congruent to this sub-theme include; the school principal and focal persons through in-depth interview and the teachers in focused group discussion. The school principal is Shinasha in its ethnicity and has worked for many years as the head of primary school where as the teachers are composed of different ethnic groups and those who are teaching in the mother tongue and other tongue of the children's. The focal persons are individuals who are language experts and working at regional, zonal and woreda level by the mandate of the

¹³² Interview held with Student of other tongue medium instruction on March 20, 2014 at 10:00-10:15 AM.

¹³³ Daniel, “An Assessment of the Impact of Medium of Instruction,” 72.

¹³⁴ Adamu, “Students' Attitude towards MTE,” 44.

educational bureau of the region. Hence, there are three focal persons at the regional level such as Berta focal person, Shinasha focal person and Gumuz focal person. In the case of Metekel zone there is one focal person for Shinasha and Gumuz languages. And in the case of Dibati woreda there are two focal persons, one for Shinasha and the other for Gumuz language.¹³⁵

As far as the answer to the question of perception is concerned, the principal stated that,

*I believe as MTE eases children's education, encourage creativity and preserve the culture of the society at large.*¹³⁶

The summary of the discussion of teachers also confirms the idea of the principal and noted as:

*The students encounter two challenges at their first entrance to school. The first one is the new environment while the other is the unfamiliar language of instruction. Thus, MTE helps the students at least by resolving the language problem.*¹³⁷

On the other hand, almost all of the focal persons responded as MTE, beyond easing children's learning, have an invaluable role to preserve the history, culture and identity of the society.

As a close observation of the views of the principal, teachers and the focal persons reflects, MTE is important pedagogically, psychologically and sociologically which is also recognized by many commentators of which the UNESCO's committee of experts on the use of mother tongue in education is worth to mention. As briefly discussed in chapter two, section five of this study, the committee asserts that, MTE enables the child to learn quickly and freely by relieving from psychological shock and identity crisis.¹³⁸

4.2.3. Official's Perception

The woreda to regional officials through in-depth interview, the researcher's participant observation as well as the 2014-2018 regional strategic plan of MTE is the source of data for this sub-theme. Proceeding to the presentation of the data, the regional Education Bureau welcomes any enterer by the following billboard which was captured by the researcher during the observation period, March 27-April 4/2014 at the site.

¹³⁵ Interview held with the woreda to regional MTE focal persons.

¹³⁶ Interview held with the School Principal.

¹³⁷ Focused Group Discussion held with Berber Primary School Teachers on March 21, 2014 at 12:30-1:30 AM.

¹³⁸ UNESCO, *The use of vernacular languages in Education*, 17.



Figure 4: The Billboard of MTE¹³⁹

As the figure illustrates, the regional education bureau confirms the multi-dimensional significance of MTE. This view is further verified by the regional strategic plan of MTE which urges the government organs to give political meaning and committed themselves for its realization.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, according to the children's right experts, MTE is not only pedagogically sound for the children. But also their Constitutional right as the third bullet of the billboard demonstrated above also confirms.¹⁴¹ The language expert extends this view by argued that, "MTE is a mile stone for preserving cultural values of the society as it is also for education."¹⁴²

Hearing such an interesting view from the officials is a welcomed value for the proponents of MTE. But what matters is the reality on the ground which is seldom discussed openly as the significance of the program. This is the issue of the consistency of this view towards all children's of the region. In short, it is not consistent to all and the detail of this argument would be addressed under a practical overview of the program, in section four of this chapter.

4.2.4. The Social Attitude

The in-depth interview with the parents of indigenous and exogenous ethnic groups, school principal and the woreda to regional officials are the source of data for this sub-theme. Proceeding

¹³⁹ Captured by the Researcher, 1/4/2014.

¹⁴⁰ The Regional Strategic Plan of MTE which was prepared by the Education Bureau of the Region to serve for the years 2014-2018. It has fourteen subsections compiled in about eighty pages.

¹⁴¹ Interview held with children's right experts under Women's, Children's and Youth affairs Bureau on March 28, 2014 at 9-9:30 AM.

¹⁴² Interview held with language expert under Culture and Tourism Bureau on April 1, 2014 at 2-2:30 PM.

to the responses, the majority of the officials responded as it was difficult at the initial stage to break the attitude of the parents especially a negatively connoted Amharic proverb “*wonth yemayashagir kuankua*”-roughly translated as the language that do not enable one to cross river. The school principal in his turn stated that, “some of the indigenous parents were not willing to enroll their children’s in their mother tongue especially at the initial stage...”¹⁴³

In confirmation to this view, the majority of the parents of the indigenous nations and nationalities responded as they dislike MTE and in turn prefer if their children learn by the national or international language especially at the initial stage. Their reasons were the opportunity for further education and job, external relation and the assumption as themselves or their children already knows their language. The majority of parents of the exogenous groups on the other hand, responded as MTE is important to develop their own language and preserve their cultural values. As a result, they state as they are wishing for the development of heir langue like that of the endogenous one.

A close observation of the participants view shows as there are twofold scenarios of MTE at the community level. The first one is the fear of the fate at the future by the indigenous nations and nationalities and the other one is the need for a brief future on behalf of the exogenous nations and nationalities. The detail presentation of the impacts that the social attitude have on children’s education would be discussed in section five of this chapter.

4.3. The Legal Status of the Program

The leading question of this theme is: *To what extent does children’s right to MTE is recognized by the regional legal instruments?* The data used to answer this question were obtained from documents such as the CRC, ACRWC, the Constitution of FDRE, the Draft Language Policy of Ethiopia, the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia, the Regional Constitution and Strategic Plan of MTE. In addition, an interview with the regional officials has been carried to see facts on the ground.

Both CRC and ACRWC acknowledged compulsory and free primary education that should be directed to the multi-dimensional development of a child. In addition, they confirmed the primacy of the children’s interest in all matters that concern them of which by implication MTE is the one.

¹⁴³ Interview held with the School Principal.

In spite of acknowledging these rights, both instruments put the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill these rights on the state parties. The instruments have also established a respective committee to promote the rights of a child and sets mechanisms of state report for its better implementation.¹⁴⁴

Ethiopia is a state party to both instruments and as a result makes the conventions part of the national laws in accordance to Article 9 (4) which asserts the national integration of international agreements ratified by the country. Moreover, though the country's Constitution does not explicitly recognize children's right to MTE, it re-affirmed the primacy of child's interest in all matters that concern her/him.¹⁴⁵ Further, the 1994 education and training policy of the country recognizes MTE at primary level cognizant of its pedagogical advantage.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the countries draft language policy explicitly states that:

*A nation, nationality or people, irrespective of whether its members are small in number, has the right for its children to be taught in its mother tongue, or a language of wider communication chosen by it, at least... to the end of primary school...*¹⁴⁷

Proceeding to the regional level, as the majority of the officials responded and the third bullet in figure 3 demonstrated, the right to MTE has a base in the 2003 revised Constitution of the region.¹⁴⁸ According to Article 2, the Constitution grants its ownership to Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao and Komo nations and nationalities despite the prevalence of "other" nations and nationalities in the region. In relation to the right to MTE, the Constitution acknowledged that,

- Art 39 (1), *Every Nation and Nationality of the region has[...] the right to use and to develop its own language[...]*^{*149}
- Art. 6 (2), *Every nation and nationality of the region has the right to education by their own language or the language of their choice.* *¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Arts, 3, 28 and 29, and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Arts, 4 and 11.

¹⁴⁵ The Constitution of FDRE, Arts, 9, 36, 39, 41 and 90.

¹⁴⁶ Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia, Art.3.5.

¹⁴⁷ The Draft Language Policy of Ethiopia, Arts. 4.1.

¹⁴⁸ The Revised Constitution of BGRS, The preamble and Arts. 2, 6, 37, 39 and 112.

¹⁴⁹ *-Translation has been carried out by the researcher.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

As a close observation of the existing legal frameworks indicate, the fundamental law of the region or the Constitution do not guarantee children's right to MTE for the exogenous nations and nationalities. This Constitutional *inclusion* and *exclusion* is extended to the regional strategic plan of MTE which puts a clear direction to the implementation of MTE for the indigenous nations and nationalities in more than 80 pages and never state a line of direction to reach the children's of exogenous nations and nationalities.¹⁵¹

This legal framework of the region is different from the sister regions in Ethiopia. According to the "study on medium of instruction in primary schools in Ethiopia", Amhara region recognizes the right for all children's of the region and as a result there is Amharic, Afan Oromo, Awiing and Hamittena medium instruction in the region.¹⁵² In addition, though its Constitution does not grant its ownership to all nations and nationalities in the region, there is Afan Oromo and Amharic medium education in Oromia regional state.¹⁵³ Returning to the study area, there is no such experiences.

4.4. The Practical Overview of the Program

The guiding question of this theme is: *How MTE is being practicing in the region?* As far as the sources of data were concerned, a participant observation, an in-depth interview of concerned bodies and a review of relevant documents has been used. Before proceeding to the discussion of the findings, an overview of the regional curriculum on which the MTE is founded seems necessary and elaborated as follows.

Though the education sector, except for higher education, is within the power of the regional government, it would be designed in accordance to the federal education and training policy based on sound pedagogical principles and concrete standards. Thus, the regional curriculum conforms to the federal education and training policy since it affirms the beginning of English as a subject at grade one. However, while the policy affirms the beginning of English as a medium of instruction at secondary level (logically, grade 9), it shifts to English medium instruction in Grade five according the regional curriculum. In addition, while the policy declares the use of Amharic as

¹⁵¹ The Regional Strategic Plan of MTE.

¹⁵² Heugh, et al. "Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia," 62.

¹⁵³ The Preamble of the Revised Constitution of Oromia Regional State and Heugh, et al. "Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia," 70.

country wide communication, it begins in grade five at the regional level. In addition to disparity with the federal policy, the regional curriculum contradicts with the very essence of the necessity of MTE at the first eight years of education.¹⁵⁴

Proceeding to the thematic question, in an effort to provide a clear answer, the theme would fall in to five sub-themes such as historical overview, the issue of accessibility, quality, follow up and cooperative work frameworks in the implementation of the program.

4.4.1. From Where to Where?

This sub-theme aimed at looking an overview of the initial stage, the current status and the future plan of MTE in the region. In doing so, a data collected through in-depth interview method from the regional officials and donor organization's such as UNICEF and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) are used. In addition, a review of secondary sources such as the regional strategic plan of MTE is also used.

As far as the initial stage was concerned, according to the response of the regional educational planning vise head, the question to MTE was emanated from the political parties of the nations and nationalities. The question also gates public acceptance and a referendum have been held on the choice of the scripts. The foundation for the question were the Constitution and the policies of the country as well as the legal instruments of the region that grants such rights to the nations and nationalities and peoples of the country in general and the region in particular.¹⁵⁵

In the referendum campaign there were many alternatives of scripts such as Latin, English, Saba and Arab of which Latin has chosen for the three languages such as Berta, Gumuz and Shinasha by the majorities of the participants. The rationality of the preference of Latin over its counterparts is because of the international status it has and above all the possibility to identify words and sounds that has related meanings which is shortcomings to others. Regarding to the process of the referendum, for instance, the Shinasha language script choice referendum was held in Bullen town, Bullen worda equivalently with a three day conference.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia, Arts. 3.1 and 3.5, and Section one of the regional Strategic Plan of MTE.

¹⁵⁵ Interview held with the Regional Educational Planning Vise Head on April 2, 2014 at 10-10:30 AM.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

Then, as the SIL focal person stated, research project has been designed and an orthographic study has been carried out in cooperation with the culture and tourism bureau. The research includes the socio-linguistic experts and the elders as participants and finally came up with the standardized dialects and other necessary inputs. Based on the findings, a trial book has been prepared, teachers were introduced and a pilot program has begun in a selected schools. A continuous evaluation of the program was carried out and based on the result, regular book was prepared and regular education has begun in 2009 at 80 schools as a subject and 20 schools as a medium of instruction.¹⁵⁷

Coming to the current status of the program, as the evaluation made by the education bureau of the region shows, there are 131 schools which are teaching as a subject and 75 schools as medium of instruction among 497 primary schools in the region. Regarding the future plan of the region, the strategic plan targeted to reach 250 schools that use MT as a subject and 150 schools as medium of instruction in 2018.

4.4.2. The Issue of Accessibility

Realizing children's right to MTE begins by accessing mother tongue based educational system among other factors. According to Clapham, this encompasses a right to equal treatment of all children's in mother tongue based educational programs.¹⁵⁸ This sub-theme aimed at analyzing the issue of accessibility of the program in the region based on the data obtained through in-depth interview, participant observation and review of relevant documents.

As the primary and secondary sources of data signify, the region's action in reaction to the accessibility of MTE is discriminatory against the exogenous nations and nationalities in one hand and among indigenous nations and nationalities in the other hand. Regarding to the discrimination against the exogenous one, the regional strategic plan of MTE explicitly stated as "the aim of the strategic plan is to reach children's of the indigenous nations and nationalities by quality and efficient MTE."¹⁵⁹

Regarding to the discrimination within the indigenous nations and nationalities themselves, only the three nations such as Berta, Gumuz and Shinasha children's are enjoying their right despite the

¹⁵⁷ Interview held with the SIL Focal Person on March 27, 2014 at 9-9:30 AM.

¹⁵⁸ Clapham, *Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction*, 123.

¹⁵⁹ Section four of the Regional Strategic Plan of MTE

prevalence of five indigenous nations and nationalities in the region. After six years of their progress, the Mao, Komo and Gwama¹⁶⁰ nations and nationalities are in preparation currently. In the case of Komo language, pilot program is running while socio-linguistic survey and script choice has been finished and pilot program is about to run in the cases of Mao and Gwama languages. The regional education bureau officials' stated as the lack of educated person is the major factor among others for this differential treatment.¹⁶¹ The impacts that the issue of accessibility causes would be presented in the next section of this chapter.

4.4.3. The Issue of Quality

The issue of quality is the other factor which could be seen equivalently with accessibility of MTE. Hence, the classroom performance of the students, the efficiency of the teachers and the eminence of the books will be emphasized and analyzed under this sub-theme. This would be done based on the data obtained from the focal persons and the woreda to regional officials through in-depth interview. In addition, a focused group discussion of the teachers, an observation of the researcher and a review of relevant documents would be used.

As the first semester roster (mark list) of the students indicate, children's who are attending their education through their mother tongue scores an average of 77.1% result while those who are attending by other tongue scores an average of 67.8%.¹⁶² In addition, the classroom observation of the researcher shows that, the mother tongue medium education students perform better than their counterparts. This finding is congruent with the finding of the team on medium of instruction in primary schools in Ethiopia. Analyzing grade 4 and 8 national assessment results of 2000 and 2004, the research team argues as the students who have gone through mother tongue medium education have higher mean achievement scores than the other tongue medium instruction.¹⁶³

However, as a surprising to this finding, Desai argued as mother tongue medium instruction is a necessary but not sufficient condition to improve the quality of education in poor contexts. The reference to his argument was the consecutive analysis of the 2000, 2004 and 2008 national

¹⁶⁰ According to the SIL Focal Person, Gwama nations are indigenous nations in the region despite the prevalence of conflict in naming them. They call themselves as Gwama and their language as Gwamegna while the rest call them as Mao.

¹⁶¹ Interview held with the Regional Educational Planning Vise Head.

¹⁶² The first semester mark list of grade one students.

¹⁶³ Heugh, et al. "Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia," 80.

assessment of the aforementioned research team. The team as Desai quoted, came up with low average scores of mother tongue medium instruction. This is attributed to poverty, poor educational resources and inappropriate curriculum.¹⁶⁴ Even though not absolutely the same, this study also comes up with a variety of scores in different subjects as a table below shows.

No.	Subjects	Mother Tongue Education		Other Tongue Education	
		High	Low	High	Low
1	Amahric	-	-	99	42
2	Borna	97	23	-	-
3	English/Ingliza	96	32	98	40
4	Mathematics/Tana	98	26	98	39
5	Environmental Science/ Gal Dani Sayinsi	97	28	98	40
6	Esthetics/Estetiksi	100	37	98	43

Table 2: The Comparative Overview of Mother Tongue and Other Tongue Education¹⁶⁵

As the above table illustrates, the two groups of students score parallel high marks while the students who are attending their education in other tongue scores higher in the case of lower points. According to the teachers view, this variety might occur because of the newness of the program and the unfamiliarity of the students as well as lack of seniors to help the students.¹⁶⁶

Regarding to the professional quality of the teachers, as the testimony of two teachers at the time of their discussion signifies, their quality is poor in mother tongue of the children's. Their testimony is narrated as follows.

Teacher one; *I have got three weeks training after completing my diploma from teachers training institution in Mathematics department and began teaching MTE...*

Teacher Two; *I have got two month's training after completing grade ten to begin MTE.*¹⁶⁷

As far as the eminence of the books is concerned, the focal persons responded as there were many errors, poor cultural values inclusion and spatial and conceptual contextualization problems at the very beginning stage of the work. The reasons that they forward for those problems were the

¹⁶⁴ Desai, "A case for Mother Tongue Education?" 118.

¹⁶⁵ The mark list of grade one students.

¹⁶⁶ Focused Group Discussion held with Teachers.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

shortage of contextual inputs such as written stories and proverbs, script of cultural assets like wedding, funeral and other ceremonies, original photographs, faults related with translation and definition of scientific concepts.¹⁶⁸

4.4.4. The Issue of Follow up Mechanism

Being derived from the main theme, this sub-theme is congruent with the question: *Is there follow up mechanism in the process of implementing MTE?* The data for this sub-thematic question is emanated from the principal, woreda to regional education officials through in-depth interview, and a review of the regional strategic plan of MTE. According to the principal,

*There is irregular supervision from higher officials. However, comparing with the attention needed by the program, the supervision is very weak and usually accompanied by hearing of our problems and going by 'it will be' suggestion.*¹⁶⁹

This view is verified by the response replied by the woreda to regional education officials and would be summarized as follows:

*There is a continuous supervision through the focal persons established only for this purpose. However, we are not confident to say it is enough and we are aware of the strong commitment needed from us. Despite this, however, our great achievement is the adoption of the regional strategic plan of MTE that puts clear direction of follow up mechanism.*¹⁷⁰

The strategic plan that is hoped to overcome the weak follow up mechanism sets the following three level directions in its follow up and evaluation mechanism section (14).¹⁷¹

I. At regional level;

- The MTE unit will meet one day per a week to evaluate its implementation.
- The education bureau management committee will evaluate the implementation of MTE and administration ones a month and submit its result to the MTE unit.

¹⁶⁸ Interview held with the woreda to regional MTE focal persons.

¹⁶⁹ Interview held with the School Principal.

¹⁷⁰ Interviews held with the Woreda to Regional Education Officials.

¹⁷¹ The translation has been carried out by the researcher.

- Follow up and evaluation will be made within three months to the zones, woredas and selected schools.
- Experience will be shared from zones, woredas and schools that have best MTE practice.
- A MTE symposium will be prepared ones a year in collaboration with the regional culture and tourism bureau.

II. At zonal level;

- The zonal education capacity building office management committee will evaluate the implementation of MTE ones per month.
- The office submits the MTE implementation report per three months.
- The office evaluates the human resource of the zone and woreda and takes the necessary measure and also submits its report to the regional education bureau.
- The office gives standard to MTE based on the effective implementation of the Woredas.
- The offices management evaluates the implementation of the package and sets its direction per month.
- The office will prepare a MTE symposium ones a year in collaboration with the zonal government communication office.

III. At woreda level;

- The woreda education capacity building and civil service office will evaluate the fulfillment of the necessary human resource in MTE stream.
- The offices management committee will evaluate the implementation of MTE strategy.
- The office will evaluate and support MTE in all schools per month with cluster supervisors.
- The office will evaluate the implementation of MTE and reports to the woreda administration council and zonal education capacity building office per three months.
- The office will prepare a MTE symposium per a year in collaboration with the woreda government communication.
- The office will evaluate and timely respond to the result of its evaluation and inspection.

As a close observation of the responses forwarded by the principal and the officials as well as the MTE strategic plan indicates, the follow up mechanism was weak and the region is awakened at a time of urgent need. This study also believes as this measure is invaluable asset if the region wants to provide a better education to its children.

4.4.5. The Issue of Cooperative Framework

The issue of cooperation is the last sub-theme of the practice of MTE and it corresponds to the question: *To what extent you are working in cooperation for the effective implementation of MTE?* The sources of data for this sub-thematic question were the regional officials and focal persons through in-depth interview and observation picture. As the response of the participants indicated the cooperation is categorized in to two as horizontal and vertical.

The horizontal cooperation is held among the sister regional bureaus such as the education bureau, culture and tourism bureau and women, children and youth affairs bureau. A language expert under culture and tourism bureau stated that,

*One of our missions is developing and preserving the culture of the people of the region of which MTE is the part and parcel of it. However, we could not do this alone without education bureau. The education bureau also needs us for the inclusion of the social value which is the key element of education. Hence, we are working together.*¹⁷²

This idea is confirmed by the educational planning vice head of education bureau. However, the cooperation with women, children and youth affairs bureau is not strong except the ECCE program which is pre-primary. In addition, donor organizations such as SIL and UNICEF are also working with education bureau and this is discussed as follows being treated as horizontal relation. According to the SIL focal person,

*Emanating from the mission to assist MTE in different parts of the world, our organization is working in cooperation with education bureau particularly in the areas of socio-linguistic survey, developing orthography, book and supportive material preparation, teachers training, running pilot program and other related activities.*¹⁷³

The education bureau focal person of UNICEF, on the other hand responded that,

*As an organization established for the right of children, our organization is working in cooperation with education bureau by financing for human resource training, book publication, curriculum evaluation programs and other related activities.*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Interview held with the language expert under Culture and Tourism Bureau.

¹⁷³ Interview held with the SIL Focal Person.

¹⁷⁴ Interview held with the UNICEF Focal Person on April 3, 2014 at 4:30-5:00 PM.

The second category, vertical cooperation is held among the government organs working at different levels i.e. from regional level up to local level. As the last bullet of figure 4, showed in section two of this chapter demonstrates, the implementation of MTE needs the participation of all parts of the society. In confirmation of this notion, the curriculum design and implementation official argued that, “the program could not effectively run if the government officials working at varying level as well as the society at large do not commit themselves towards it implementation.”¹⁷⁵

As the response of the majority of the participants elicited, the cooperative framework in the implementation of MTE is to some extent good though not enough. Hence, considering the multi-dimensional significance of MTE as well as the vulnerability of children’s to right violations, a strong cooperation is needed for a better implementation of the program. In this aspect, the weak cooperation between the prime (in the researchers view) children’s rights duty bearers- women, children’s and youth affairs bureau and the education bureau is unfortunately disappointing to the researchers of children’s right approach like the present one.

4.5. Challenges of Realizing the Program

The fourth theme which is aimed at addressing the challenges being faced by the concerned bodies is congruent with the question: *What are the challenges you are facing in the process of realizing MTE to all children of the region?* As far as the responses are concerned, they fall in to four categories such as educational, political, economic and socio-linguistic and this leads to the emergency of sub-themes which shall be discussed as follows.

4.5.1. Educational Challenges

Educational challenge is the first challenge that is identified based on the data obtained from the woreda to regional officials, students, principal and focal persons through in-depth interview, and focused group discussion of teachers. In addition to these primary sources, a review of secondary sources of data such as the federal language and training policy and the regional strategic plan of MTE are used. As far as the responses are concerned, the problems related with educational policy and strategy, difficulty of teaching and learning, shortage of resources and weak coordination and follow up mechanisms are the major educational challenges and briefly discussed as follows.

¹⁷⁵ Interview held with the Curriculum Design and Implementation Vise Head on April 3, 2014 at 4:30-5:00 PM.

To begin with the educational policy of the country, the education and training policy recognizes the rights of all children of the country to learn in their mother tongue.¹⁷⁶ However, the regional strategic plan of the MTE grants this right only to the children's of the indigenous nations and nationalities.¹⁷⁷ This is the source of the problem for the challenges that the children's face at the classroom for the reason that they are not aware of. In this regard, two other tongue medium instruction students stated that,

*We are facing problems in understanding what our teacher says and to compete for a rank. Sometimes, our teachers beats us when we are not able to work our home works...the classroom environment is not good for us.*¹⁷⁸

The other educational challenge is the issue of teachers' professional quality. As stated in section four of this chapter, the professional quality of the teachers is poor. This is resulted mainly as a result of the shortage of training period. By recognizing this fact, the teachers' at the time of their discussion argued as it is difficult to create conducive teaching and learning environment and appeal the problem to the newness of the program. The focal persons and officials on the other hand noted the weak training result, turnover and unreasonable need of incentives as the problems associated with teachers.

The shortage of teaching and supportive materials such as text books, reference books, teachers guide, dictionaries and other teaching aids are also the other educational challenges. According to the teachers, the principal and focal persons, there is shortage in numerical availability, poor in cultural inclusion and edition problems in relation to the instructional materials and hoped to be resolved through time.

The last but not least educational challenge as the regional education bureau official's stated is that, the shortage of officials that have awareness of the significance of MTE and the weak follow up mechanisms as well as the poor multi-sectorial coordination. These challenges would have an effect on children's education since the best achievements are not encouraged by positive rewards and the problems that might occur do not get timely responses.

¹⁷⁶ Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia Art. 5.

¹⁷⁷ Section four of the Regional Strategic Plan of MTE.

¹⁷⁸ Interview held with the other tongue medium instruction Students.

The finding of a study conducted by Dessalew which is entitled as “Factors that affect the implementation of using Awgni as a medium of instruction in the lower primary schools” is congruent with the view of participants of this study. The study argued that poor policy, curriculum, textbook and supportive materials preparation, teacher’s development, office and department organization and personnel placement are the major challenges to MTE.¹⁷⁹

4.5.2. Political Challenges

Being guided by the above thematic question, this sub-theme intends to discuss the political challenges of children’s right to MTE. In doing so, the data obtained from the parents through in-depth interview and a review of secondary sources of data such as the federal and the regional Constitutions, the federal education and training policy and the regional strategic plan of MTE are used.

The primary challenge that the researcher found through a review of the legal instruments of the region that are assumed to be driven from the federal legal instruments is *legal discrepancy*. As stated in section three of this chapter, the federal Constitution, education and training policy and the draft language policy though in some cases do not explicitly state, grants children’s right to MTE at primary level.¹⁸⁰ Coming to the regional level, both the regional Constitution and MTE strategic plan guarantee the right only for the indigenous nations and nationalities. In doing so, discrimination has been committed against the children’s of exogenous nations and nationalities.¹⁸¹

Proceeding to the facts on the ground, an Oromo parent of a child at the school stated as their children are ashamed of who they are and perceive their language as it is minor. In confirmation to this view, the other respondent who is also Oromo in ethnicity and a parent of two children learning in other tongue medium instruction stated that,

*We are in a new form of slavery. We have raised this issue in any forums we get. But the answer for our question is always negative even up to assuming us as a member of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)...what shall we do?*¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Dessalew, “Factors that Affect the Implementation of Using Awgni as a Medium of Instruction,” 90.

¹⁸⁰ The Constitution of FDRE, Arts. 36 & 41, Education and Training Policy, Art. 3.5 and The Draft Language Policy of Ethiopia Art. 4.1.

¹⁸¹ The Revised Constitution of BGRS, Art.6. and Section four of the Regional Strategic Plan of MTE

¹⁸² Interview held with the other tongue medium instruction Student, Parent on March 20, 2014 at 6:00-6:30 PM

The political challenges of this study are countersigned by the research finding on the policy and practice of MTE in Kenya. The researcher, Gacheche argued that, policy decisions about which medium of instruction to use in schools are rarely made based on the needs of the majority but rather favor the politically dominant class since the language question is power.¹⁸³

4.5.3. Economic Challenges

The other sub-theme which also being led by the guiding question stated above is the issue of economy. Sources of data that are used for this sub-theme were the principal, woreda to regional officials and focal persons through in-depth interview. The scholarly writings review and the observation picture will support these primary sources.

From the very beginning of the scholar debate on the implementation of MTE, the economic usefulness of teaching of and through the dominant language is preferred by some scholars over MTE. However, as stated in section six of chapter two, there are also economic theorists like Amartya Sen, who argues as linguistic rights in education trigger creativity, alternative thinking, flexibility and innovation which are assets for future investment.¹⁸⁴

Proceeding to the facts in the study site, as the second bullet of the billboard in section two of this chapter illustrates, it is believed by the officials as using their mother tongue for writing and reading purpose plays a key role for their development. Despite such strong believe, however, there are many economic challenges in the realization of MTE that are being raised at different levels. The school principal stated that,

*The student-teacher ratio is 1:39 and the pupil-book ratio is 2:3. This shows that there are no adequate teachers, books and supportive materials. The rationale behind is financial constraint.*¹⁸⁵

Confirming this view, the focal persons and woreda to regional official's noted as shortage of finance is a bottleneck for human resource recruitment and training, book and supportive materials publication, duplication and transportation to distance areas.

¹⁸³ Gacheche, "Challenges in Implementing a Mother Tongue-Based Language in-Education Policy," 8.

¹⁸⁴ Skutnabb-Kangas, *The Stakes: Linguistic Diversity, Linguistic Human Rights and Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education.* 93.

¹⁸⁵ Interview held with the School Principal.

4.5.4. Socio-Cultural Challenges

It is believed that, education is an integral part of the knowledge and values of the society. Hence, this sub-theme aimed at addressing the negative perceptions of the society which is assumed as having strong effect on the realization of MTE in the region. The sources of the data for this sub-theme include the principal, parents and woreda to regional officials through in-depth interview and the teachers through focused group discussion. As far as the responses is concerned, there are two views and discussed as follows.

The first one is the internal challenges. These are challenges that emanate from the indigenous nations and nationalities themselves. As the majority of the respondents stated, some part of the society negatively perceive MTE by raising the issues of job opportunity, external relation and assuming as their children already knows their language. Regarding to the last point for instance, the experience of the principal of the school, which is narrated here in after signifies more.

One parent who is ethnically Shinasha has charged us for the reason that his child joins Shinasha medium education. His argument was 'My child already knows it and where my child reaches by it.' However, after a long time negotiation, the parent has changed his attitude.¹⁸⁶

The other challenge is the external which is emanated from the exogenous ethnic groups. These groups challenge MTE of the indigenous one from different angles. One parent of a child learning in other tongue medium instruction argued that,

We all are Ethiopians and shall enjoy equal state recognition. But the privilege of one nation over the other or one language over the other is not fair for any rational being...it leads to conflict between us despite we have lived together for centuries in harmony.¹⁸⁷

The experience of one teacher of the school, who is also a parent of two children learning in other tongue medium instruction, verifies the above statement.

I am the head of child parliament...One day the case of two children's come in to us. It was the decision of the school principal to dismiss two students for the reason that they

¹⁸⁶ Interview held with the School Principal.

¹⁸⁷ Interview held with the other tongue medium instruction Student, Parent on March 21, 2014 at 8:00-8:30 AM.

*were not voluntary to learn in other tongue. We defend the case being on the side of the children. Finally, we won the case and the students returned to their education....Not only this particular case, but also the nomenclature at school is against the children's identity... There are two groups of students in Berber primary school; these are the indigenous nation's students and the "other" students. What does "other" mean while you have your own identity?*¹⁸⁸

The socio-cultural challenges mentioned by the participants of the present study goes in line with many research works of which only two of them are referred here. In regard to the internal challenge, the Awgni case which is stated above under the educational challenge noted that, the society will resist the program if not thoroughly consulted and take part in its development. The research further states that, poor preparation of the program by ignoring its owner or the society is missing the great asset of the program.¹⁸⁹ As far as the external challenge is concerned, a thesis conducted by Desai being entitled "a case of MTE in South Africa" argues as the preference of some languages over the others lead to social division and ethnic rivalry which in turn hinders the effective implementation of MTE.¹⁹⁰

4.6. Solutions for the Challenges of Realizing the Program

The last but not the least theme is the respondents view regarding the solutions for the challenges raised in section five above and it is congruent with the question: *What are the possible solutions you are undertaking for the challenges you are facing in realizing MTE?* The data for this thematic question were obtained from woreda to regional officials, the students, principal and parents through in-depth interview, and teachers through focused group discussion.

Before proceeding to the responses, the analysis of the research works in other setting indicates that, many of them focuses on identifying the challenges and based on that, provides their own recommendations. However, as a result of the theoretical root underlying the present research, the solutions for the problems are explored from the participants themselves and discussed as follows.

¹⁸⁸ Interview held with the other tongue medium instruction Student, Parent and teacher on March 20, 2014 at 1:00-1:30 AM.

¹⁸⁹ Dessalew, "Factors that Affect the Implementation of Using Awgni as a Medium of Instruction," 90.

¹⁹⁰ Desai, "A case for Mother Tongue Education?" 92.

Regarding to the educational challenges, the majority of the students stated as they use the available materials together and help each other by the *one-five union*¹⁹¹ of students in the classroom as well as taking time and reading many times in their home to understand what they have learnt. The teachers too, stated as they facilitate the students learning by interpreting the new concepts in to the languages that the students understand and doing the home works of the students in the class. The principal in his turn noted as the school is helping the students by photocopying the inadequate books, by preparing supportive materials and encouraging their teacher.¹⁹²

The woreda to regional officials on the other hand argued as they are committed themselves to fulfill the shortage of human resource by *accelerated diploma program*¹⁹³ and in-service training to develop the professional quality of teachers at Gilgel Beles teachers training college and also working in cooperation with supporting organizations to fulfill the problems related with book and other instructional materials. They also rose as the MTE strategic plan of the region puts a clear direction for continuous follow up mechanisms that enable to provide timely response for problems related with it.¹⁹⁴

As far as the political solutions is concerned, the majority of respondents from the exogenous ethnic groups stated as they are raising their problems at any forums they get despite the challenges they are facing as a result of their question. The officials on the other hand responded that, the reason for the primacy of their nations and nationalities interest is their negligence by the former ruling systems of the country and the outreach to the rest of nations and nationalities shall be after their enjoyment of their right.¹⁹⁵

Regarding to the economic solutions the woreda to regional officials noted as they are developing the program by specifically allocating budget for the program, working in collaboration with supporting organizations such as SIL, UNICEF and other interested bodies, mobilizing the

¹⁹¹ One-five union is a group of students combined together based on their academic achievements to enhance peer learning, to develop a spirit of competition and to strength team work habit.

¹⁹² Interview held with the Students and School Principal, and Focused Group Discussion held with the Teachers.

¹⁹³ As stated in the regional strategic plan of MTE, accelerated diploma program is a program which is being carried out by Gilgel Beles Teachers Training College (the only college that the region own) in due attention to fulfill the human resource shortage.

¹⁹⁴ Interviews held with the Woreda to Regional Education Officials.

¹⁹⁵ Interviews held with the Parents and Woreda to Regional Education Officials.

community and the government agents. The sum total of these efforts is believed by the officials to resolve any financial limitations of the program.¹⁹⁶

Finally, as far as the socio-cultural solutions are concerned, the school principal and woreda to regional officials' stated as the initial problems are being resolved by a continuous awareness creation campaigns and informing those who have no knowledge of the benefit of MTE. They further stated that, as a result of such movements, the society is now feeling as the owner of the program and contributing to its development as much as its capacity allowed to do so.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Interviews held with the Woreda to Regional Education Officials.

¹⁹⁷ Interviews held with the School Principal and Woreda to Regional Education Officials.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

In this section, a summary of the major findings of the research would be carried out based on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data in chapter four.

The finding of the present research revealed that, the majority of the participants would have a positive attitude towards the significance of MTE for the children in particular and the society at large. The rationale of this assumption were the role of MTE in reducing the difficulty of understanding the contents, easing the unfamiliarity of the school environment, encouraging creativity and preserving the cultural values of the society. On the other side of this fact, the other tongue educational system will harm the children's educational life on top of other factors since it lacks the above opportunities of MTE.

Unlike the international, regional and national binding legal instruments, the finding of the study also indicated that, children's right to MTE has been legally recognized in the study site. However, the statement of the right as well as the practical inclination is targeted to the children's of the indigenous nations and nationalities in the exclusion of the children's of exogenous nations and nationalities. As a result, children's of exogenous nations and nationalities are not enjoying their right to MTE in the region except Amhara children's because of the curriculum of the region. As the study argues, this differential treatment of the children's of the region is against their best interest which was supposed to precede in any actions and decisions of the government in accordance with the various binding human rights instruments.

The finding of the study further shows as the beginning of the program in the region has six years of age and in those years the region is able to increase the number of schools enrolling children's of indigenous nations and nationalities in their mother tongue. Despite the numeral increasing of the schools and students, the quality of the teachers, books and the performance of the students is a serious issue and the majority of the participants argue as it is poor and being developed through time. Regarding the follow up mechanism and cooperative framework in the process of practicing the program too, all most all the respondents replied as there is irregular and weak supervision and cooperation among the stakeholders.

Furthermore, the finding of the study revealed that, the majority of the respondents signify as the program is being challenged by educational, political, economic and socio-cultural factors. The stated major educational challenges were the biased strategic plan, difficulty of teaching and learning process, shortage of human and material resources and weak multi-sectorial coordination and follow up mechanisms. Regarding to the political challenge, the Constitutional exclusion and inclusion of the nations and nationalities in the region is worth to mention.

The shortage of finance to train, recruit, place and professional development of the teachers and to fulfill the material needs is the other challenge that the majority of the respondents raise. The last but not the least challenge is the internal and external socio-cultural challenges. Internally, a few but not insignificant number of the respondents from the indigenous nations and nationalities have a negative perception on the program though it weighs at the initial point and improvements are being seen through a time. Externally, the exogenous nations and nationalities argue as they were discriminated and their language is unequally treated by the regional government.

As far as the solution to the aforementioned challenges is concerned, the finding of the study revealed that, all most all participants of the study responded as they are taking the necessary measures. Hence, the educational challenges are supposed to be resolved by fulfilling the inadequate human and material resources. Regarding to the political challenges, they are assumed to get a solution through questioning on the behalf of the exogenous nations and nationalities and negotiation on the behalf of the government. Budget allocation, creating strong multi-sectorial cooperation and mobilizing the community are among the perceived solution for financial constraints whereas responding to their questions, awareness creation, training and counseling the community are the suggested solutions for socio-cultural challenges.

5.2. Conclusion

In this research, endeavors were made to explore the realization of children's right to mother tongue primary education in BGRS. In doing so, the study was guided by a fundamental question whether it is realized or not for all children's of the region. For the purpose of answering this question, the study was rooted in epistemological philosophical assumption through grounded theory following qualitative research approach.

Data for the study were gathered from primary and secondary sources by employing in-depth interview, focused group discussion, observation and a review of relevant documents as a method of data collection from the purposefully selected participants. The data was analyzed in line with its theoretical root by carefully organizing the raw data, transcribing the interviews, triangulation of primary and secondary data, coding the triangulated data and drawing theme.

Conceptually, MTE in this study is understood as an educational system that uses mother tongue of the pupil which she/he knows best and uses most as a subject and medium of instruction. Based on this fact, the study was rooted in Cultural-Historical Activity theory and foresees to the mother tongue based multilingual education. However, MTE was focused by the present study based on a logic of non-expectance of the building (multilingualism) without its foundation (mother tongue). Numerous scholars signify as the founding the foundation is not an easy task and should resist the political, socio-economic and educational challenges.

As far as the finding of the present research is concerned, the majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards MTE. This is extended up to making a Constitutional right and preparing specific strategic plan to its implementation for the children's of indigenous nations and nationalities with the exclusion of the exogenous nations and nationalities. As a result of these and other related factors, currently an ever increasing number of schools are being enrolling children's of indigenous nations and nationalities in their mother tongue. However, the present research also explored as the program is being challenged by political, socio-economic and educational factors despite endeavors were being made to resolve the problems at different levels in varying degrees.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned major findings, it is the belief of the researcher that the professional recommendation of this study would provide the stakeholders a better ways of realizing children's right to mother tongue primary education. Thus, the following recommendations have been made.

- ◆ The regional government is advised to respect the personality principle of Articles 5 and 39, of the Constitution of FDRE and Article 14 of the Revised Regional Constitution; and revise the regional legal instruments which are contrary to the right to equality of all children's.

- ◆ Educational policy makers are recommended to formulate an inclusive policy- a policy that respects the linguistic rights of all children of the region and considering the passiveness of the paper, sound commitment shall be made for its effective implementation.
- ◆ The children, parents and teachers are suggested to contribute by their knowledge and finance to fulfill the human and material shortages and ensure quality MTE.
- ◆ The human rights activists, advocates and interested donor organizations are suggested to go far away from the “main roads” to areas where the children are deprived of their right to MTE. Assuming itself as one of such areas, the present study recalled them to contribute by financing, advocating and bringing the case before the law.
- ◆ Despite making a great endeavor, the present research confirms that it is not absolute to find all aspects of MTE and as a result, calls other researchers to carry out further study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

I. In-depth Interviews

Interview Guideline for School Principal

1. As school principal, how you perceive education of and through mother tongue of students at primary level?
2. What is the text book-pupil and pupil-teacher ratio?
3. Is there follow up mechanism from higher officials on the effective implementation of MTE?
4. What are the challenges that you faced in the process of implementing MTE?
5. What are the measures you have taken to overcome the challenges you faced?
6. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for Students

1. In which medium of instruction you are learning?
2. What is your feeling towards the medium of instruction you are learning through?
3. Have you text books for each of the subjects you are learning?
4. Have you teachers vis-à-vis all subjects you are learning?
5. What are the benefits you are getting from the medium of instruction?
6. What are the challenges you are facing as a result of the medium of instruction you are learning through?
7. How you are trying to solve medium of instruction related problems?

Interview Guidelines for Parents

1. How many children do you have in Berber primary school?
2. In what medium of instruction your child/children is/are learning?
3. Is/Are your child/children's learn by the medium of instruction of her/his/their choice?
4. Do you believe that MTE shall preserve and promote your cultural values?
5. What is expected from you to realize children's interest to learn by their mother tongue?
6. How you observe the feeling and performance of your child/children in reaction to the medium of instruction she/he/they is/are learning through?
7. Do your child/children have adequate books?
8. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for Woreda & Zonal Education Capacity Building Officials

1. On behalf of your office, how you perceive education of and through mother tongue of students at primary level?
2. How many primary schools are there in this zone/woreda and how many of them use MTE vis-à-vis the communities they are in?
3. What is the text book-pupil and pupil-teacher ratio?
4. What contributions do your office is providing to increase the quality of prevailing MTE and too reach children's who have not got this chance?
5. Have you continuous follow up mechanism on the effective implementation of MTE?
6. What are the challenges you are encountered in realizing MTE?
7. What do you think possible measures to be taken to overcome these challenges?
8. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for Regional Education Bureau Officials

1. On behalf of your bureau, how you perceive education of and through mother tongue of students at primary level?
2. To what extent MTE is recognized in the legal instruments of the region?
3. To what extent the curriculum design does considers the mother tongue of the students?
4. What kind of plan does the region have to reach all children's of the region in MTE?
5. What is the text book-pupil and pupil-teacher ratio?
6. Have you allocated sufficient budget for the realization of MTE?
7. Is there well organized monitoring mechanism on the implementation of MTE?
8. To how much extent you are working in cooperation with other sectors and organizations working in children's education?
9. What are the major constraints that you faced in realizing MTE?
10. What are the solutions that you think to overcome those constraints?
11. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for Regional Women, Children's & Youth Affairs Bureau Officials

1. On behalf of your bureau, how you perceive children's right to MTE?

2. To how much extent does children's right to MTE is recognized by the regional legal instruments?
3. What do you think the contribution of the bureau to realize the right to MTE of all children's of the region?
4. To how much extent you are working in cooperation with the education bureau in particular and other sectors in general to respect and promote children's right to MTE?
5. What are the challenges you faced in realizing children's right to MTE?
6. What are the solutions that the bureau suggests to overcome those challenges?
7. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for Culture & Tourism Bureau Officials

1. How your bureau perceives the contribution of MTE of children's in preserving and promoting the cultural value of the society?
2. What about the legal instruments of the region in recognizing this fact?
3. To how much extent does the curriculum include the cultural value of the people of the region?
4. What do you think about the interest of children's of non-indigenous ethnic groups to MTE?
5. What do you think regarding the contribution of your bureau in this aspect?
6. Is there a means of cooperation with the education bureau in particular and other sectors in general to realize MTE?
7. What challenges you are faced or think to hinder the realization of MTE?
8. What do you think regarding the possible solutions?
9. Anything else to add?

Interview Guideline for Focal Persons of Mother Tongue

1. What is the responsibility of the focal person?
2. As a language expert, how you perceive MTE at primary level?
3. How you observe the quality and quantity of the teaching and supportive materials?
4. How you observe the adequacy and qualification of human resource?
5. What are the challenges you come up with in realizing MTE?
6. What are the solutions you suppose to resolve the challenges you faced?
7. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for the Regional Legal Experts

1. How you perceive children's right to MTE?
2. What is the current legal status of children's right to MTE?
3. What is the plan of the region concerning MTE?
4. Anything else to add?

Interview Guidelines for MTE Supporting Organizations

1. What is the objective of your organization?
2. What are the contributions of your organization regarding MTE of children?
3. Have you adequate experts of MTE?
4. What are the challenges that you encountered in this project?
5. What are the solutions you undertake to overcome the challenges you faced?
6. Anything else to add?

II. Focus Group Discussion

FGD Guidelines for Teachers

1. In which medium of instruction you believe children's learn better; by mother/other tongue?
2. How you observe the performance of your students when they learn by their mother/other tongue?
3. Have you got quality pre-service training and receiving in-service training so that you will update yourselves in the medium of instruction?
4. What are the major challenges you faced in teaching by mother/other tongue?
5. What are the solutions you undertake to overcome the challenges you faced?

III. Observation

Observation Guidelines

1. The numeral availability of teaching materials.
2. The quality of teaching materials in terms of contents.
3. Existence of sufficient teachers and their fluency while teaching.
4. The level of students learning performance in the classroom.
5. The ethnic composition of the society.

APPENDIX II

Profile of the Respondents

The informants background in terms of their level, institution and their positions within their institutions as well as their numbers respecting their right to remain anonymous.

No.	Level	Institution	Position	Total
1	Region	Education Bureau	Educational Planning and Curriculum Design and Implementation Vise Heads	2
		Culture and Tourism Bureau	Language Expert	1
		Women, Children and Youth Bureau	Children's Right Experts	2
		MTE Focal Persons	MTE Experts	3
		MTE donor Organizations	UNICEF and SIL Focal Persons	2
		Legal Expert	Member of the Drafters of Legal Documents	1
2	Zone	Educational capacity Building Office	MTE Expert*	1
3	Woreda	Educational Capacity Building and Civil Service Office	Head Administration	1
		MTE Focal Persons	MTE Experts	2
4	School	Principal	Head	1
		Teachers	Mother Tongue & Other Tongue Teachers	10
		Students	Mother Tongue & Other Tongue Learners	10
		Parents	Mother Tongue & Other Tongue Parents	10
Grand Total				46

*The MTE expert was also a representative of the office at the time of data collection and consulted as an official and MTE expert.