ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

# THE RENEWAL PROCESS OF THE 2008/9 ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

PhD Dissertation

By

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April, 2020
Addis Ababa University

# THE RENEWAL PROCESS OF THE 2008/9 ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**

**By**

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**April, 2020**

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This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Dagne Kebede, entitled *The Renewal Process of the 2008/9 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Secondary School Curriculum* and submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)** complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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# DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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**Dedicated to: Jal’e Kebede**

# ABSTRACT

*The Renewal Process of the 2008/9 EFL Secondary School Curriculum*
*Dagne Kebede*
*Addis Ababa University, 2020*

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the renewal process of the 2008/9 EFL secondary school curriculum. Qualitative case – study design was employed to guide the overall research with the use of semi – structured interview and document analysis as the data collection tools. An interpretive thematic approach of qualitative data analysis was applied for the purpose of coding, categorization, and generating theme from the collected data. Following this, the findings of the study were presented, analyzed and discussed based on the themes generated from the data analysis. According to the results, the major contextual factors that necessitated the 2008/9 EFL curriculum renewal were: too bulky nature of the curriculum; difficulty of the content for the students; irrelevance of the curriculum contents to learners' and society's needs; lack of minimum learning competency (MLC) indicators; difficulty in implementing continuous assessment, and the need to align the curriculum with government policies and strategies. The findings of this study also demonstrated that the process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum development reflected typical characteristics of Tyler's (1949) product/objectives/top-down model since curriculum aims, goals and objectives, curriculum materials and/or contents (including the syllabus and the textbooks), teaching-learning methods, and assessment strategies were all centrally pre-specified by curriculum experts at the MoE. According to the findings, the process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum renewal was incomprehensive, poorly – planned, and was not data – driven as it overlooked such crucial aspects as extensive evaluation and try – out mechanisms as integral parts of the process. It is also evident in the results that needs analysis had been conducted by curriculum experts at MoE through collecting data from students, teachers, school directors, supervisors and society. The findings further revealed that training of trainers had been organized for teachers selected from the regions at the ministry level though there was no evidence as to whether the trained teachers had disseminated the knowledge and skills they gained to their respective schools. Based on the findings, context – specific recommendations were forwarded towards the improvement of the EFL curriculum development.*


***Key Words:*** *EFL Curriculum, Curriculum Renewal/Development, Qualitative Case – Study*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who supported, encouraged, and inspired me during my journey of completing this work. I first express my wholehearted praise and thankfulness to God, without whose assistance, this work would never have been completed.

I would like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Alemu Hailu, who spared no efforts to provide me with sincere advice and encouragement. Without your constructive feedback, invaluable guidance, patience and faith, this study would not have been successful. Thank you Dr. for believing in me.

Special thanks are also due to everyone who had participated in this study, particularly the curriculum experts who went out of their way in providing me with their precious time and unfailing commitment and cooperation during my field work. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my mom Desta Shibo who is still my hero and to my dad Kebede Taresa who went to be with the Lord, for instilling in me the seeds of curiosity, courage and relentless determination of never giving up on my childhood dream.

Last but not least, I would like to convey my deepest gratitude to my friends and/or brothers: Leta Kebede, Etana Diriba, Mihret G/Michael, Merga Dessalegn, Biruk Belay, Gemechis Sirna, Ashenafi Belina and Tariku Tenna, for being there for me during 'those tough' times of my life and for being close friends and/or brothers to whom I could confide all my personal and professional matters.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**AAU** Addis Ababa University

| | |
|---|---|
| **CBE** | Competency – Based Education |
| **CBLT** | Competency – Based Language Teaching |
| **CDID** | Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate |
| **CLT** | Communicative Language Teaching |
| **GEQIP** | General Education Quality Improvement Program |
| **DFLL** | Department of Foreign Languages and Literature |
| **EFL** | English as a Foreign Language |
| **ELT** | English Language Teaching |
| **ESDP** | Education Sector Development Program |
| **ETP** | Education and Training Policy |
| **ICDR** | Institute of Curriculum Development and Research |
| **JAICA** | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| **MDG** | Millennium Development Goals |
| **MLC** | Minimum Learning Competencies |
| **MoE** | Ministry of Education |
| **NLA** | National Learning Assessment |
| **NOE** | National Organization for Examinations |
| **TEFL** | Teaching English as a Foreign Language |
| **TGE** | Transitional Government of Ethiopia |
| **WB** | World Bank |

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the Study

The term curriculum is open to a variety of definitions since different authors define it in different ways. In its narrowest sense it is synonymous with the term syllabus, as in the specification of the content and ordering of what is to be taught. In the wider sense it refers to all aspects of planning *(the why)*, implementation *(the how)* and evaluation *(the how well)* of an educational program. Rodgers (1989) explains that curriculum includes not only what pupils learn, but how they learn it, how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kind of facilities. Robertson (1971) clarifies the term saying, "The curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs" (p. 566). Dubin and Olshtain (1986) point out the common belief that curriculum includes a syllabus, but not vice versa. For the purpose of this study, curriculum is defined as all those activities in which students engage under the auspices of the school. These include content students need to learn (syllabus), methods teachers use to deliver the content (pedagogy), supporting materials used to teach (textbooks), methods of assessment employed (testing), kind of facilities and means of evaluation employed to improve the program.

Curriculum development is a comprehensive and multidimensional process, in which curriculum is planned, designed and then implemented in the classrooms (Olivia, 2001; Ornstein and Hunkins, 2004). Richards (2001) describes curriculum development as "the range of planning and implementation processes involved in developing or renewing a curriculum" (p. 41). Curriculum development, thus, includes determining what knowledge, skills, values and experiences should be provided to learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes, and includes all the processes involved in developing, implementing and evaluating language programs. This study adopts Richards' (2001) inclusive definition of curriculum development that depicts the process as focusing on "needs analysis, situation analysis, planning learning

outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching and evaluation" (Richards 2001: 14).

Regarding the ideological bases of curricula, White (1988) makes reference to different models of curriculum renewal representing the expression of different value systems, divergent views and orientations on education. Similarly, according to Clark (1987) there is a set of beliefs and views on the nature of knowledge and the purpose of education underlying any curriculum. These include Classical Humanism (that focuses on education as transmitter of cultural heritage), Reconstructionism (that regards education as an instrument of change) and Progressivism (that stresses the role of education in enhancing growth and self – realization of the individual).

More specifically, the classical humanist approach to curriculum design is characterized by a desire to promote broad intellectual capacities such as memorization and the ability to analyze, classify and reconstruct elements of knowledge. The teacher is seen as a transmitter of knowledge and the learner's task is to acquire knowledge so as to be able to control and apply it in new contexts. The classical humanist gives rise to *content driven curriculum* in which the designer sets out to analyze what is seen as the inherent content of a subject into its constituent parts and then sequences these from what are deemed to be the simpler elements to learn to what are considered to be the more complex ones (Clark, 1987: 5-8). The grammar-translation approach is born out of this school of thought. The content to be taught and learnt is expressed in terms of phonology, grammar and vocabulary that are seen to constitute any language. The classical humanist curriculum emphasizes the mastery of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary while undermining the importance of the practical skills. The norm – referenced form of assessment associated with classical humanism also provides little information as to what students can or cannot do (Clark, 1987).

Reconstructionism emphasizes the practical aspects of education and the promotion of international and intra-national understanding. It does not focus on the structure of the subjects to be studied but on the development of objectives to be achieved. Re-constructivism gives rise to a *goal-driven curriculum* in which the content is derived from an analysis of the learner's objective needs in terms of behavior. Great focus is placed on planning, setting goals to be pursued and deliberate interventions in the education system to bring about outcomes deemed necessary

(Clark, 1987: 14-15). The methodology normally associated with Reconstructionism emphasizes deliberate practice of skills. In terms of instruction, the rule-based, direct transmission tenets of grammar-translation were replaced by a more pragmatic view of language learning which stressed language use rather than knowledge about language. The goal was for students to achieve communicative competence in oral and written language. A number of instructional strategies were used, including the Direct Method, Audio-lingualism and Oral-structuralism. The greatest flaw of Reconstructionism lies in its assumption that if one describes the product of learning in sufficient detail, then one can choose the related learning experiences. However, critics claim that describing the products of learning either in terms of behavioral objectives or ability to express certain functional-notional meanings or combinations of these does not necessarily indicate the way to reach these products (Clark, 1987).

Progressivism is based on a learner-centered approach to education which aims to promote the learner's development as an individual with intellectual and emotional needs and as a social being. The learner is seen as a whole person rather than a disembodied intellect or a skilled performer. Teachers are not instructors but creators of an environment in which learners learn how to learn. Progressivists are more concerned with learning processes and methodology than with predetermining learning objectives. Progressivism gives rise to a *process-driven curriculum*, governed by principles of procedure designed to allow learner goals, content and method (Clark, 1987: 49-51). Progressivism is realized in language teaching and learning through task-based programs such as those pioneered by Prabhu in the Bangalore Project (Prabhu and Carroll 1980). With the shift from a 'product' based curriculum to a 'process oriented curriculum', there was also a shift in methodology towards 'Communicative Language Teaching' (CLT) which became widely popular in the ESL education during 1980s.

Curriculum design specialists have proposed various frameworks that break down the process of curriculum development into components and sub-processes (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Graves, 1996; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Johnson, 1989; Richards, 1990; White, 1988). For instance, in the framework introduced by Dubin and Olshtain (1986), "fact finding stage" is the first stage in which the societal factors are assessed. This stage provides answers to the key questions regarding program policies including such questions as 'Who are the learners?', 'Who are the teachers?', 'Why is the program necessary?', 'Where will the program be implemented?', 'How

will it be implemented?' (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986). After interpreting the results of the fact finding stage, curriculum designers should establish policies and formulate goals on the basis of the results. The next stage is the realization of goals through instructional plans. In this stage, general goals are translated into specific objectives. In other words, specific objectives are specified on the basis of general goals in three dimensions of curriculum: language content, processes, and product or outcomes. After addressing all these issues, the following stage is to decide on the shape of the syllabus; whether it is going to be in a linear, modular, cyclical, matrix or story line format (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986).

One of the most important prerequisites of delivering effective and quality language education is having a clearly defined curriculum in terms of its teaching goals and specific objectives. Ethiopia designed a new education policy in 1994 with the view to reform the education policy that was in effect during the Derg regime. One of the priorities given in this education policy was changing the syllabuses and textbooks that had been in use. It was felt that the then syllabus and textbooks would not go with the socio-political situation of the country and the prevailing principles of teaching/learning processes i.e. learner centeredness (Alemu, 2004). The policy stated that the teaching/learning processes should be based on the problem-solving approach that brings learners to the center of learning. Accordingly, it was decided that teaching English as a Foreign Language in the country should be based on the insights gained from the theories and practices of Communicative Language Teaching. The new policy also stipulates that English should be taught as a subject starting from grade one and serve as a medium of instruction starting from grade nine.

One of the priorities given in the policy was changing the Derg curriculum, and introducing new textbooks based on a sequential basis for primary level starting from grades 1-5. The responsibility for preparing textbooks, other than English textbooks, was given to the regional educational bureaus. However, the responsibility of preparing English textbooks for both primary and secondary levels was given to the English Panel, Institute of Curriculum and Educational Research, Ministry of Education (Alemu, 2004). Accordingly, the Ministry of Education prepared English textbooks for the primary level within four years, 1994/5 to 1997/8 and published "English for Ethiopia" series, for the secondary level in 1996. In English for Ethiopia series, language skills that were excluded from the previous textbooks (speaking and

writing) were given the maximum teaching emphasis. An approach that brings learners to the center was introduced in the new series. For the general secondary education (grades 9 and 10), two textbooks have been developed for the first and second semesters. The textbooks differ greatly in content and approach from previous textbooks. Each unit in the textbook is organized around topics (themes) covering vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading and writing sections.

This newly revised curriculum was put into effect until it was followed by two consecutive renewals in 2004/5 and 2008/9. The Ministry of Education prepared new English textbooks for grades 9-12 starting from 2008 and published these textbooks in the year 2010. The English syllabus for grades 9-12 is based on the new curriculum framework for Ethiopian schools and on the needs assessment conducted prior to revision work (MoE, 2009). Moreover, the syllabus has also considered international content standards for a similar age and grade level of learners. Certain changes have been made to the syllabus. For instance, unlike the previous one, the content has been reduced so that teachers could be able to cover the content within the allotted time, it is based on minimum learning competencies for each grade against which students will be assessed, there is spiral progression throughout the four language skills, grammatical and vocabulary items and other language components, and the content is relevant to all students whether they are leaving school after grade 10 or continuing to grades 11 and 12 or entering higher education or the world of work (MoE, 2009).

The syllabus demonstrates practical implementation of active learning and learner-centeredness and is designed to inform the production of quality textbooks that will inspire confidence and develop competence in teachers so they can use a broader range of methodologies in their teaching (MoE, 2009). The approach to language teaching is communicative and skills based: students learn and practice language which is meaningful to them and which has a real purpose and context. For this reason the focus is on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grammar, vocabulary and social expressions are integrated into practice of these skills. Language is about communicating with others and learners are encouraged to interact with each other in a variety of patterns: pairs, groups and plenary. The activities are also designed to encourage students' natural curiosity and appetite for discovery together with enjoyment of learning through debates, presentations, surveys, role plays, stories, projects and research

activities appropriate to their age (MoE, 2009). Continuous assessment is also integrated in to the curriculum as a means to evaluate students' progress.

Despite undergoing reforms since 1994, little is known about the process adopted to renew the EFL curriculum within our country. So far, to the best knowledge of the researcher, studies conducted in this area are scant within the Ethiopian context. Given this research gap, therefore, there appears to be a practical need for the present study which aims to determine the renewal process of the 2008/9 secondary school EFL curriculum.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

While curriculum and curriculum development are well-researched topics in western literature, there is very little research in this area in developing countries where English is used as a foreign language (Phan, 2015). Following are some of the studies conducted in EFL contexts addressing the theme of EFL curriculum. To begin with, Supanit (2006) conducted a critical analysis of the 2001 national foreign language standard-based primary education curriculum in the Thai school system by using such instruments as document analysis, interviews and questionnaires. The research analyses the English language curriculum by asking questions about who was involved in the curriculum planning process and what were the decision making mechanism and processes involved in its planning. According to the findings, difficulties of Thai foreign language education are a consequence of the incoherence of philosophical, theoretical, and social bases of curriculum design. The research concludes by drawing implication for future research to stress a critical literacy approach to English language education and curriculum development.

A study conducted by Phan (2015) on approaches to EFL curriculum development in Vietnamese Higher Education is also worth mentioning in this case. Phan (2015) used a qualitative case study design to reveal the previously unheard voices of senior administrators, EFL teachers and EFL students of the university to show how EFL curriculum is developed in that particular context. The researcher mainly employed face-to-face interviews (with senior administrators and teaching staff) and focus group discussion (with students) as data collection instruments. The findings reveal that understandings of curriculum are diverse and sometimes conflicting among stakeholders interviewed and the curriculum is developed in a top-down hierarchical manner. The findings also indicate that there exists mismatch between the traditional

view of knowledge versus the contemporary purpose of curriculum, recently approved institutional autonomy versus stakeholders' competencies and innovative ideas versus traditional values.

Moreover, a dissertation by Rodrigues (2015) on curriculum design and language learning in Brazil through the lens of analysis of English textbook is also of significance. Rodrigues (2015) used qualitative content analysis method to explore the extent to which textbook writers included curriculum design and language learning processes into two sixth grade textbooks - *the Links* (2011) and *Keep in Mind* (2012) - by developing checklists from Notion and Macalister's (2010) language curriculum design components and from Tomlinson (2003, 2010, 2011) as well as Ellis's (2014) language learning principles. The findings indicate that both textbooks follow a weak version of the communicative approach; they develop suitable controlled practices related to speaking skills and provide natural spoken data for the content of the units; they failed to create conditions for freer production of language use to achieve a communicative outcome; there are few opportunities for students to interact, share meaning, and manipulate the language in communicative contexts; and textbook authors fail to include content more than once across textbook, thereby hindering students' abilities to recall and integrated content knowledge.

Furthermore, Uztosun and Troudi (2006) conducted a study on lecturers' views about the effectiveness of curriculum change procedures taking place at the English language teacher education departments of Turkish universities using open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The results indicate that lecturers did not have voice during the change process and were not well informed about the changes. Moreover, the change process disregarded some important steps of curriculum development such as needs analysis, teacher training, and evaluation.

The trend apparent in this set of ELT researches also recurs in studies that were conducted within the Ethiopian context. For instance, Mellese (1992) carried out an evaluation of grades 9-12 English curriculum and its implementation to find out evidences for causes of students‟ deficiency in English. To this effect, he employed document analysis, unstructured interview and questionnaire to gather data pertaining to English curriculum and its implementation. The findings of the study indicate that one of the causes for students' deficiency in English lies in the

design and implementation of the English curriculum. The study concludes that ambiguity and insufficiency of the curriculum objectives; absence of communicative language; high dosage of grammatical descriptions; irrelevance of reading passages, vocabulary items and exercises as curriculum contents and their unsystematic selection and gradation; and shortage and absence of instructional facilities, plans, methods, techniques and strategies for implementing it are among the major factors contributing to the students' deficiency in English.

In a similar vein, Hailu (2008) conducted a research within the Ethiopian context on the English for Ethiopia grade 11 students' book by using questionnaire and content analysis as tools for collecting data from students, teachers and external evaluators. The findings of the study reveal that the textbook is of low level quality since some of the exercises are not designed for genuine communication, since some of the skills are not presented in the way the learners' need to practice and since significant numbers of topics and contents are not in harmony with the learners' interest and culture. Last but not least, a study by Biniyam (2012) uses classroom observation, questionnaire and interview as research tools to inquire into policy and practice of primary EFL teaching in Ethiopia. Accordingly, having reviewed grades 1-4 English curriculum policy and the English textbooks, Biniyam (2012) concludes that most of the contents, the tasks and the activities embodied in the textbooks and the structures used to present these contents are appropriate to promote students' English though discrepancy exists between methods propounded in the policy contents as well as teachers' guides and teachers' actual classroom practices.

Although the results of these studies contribute to the present study through their implications for the problems inherent in the innovated curriculum, they also had certain limitations in terms of their purposes and scopes. For instance, the scope of some of the researches is limited to the EFL curriculum of primary school level (e.g. Supanit (2006), Biniyam (2012)), while others are based on curriculum design practices at higher education level (e.g. Uztosun and Troudi (2006)) rather than secondary education level. Moreover, the other studies emphasize only on a single aspect of curriculum - textbooks - in order to scrutinize how the EFL curriculum is embodied through textbooks (e.g. Rodrigues (2015), Hailu (2008)) at the expense of other essential curriculum design aspects like evaluation, needs analysis, try out, training of teachers, etc. Furthermore, the

studies were conducted prior to 2015 and much development has taken place in the field and in our country since then.

Though the English curriculum has undergone a series of reforms since 1994, the situation to date seems to be precarious bedeviled by lack of quality as students are still found unable to follow their studies in different post-secondary and/or higher academic institutions because their knowledge of English is poor. In relation to this, locally conducted studies have revealed that the level of English acquired by the time pupils complete secondary schools have been found very poor and this has negatively affected the general level of their academic achievements (Gebremedihin, 1993; Hailemichael, 1993; Geremew, 1999; Alamiraw, 2005; Tekeste, 2006).

Similarly, the program action plan of Education Sector Development Program V (ESDP V) stipulates that in spite of great efforts under General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP), student attainment and learning outcomes have not improved in line with targets in the period of ESDP IV since the system has not been supporting the majority of students to acquire core foundation skills and this impacts on their progress through to Grade 12, with TVET and on their outcomes in higher education (ESDP V, 2015/16). From this, it is apparent that most of the students face high pressure of continuing their studies in higher education where English serves as medium of instruction since they lack level of language competence required at this stage whereby they are demanded to be independent learners who are able to understand, explain, interpret and construct knowledge (using English) rather than to be passive-empty-vessels waiting to be filled knowledge provided by the instructor.

Although the widened gap between the language level proposed by the EFL curriculum and the actual language competence of the students can be attributed to interplay of several factors, the curriculum package in general and its renewal process in particular at all levels of education in Ethiopia have never been immune to criticism all the way through the history of the Ethiopian modern education system. Problems associated with curriculum and curriculum development are rooted in many ways in the Ethiopian education system at each level of education, irrespective of the fields of studies and/or the subjects to be taught/learned and the skills, competencies, attitudes to be developed. Discontents of such type were reflected in the works of many writers and researchers who have dealt with issues related to curriculum development and its practices at

various levels along the continuum of the education system in Ethiopia since the 1950s (For instance, MoE, 2002; Kassaye, 2005, 2014; Temechegn, 2000; Amare, 1998; Tekeste, 2006; Mulu, 2009; Ayalew, Dawit, Tesfaye and Yalew, 2009). In fact, the problems addressed in these studies and all those discussed in this section may inform the current research, they are out of the scope of this study. Yet, the specific nature, processes and challenges of the EFL curriculum development are not well known and/or are less researched in within the context of the Ethiopian education system. Based on this premise, therefore, this study investigates the renewal process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum with the aim of uncovering the process through which it was developed, thereby identifying the underpinning curriculum development theory and/or model.

### 1.3. Research Questions

The main research question that guides this study is 'How was the 2008/9 EFL secondary school curriculum renewed?' To this end, this inquiry seeks to answer the following specific questions:

- Was the EFL curriculum renewal process based on summative evaluation?
- What contextual factors drove the curriculum renewal?
- What procedures and practices of needs assessment were followed, if any, prior to designing the curriculum?
- What were the source and nature of the aims, goals and objectives set?
- How was the content of the curriculum determined?
- What pedagogical and/or methodological suggestions were recommended to facilitate achievement of the instructional goals and objectives?
- What evaluation methods were forwarded for teachers to assess the students?
- What procedure was involved in piloting the curriculum and/or the curriculum materials?
- What were the factors that influenced, if any, the EFL curriculum renewal process?
- What model of curriculum development underpins the EFL curriculum?

### 1.4. Objectives of the Study

The general and specific objectives that guide this study are presented as follows.

### 1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the renewal process of the 2008/9 secondary school EFL curriculum.

### 1.4.2. Specific Objectives

In an endeavor to attain the general objective, therefore, this study specifically aims at:

- Justifying whether the curriculum renewal process was based on summative evaluation,
- Finding out the contextual factors that drove the curriculum renewal;
- Exploring the processes and practices adopted to assess needs, if any, prior to designing the curriculum;
- Analyzing the source and nature of aims, goals and objectives set;
- Identifying the procedures followed in determining the content of the curriculum;
- Uncovering the pedagogical and/or methodological techniques underlying the EFL curriculum;
- Identifying the evaluation methods forwarded for teachers to assess the students;
- Scrutinizing the process of curriculum and/or curriculum materials piloting;
- Finding out the factors that influenced, if any, the EFL curriculum renewal process;
- Uncovering the curriculum development model underpinning the EFL curriculum.

## 1.5. Significance of the Study

This research explores the renewal process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum of secondary schools and thus the researcher believes that it is important in several aspects. First, by describing the detailed process of EFL curriculum renewal, the result of this study would uncover the theoretical underpinnings of the Ethiopian secondary school EFL curriculum, thereby determining whether the process is informed by current theories within the field. Second, this research may generate insight regarding the best practices that need to be promoted as well as the problematic areas that need to be addressed for the betterment of future EFL curriculum renewal endeavors. Third, this study may serve as a springboard for further studies in the field of English

curriculum development. Last, this study may contribute to the body of literature on secondary schools EFL curriculum and may address the research gap in the field.

### 1.6. Scope of the Study

Topically, the present study focuses on such aspects of curriculum development as evaluation, needs analysis, aims, goals and objectives setting, content selection and sequencing, and tryout/piloting. In addition, this study is delimited to curriculum experts found in Ministry of Education. These decisions of inclusions were made in order to maintain feasibility of the research process in terms of time and budget.

### 1.7. Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study is that the voices that have been considered are those from the curriculum experts at the MoE. The other stakeholders especially such as regional curriculum experts, researchers, EFL academics/teachers, EFL students both previous and current ones, and societal members could also be heard so as to build a more complete picture of the processes of curriculum development and the quality of existing curriculum.

Though a single case study is the most suitable choice to explore the real-life phenomenon of curriculum development in-depth due to the scale and time frame for a doctoral thesis, a multiple-case study would have enriched the findings. The understandings of processes of secondary school EFL curriculum development show curriculum expert perceptions, beliefs, and practices within the research site, namely the MoE. Those findings would have reflected more of curriculum development practices in the Ethiopian context if they had been compared with those from curriculum development wings of the regional educational bureaus across the country.

While factors limiting the present study were anticipated and taken into account during the design phase, inevitably some limitations were encountered during data collection. The study could involve only four of the nine experts, who had both experience and expertise in the EFL secondary school curriculum development; partly due to their fully scheduled time commitment and mainly due to their unreachability/unavailability (since they had already either retired or shifted to other offices through promotion).

The other limitation of this study pertains to the issue of generalization. Accordingly, though case studies limit generalization of the findings to broader populations, the knowledge from the study can be useful when applied to other cases of similar contexts (Guest et al., 2012).

### 1.8. Operational Definitions

Operational definitions of essential terms used in this study are given as follows:

**Curriculum:** For the purpose of this study, the term curriculum is defined as all those activities in which students engage under the auspices of the school including content students need to learn (syllabus), methods teachers use to deliver the content (pedagogy), supporting materials used to teach (textbooks), methods of assessment employed (testing), kind of facilities in which teaching-learning takes place, and means of evaluation employed to improve the program.

**Curriculum Renewal:** In this study, the term curriculum renewal is used interchangeably with curriculum development/design/revision which encompasses "...the range of planning and implementation processes involved in developing or renewing a curriculum. These processes focus needs analysis, situation analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching, and evaluation" (Richards 2001:14).

### 1.9. Organization of the Dissertation

Overall, this thesis has five main chapters. The First Chapter is the overall introductory part. The Second Chapter reviews related literature and provides a conceptual/theoretical framework for the study. The Third Chapter deals with the research methodology employed, and accordingly discusses in detail the sample and sampling procedures of the study, the instruments of data collection, the procedures of data collection and the method of analyses. This chapter ends by discussing the major insights gained from conducting the pilot study. The Fourth Chapter revolves around the data analyses, presentation and discussion of the findings. The last Chapter of the thesis provides the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications drawn from the findings.

# CHAPTR TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1. Conceptualization of Curriculum

Curriculum is a fundamental component of education at all levels and for a very long time, researchers and educators have dwelled on many aspects of curriculum. The most heatedly debated aspect arguably remains that of the definition of a curriculum. Currently, there is still no widely accepted or unanimously agreed-on definition for the term "curriculum". The fact that the term curriculum does not have any single exact definition ultimately leads to emergence of various interpretations from different educators. "The curriculum field is by no means clear; as a discipline of study and as a field of practice, curriculum lacks clean boundaries…" (Olivia, 2001:10).

The origin of the word "curriculum" can be traced to Latin. Its first meaning was "a running," "a race," or "a course," and its secondary meanings were "a race-course" or "a career" (Connelly and Lantz, 1991, p. 15; Egan, 2003:10). While some educators define the concept of curriculum as subjects or subject matters, others define it as experiences that a learner has under the guidance of the school. A narrow definition of curriculum would limit it to the content of what is taught, for instance, "a plan for learning" or "a general over-all plan of the content or specific materials of instruction that the school should offer the student by way of qualifying him for graduation or certification or for entering into a professional or vocational field" (Good, 1959, quoted in Connelly and Lantz, 1991:15). Here, curriculum is defined as "permanent" subjects that embody essential knowledge.

In a broad sense, curriculum is the whole of educational study or an "experience", including all planned and other kinds of learning, which are either accidental, unplanned, or may even be quite undesirable. Rodgers (1989, p.26) explains that curriculum includes not only what pupils learn, but how they learn it, how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kind of facilities. Robertson (1971) clarified the term, saying, "The curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs" (p. 566).

Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p. 40) explain further that a “curriculum” deals with abstract and general goals while a “syllabus” is an educational plan that guides teachers and learners in everyday concerns. According to them, curriculum includes a syllabus, but not vice versa (p. 3). Syllabus design corners itself with the selection of scope and sequences and justifying content as well as proficiency level of language learners and learning objectives (Richards, 2001; Nunan, 1988). To recapitulate, curriculum is the “what”, “why”, and “how” of a formal educational course or program. The “what” of a curriculum consists of the content being covered; the “why” refers to the goals and objectives of the program, along with the rationale for the chosen content, its sequence, and presentation; and the “how” covers the sequence, format, and presentation of the instruction, including the relevant methods, techniques, assessment and instructional environment.

### 2.2. The Distinction between Syllabus and Curriculum

Distinguishing between the terms syllabus and curriculum is necessary in language curriculum studies. Yalden (1987) states that the overlap between syllabus and curriculum has caused a great deal of confusion and he distinguishes clearly between the two by considering "curriculum" as a very general concept which involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors which contribute to planning an educational program. In comparison, "syllabus" refers to that subpart of a curriculum which is concerned with a specification of what units will be taught. In other words, syllabus contains details of ends - a characterization of the target outcomes or objectives and means - and the method by which the target outcomes will be achieved (Johnson, 1989a). A syllabus is subsumed in the curriculum (Allen, 1984; Print, 1993; Graves, 1996; Breen, 2001).

Thus, accepting that curriculum is a far broader concept than syllabus, it is important to examine just what others consider a curriculum to be. Rodgers (1989) explains that, at the school level, a curriculum is all those activities in which children engage under the auspices of the school. The curriculum deals with issues in child learning, teaching methodologies, material organization and methods of assessment as well as the kind of facilities available. On the other hand, a syllabus only prescribes the content to be covered and that forms only a small part of the total school program. Dubin and Olshtain (1986:40) explain further that a "curriculum" deals with abstract

and general goals while a "syllabus" is an instructional plan that guides teachers and learners in everyday concerns. The language curriculum development process is typically seen as consisting of needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology, and evaluation. Syllabus design concerns itself with the selection of scope and sequences and justifying content as well as proficiency levels of language learners and learning objectives (Richards, 2001, Nunan, 2004).

### 2.3. The Nature of Curriculum Analysis

Posner (1995) defines "curriculum analysis" similarly to Gutek's (2004) definition of "analysis", that is, as a method of breaking a curriculum into parts, examining those parts, and the ways they fit together to make a whole. Curriculum analysis is different from curriculum evaluation. Schubert (1986) explains that evaluation is the attempt to assess or judge the educational practices or programs. The analysis, on the other hand, is the process of considering something carefully in order to understand it or explain it. Thus, the nature of making judgment will be mostly found in the process of evaluation rather than analysis.

Posner (1995) adds that to analyze the curriculum is ". . . to identify the beliefs and ideas to which the developers were committed and which either explicitly or implicitly shaped the curriculum, and to examine the implications of these commitments and beliefs for the quality of the educational experience." (p.13). However, most curriculum documents do not explicitly state developers' beliefs, nor ideas nor theoretical commitments, and even when they do, it is dangerous to take them at face value (Posner, 1995; Richards, 2001). Thus, the task of the curriculum analyst is to probe beneath the surface of the curriculum document or curriculum design in order to identify curriculum beliefs, ideas or theoretical bases of the curriculum or the perception of reality held by educators (Freire, 2004). Freire (2004) adds that the investigation of an educator's perception of reality is the investigation of the thought-language with which educators (and politicians) refer to reality, the levels at which they perceive that reality, and their view of the world that is represented in the program content of education.

Furthermore, Willis (1978) asserts that the curriculum is the form of meanings that were asserted in relation to other items. He states "when the relations among selections that constitute the designs of curriculum have been explained, the meanings of the curriculum have thereby been disclosed" (p.78). Willis (1978) suggests that to account for the meaning of a curriculum,

therefore, is to account for the reason for the curriculum elements and why its meaning is chosen as well as to explain the relations among the selections.

Curriculum analysis is similar to an illuminative model of evaluation, a new wave of evaluation (Stenhouse, 1975), that focuses on description and interpretation rather than on measurement and prediction of the curriculum achievement (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976). An illuminative evaluation model does not justify the curriculum intent which is different from the form of evaluation that is based on empirical assessment, such as the rationale model designed by Tyler (1949). Evaluation in the rationale model is the process of assessing the effectiveness of curriculum objectives, content and curriculum implementation and making a judgment by having objectives as a set of criteria. On the other hand, an illuminative evaluation favors observation of the real and what is happening in particular contexts in the classroom as useful data for curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975; Parlett and Hamilton, 1976; Richards, 200 1). Taylor and Richards (1979) argue that the fundamental concern of illuminative evaluation is with the basic tenets, philosophy, aims, and intentions explicit or implicit within the curriculum and it is qualitative rather than quantitative; it is an approach that focuses on the ideas and judgments of those involved in the curriculum. Eisner (1979) states that conventional training in evaluation still bears the imprint of psychometrics:

> "Although psychometric techniques are useful in describing some aspects of education performance, they by no means embrace the entirety of what counts educationally... The reduction of educational evaluation to a set of limited quantitative methods, ones that harbor their own values, which often go unacknowledged or unapprised, is to reduce educational evaluators to technicians and to a technical process." (p. 188)

The illuminative model with its concern for description and interpretation shares a similar view: qualitative methods in curriculum evaluation, such as the account of what happens in the reality of the classroom or in curriculum implementation, could better contribute to curriculum development than the quantitative method's concern for measurement and prediction (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976). However, the illuminative model only broadens the curriculum analysis perspectives. Curriculum analysis takes us further in-depth into the curriculum document and its

planning process, whereas the illuminative model focuses more on evaluation of the curriculum development and classroom practice.

To conclude, curriculum analysis is the process whereby each element of the curriculum is delineated and explored by revealing its implicit and explicit beliefs, values, and meanings, imposed or decided on by curriculum developers in the decision making process. In addition, because each curriculum element is asserted to form the curriculum, the study of how the relationship of each element is formed for the quality of educational experience is also essential. This statement implies two main focuses of curriculum analysis which are: a) beliefs, ideas, theories and meaning underlying the curriculum, and b) the relationship between the underlying meanings of the elements of the curriculum. In addition, the curriculum analyst should take an eclectic position, which means having a broad view from different perspectives, but not encapsulated by them (Posner, 1995).

## 2.4. Major Issues Related to Curriculum Decision Making

### 2.4.1. Participants in Curriculum Planning - the Decision Makers

In general, it is undeniable that despite the bottom-up curriculum development (School-Based Curriculum) approach that is introduced to allow the curricula to be developed by those who implement the curriculum, the national curriculum, the policy and the knowledge relating to the development of the nation are all still decided at the national level. Print (1993) comments that

> "in our complex, democratically based, multicultural society, decisions will be made in the curriculum development process which reflect competing forces seeking to influence future generations.. .It is important that educators realize, therefore, that curriculum development is essentially a manipulative strategy." (p.15)

Thus, one of the ways to democratize national education is to ensure that the people who have power to make a decision at the policy level make the most of their responsibilities to their own generation and future generations in a democratic way. Pierre Bourdieu, a well-known sociologist, who worked against social injustice and oppression, believes that intellectuals have a major responsibility in bridging intellectual work and the operations of politics (Giroux, 2004, p.7). What we can do is to try to understand the curriculum and its underlying principles which

then allows us to understand what ways the nation is leading its citizens and how freedom can be exercised in the process of learning. We have to understand this legitimating process, and then we can be assured that education is not the place for any particular party to take advantage, but a place that advantages our children.

One of the crucial tasks of curriculum analysis is to disclose the meanings of the curriculum developers which are embodied in their selections of those possibilities which in fact constitute the form their work takes (Willis, 1978; Johnson, 1989b; Freire, 1998). Modern language curriculum development starts to question not only how the objectives are derived and how they are implemented but also to question who has the responsibility for holding the decision made, what is their expertise, their beliefs and ideologies concerning second or foreign language education and curriculum studies. Print (1993) adds that "if we are able to understand where curriculum developers are coming from, we can better understand the curricula that have been devised and can thus be more consistent with the curriculum's intentions when it is implemented" (p.46).

Curriculum developers or policy makers are persons who participate in or commence the task of constructing a curriculum, to organize and conceptualize the curriculum, whether or not it includes a written document; as pointed out by Print (1993), they are participating in curriculum planning. Parsons (1995) explains that professional groups, such as scientists and academics, are often represented as the creators of public policy. Thus, they, the proponents of particular bodies of knowledge, play an important role in shaping both social policy and the institutions of everyday life and they are said to have power. Ornstein and Hunkins (1993) state that a person's philosophical stance will affect his or her interpretation and selection of objective knowledge, influence the content selected and how it will be organized, affect decisions about how to teach or deliver the curriculum and guide judgments about how to evaluate the success of the curriculum developed.

Posner (1995) has posed questions relating to the decision making process as follows: Who made up the cast of characters in the development of the curriculum? What were their names, with what institution were they affiliated, and what were their roles in the project? Lian (2003) suggests that learning theory and practice are not the only influences on teaching; instead

administrative constraints and curriculum planning processes will have a major impact. His questions are, for example, (a) Who will decide on the content of syllabuses: administrators, teachers, researchers, the minister or all the above?; (b) Who will select the people who will develop the curriculum?; (c) How will these people be selected?; (d) Who will have the final say in the approval of the curriculum?; and finally (e) Who will select the people who select the people who will develop the curriculum? The questions here imply that the group of people who make decisions in the policy making process have power to determine what child should be developed and in what way. Curriculum developers have crucial powers in the way a child develops.

Thus the people involved in the planning process must have knowledge within their expertise as well as knowledge related to multiple perspectives of education. As stated by Posner (1995), curriculum decisions are never limited to questions of how to do something but entail decisions about desirability, fairness, or legitimacy of content, of an approach to topic, or of a way to treat students, all of which have historical, social, political, moral, cultural, and economic implications. Thus, curriculum decision making is a very complex task that involves many kinds of decisions (Sowell, 2005) and one important characteristic of adequate curriculum development is that the decisions made in the course of planning rest on multiple criteria and consider a multiplicity of factors (Taba, 1962). Saylor et al. (1981) argue that the appropriateness of a curriculum plan will be improved when curriculum decision makers have knowledge of curriculum choices to be made and criteria to apply in making choices supported by knowledge (Print, 1993).

### 2.4.2. Philosophical and Theoretical Bases Underlying a Curriculum

As stated previously, curriculum planning is the stage where the feature of the curriculum or the whole picture of the curriculum is conceptualized. The coherent curriculum is the result of the coherence of choices made in order to conceptualize the curriculum. This section describes theoretical bases or the common foundation knowledge that is the basis for decision making. The definition of philosophical and theoretical bases in this research means the nature of knowledge and worthwhile knowledge that school teachers, learners and stakeholders were told to value that advocate and reflect school goals or aims, content, as well as the processes of teaching and

learning (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). For example, Thai national education contains educational philosophies that curriculum stakeholders, school teachers as well as people who are involved in educating the child have to take into account as bases for their decision making. One philosophy of life, for example, is to live with happiness and to smile. Allen (1984) states that philosophical orientation is a particular conceptual framework that entails a theory of what language is and how language is learned and it can have far-reaching effects on what takes place in the classroom.

White (1988) shows us that it is especially important that the theoretical aspects of curriculum development be re-examined because of the strong tendency to assume that the theoretical foundations of our current curriculum are sound and that the difficulties occur chiefly in translating theory into practice. Taba (1962) argues that because of the very complexity and multitude of decisions and the fact that curriculum developers are selected by different segments in the educational organization, it is important that there is an adequate theory for curriculum development. Tanner and Tanner (1995) point out that the problem of design is compounded by the problem of theory. Theory had been largely neglected. School stakeholders have been more concerned with educational practice and with administration than with hard thinking concerning the direction in which education is moving and ought to move. Dewey (1963), who believed in the unity of theory and practice, asserted that the practical conflicts and the controversies that emerge at the level of philosophy of education only set a problem. Kumaravadivelu (2001) in his pedagogy of practicality, emphasized that

> "the practice of classroom teaching has a close relationship between theory and practice and[. . .] that general educationists have long recognized the harmful effect of the theory/practice dichotomy and others that constitute a dialectical praxis, an affirmation that has recently influenced L2 teaching and teacher education as well."(p.540)

### 2.4.3. Forces of Curriculum Decision Making

#### 2.4.3.1. Political constraints

The underlying ideologies and theories explain the characteristics of a curriculum. However, most curriculum developers do not work according to theories, educational philosophies or

explicit values. What this research tries to identify is that even though the process of education is political in nature, the political constraints here do not refer to the personal politics of individuals developing the curriculum nor does it refer to the politics of those stakeholders interpreting and reinterpreting the curriculum, but to the politics of political power groups who are able to influence the interpretation of curriculum developers. Curriculum development could derive from political pressure (Tanner and Tanner, 1995). For example, in the case of educational reform, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) argue that it is very much a political process. It is about politically motivated change that is accompanied by, among other things, greater commitment of leaders, the power of new ideas, and additional resources. Goodlad (1979) states that the most controversial issues relating to education are the political constraints attached to the provision of education for the growth of child and society.

Johnson (1989b) argues that "we need to see successful language education programs as considerably more than a composite of well-chosen linguistics inventories, well-tested procedures and well-designed classroom materials. Perhaps even more than educational programs in other fields proposed and planned with political acumen" (p. 25). As Johnson (1989b) further explains

> "National Language policies are determined by socio-political pressures which vary from one culture and socio-political system to another; the primary consideration of most governments begins to maintain, and if possible extend their power, influence and acceptability... There are well-established constraints on what can be achieved, for example in situations where opportunities for learning are brief and intermittent, opportunities for forgetting almost infinite, and where there is no contact with the target language outside the classroom... However, governments and language schools which promise only what they can perform are likely to go out of business" (pp.3-4).

Sowell (2005) mentions that governmental groups can and do enact legislation or use budget pressures to effect curriculum change and somehow influence curriculum decision making through sponsored research, and/or even through Supreme Court rulings as has happened in United States (Sowell, 2005). Saylor et al. (1981) argue that "Many educational institutions, especially public schools, colleges, and universities, are subject to political control and direction;

they are instruments of social groups, and the groups collectively exercise their control through political action." (p. 147).

Rodgers (1989) describes the process of arranging, analyzing and responding to political considerations in the English language curriculum and language policy as "polity determination". He proposes two main issues related to "polity determination" in the curriculum planning process to be analyzed: the analysis of the existing socio-political context into which a new educational program is to fit and the development of strategies to optimize the probable success and effectiveness of the program in such a political context. Therefore, the analysis of national curricula requires attention to the political constraints and influences on the theoretical and philosophical bases of the curricula. In other words, the process of forming a national EFL curriculum is not purely about learners and languages but it is also about political power that governs the whole educational process.

**2.4.3.2. Western influences**

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the Thai EFL curriculum has developed partly under .the influence of Western education. The influences come both directly and indirectly. The direct influence is from the cooperation or a joint venture of education between the Thai and Western governments. The indirect influence is from the trends of education and English language teaching and learning. The Western influence sometimes produces unpleasant results in education planning because the influences come with different perspectives towards teachers and learners and how to understand education. As Print (1993) argues, United States education has influenced Australian education for the past 30 years, and the results are a non-ethnocentrically based curriculum and the lack of national sentiment in Australia curricula.

Furthermore, globalization has moved decision making in the policy agenda closer to international trends in education and economics. However, Parsons (1995: 243) argued that "the more nations are compelled to accept the global forces which shape policy options, the more they may seek to retain - or obtain - their capacity to be different." Parsons (1995) adds further that despite the issues and problems that may be defined in global terms, decision-making and implementation are carried out within national contexts.

## 2.5. Models of Curriculum Development

The process of curriculum development is illuminated with specific decisions based on a value system (Marsh and Willis, 2007). Such a set of design decisions and basic considerations involved in curriculum decisions are presented in general descriptions of curricula, called the models of curriculum development (Marsh and Willis, 2007). Though models of curriculum development do not convey all statements of rules and principles that theories include, they can justify curriculum decisions, and can show their interrelationships. In addition, models of curriculum development can "illuminate novel facets of the curriculum development process, correct misconceptions about that process" (Walker, 1971:52), and "provide useful detailed perspectives on some particulars of the curriculum in action" (Marsh and Willis, 2007:100). To respond to understandings of curriculum, three models of curriculum development are discussed: the content, the product, and the process models.

### 2.5.1. The Content/Academic Rationalism Model: Classical Humanism

Classical humanism can be traced back to Plato and to the concept of elite of guardians governing/controlling the state of education. They are characterized by their desire to promote broad intellectual capacities, such as memorization and the analysis, classification and reconstruction of elements of knowledge. Knowledge is seen as a set of revealed truths, whose underlying rules and regularities should be studied and consciously mastered. In the classroom, there is much emphasis on study, conscious understanding, reflection and awareness and controlled application of knowledge. Classical humanists are concerned with the maintenance and transmission through education of the wisdom of the previous generations; the development of intellectual capacities and critical faculties and the maintenance of standards.

Academic rationalists place academic disciplines and subject matter as ends or objectives of education by encouraging our understanding of the structure of a discipline (Allen, 1984; Clark, 1987; Richards, 2001; Gilbert, 2005; Sowell, 2005). Clark (1987) refers to this ideology as 'classical humanism' and states that the purpose of 'classical humanism' is to maintain and transmit through education the wisdom and culture of previous generations. The culture is to be transmitted through a hidden curriculum. This approach views curriculum development as a procedure based on intellectual maturity, scholarly logic, and academic rationality (Medley,

1985; Richards, 2001). The curriculum is viewed as a body of content knowledge or a container of knowledge to be transmitted together with a list of items whose underlying rules and regularities should be studied and consciously mastered (Clark, 1987). The role of teachers is to pass on the knowledge that they claim to possess to learners to acquire.

In the mastery of subject matter approach, curriculum is planned on the basis of content- it is content-driven curriculum per se (Clark, 1987). The planning is conducted for the most part by university scholars who claim legitimacy in decision making related to teaching and learning and knowledge in schools (Clark, 1987). They analyze content knowledge into its constituent parts and from what are deemed to be simple elements they sequence those parts into the more complex elements to be learnt. Clark (1987) further states that in this approach to planning the universities are able to control the examination system and act as guardians of the nation's wisdom.

The scope, sequence and organization of curriculum content both vertically and horizontally is organized within the subject matter, resulting in less integration across subjects and curriculum (Sowell, 2005). Textbooks are the most important materials and for teachers they contain details of what to teach in classroom (Clark, 1987; Kilpatrick, 1993). Thus, all of the classes are expected to move at the same pace as a block through units of work in the textbook. This process is represented as homogeneous achievement and learning speed (Clark, 1987; Johnson, 2001).

In foreign language teaching, this model envisages the grammar based curriculum in which the syllabus focuses on the grammar and vocabulary. The goals of the curriculum are to transmit knowledge of the language system to the learners to ensure that they master the grammar rules and vocabulary of the language (Finney, 2002). The content, or the syllabus, is a so-called "structural syllabus" or 'Syllabus Type A' (Allen, 1984, 1986; White, 1988). Wilkins calls it a 'Synthetic Syllabus'. In the Synthetic approach, Wilkins (1976) notes that "different parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up" (p. 2).

A selection and sequencing of individual grammar points and lexis and other formal features of language form the content of Syllabus Type A (Allen, 1984, 1986). Language is broken down into its constituent parts and each part introduced separately, step by step, from the easy to the

difficult, from the simple to the complex, in the belief that the instruction role is to simplify the challenge for learners (Nunan, 2004) and assumes that second language acquisition is a linear and cumulative process. As mentioned, such an organization represents the linguist's formal analysis of language as phonology, syntax and morpheme in language learning (Brumfit, 1984; Lian, 2000; Nunan, 2001). Allen (1986) asserts that the justification for a Type A focus is that "beginning students can scarcely be expected to communicate in a second language until they have mastered the underlying principles of sentence structure, and acquired a basic vocabulary." (p.5). It is hoped that through the study of the grammar of the target language, students will become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

The grammar-translation approach, in which the content to be taught and learnt is expressed in terms of phonology, grammar and vocabulary that are seen to constitute any language, is born out of this school of thought. The purposes of the language courses are to impart knowledge of the linguistic system to the students and to see that they master the rules of grammar and vocabulary. The components or the syllabus is a selection, gradation and sequencing of the items of grammar and lexis; the pedagogic procedures involve drilling of grammatical sentences, presentation of the rules of grammar and memorization of vocabulary.

The teaching technique used is rote learning, drills, grammar-translation and teaching and learning is associated with tests and assessments that view language teaching and learning as transmissive and the learners as passive recipients of knowledge (Richards, 1985; White, 1988; Ellis, 1997; Finney, 2002). This presumes that learners must first learn the language system, either inductively or deductively, and can only use it freely for themselves much later (Brurnfit, 1984).

Assessment is taken up on the learner’s capability to produce grammatically accurate language. Target language as a relatively unchanging or fixed concept forms the fundamental element for the grammar based curriculum and it does not consider the aspects like contextual occurrence, modes of discourse or specific needs of the learners and it reflects an essentialist (or objectivist) approach to semantic realization. When the communicative approach to language learning started making its presence felt in the late 1960s and 1970s, this approach to language curriculum design

ceased to register its dominance. Even though the model enjoys its presence in the content for syllabus design, the grammar based approach lost its primacy as a basis for planning a curriculum.

Teachers development, according to this conception, is based on the view that teachers with a mastery of knowledge of structure are assumed to be able to teach foreign language. As Lian (2000) comments, teacher education has gone the same way as the education of the child in that in foreign language education, the more they master of the language form, the more they are assumed to be able to perform the language.

### 2.5.2. The Product/Objectives/Social – Efficiency Model: Reconstructionism

The objectives of the teaching-learning process happen to be the primary aspect of this model. Reconstructionism feels that the fundamental responsibility of education is to result in certain amount of social change. The genesis of the model has its moorings with the movement for the scientific management of education and the contribution of behavioral psychologists in the first half of the twentieth century, whose ideas went on to defining learning as a process of observable changes in the patterns of behavior with measurability.

In the behaviorist approach to education, education is viewed in terms of skills practice. The curriculum conception that takes this view as its philosophical and theoretical basis is a 'Social-economic efficiency' conception with a 'technological perspective' (Allen, 1984; Sowell, 2005) or a 'technical-scientific approach' (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Ornstein and Hunkins (1993) assert that the technical-scientific approach values the means-ends logic as defined by behaviorist or technocratic educators. A social and economic efficiency approach argues that the curriculum should focus above all on knowledge and skills that are relevant to the learner's everyday life needs and that the curriculum should be planned to meet the practical needs of society (Richards, 2001).

In addition, Richards (2001) states that in many countries where English is a foreign language, the movement of socio and economic efficiency has overtaken an academic rationalist conception as the underpinning philosophy of the foreign language curriculum. Brady and Kennedy (2003) explain that the aims of this ideology were to 'manage' the social sphere in just

the same way as advocated by scientific managers. They add that the school curriculum that takes this view has as its aim to produce citizens and workers who can ensure the efficient running of society. The key curriculum concept is relevance and the issue is to make the curriculum relevant to the needs of society (Brady and Kennedy, 2003). Richards (2001) reiterates that this approach stresses the economic needs of society as a justification for teaching English; Japan is an example. The debate about English language teaching in Japan included the proposal that a poor standard of English contributed to Japan's economic malaise in the late 1990s (Richards, 2001).

The curriculum planning approach that is based on this social-economic efficiency conception is a goal-oriented approach (Clark, 1987), that is, it is a so-called 'rationale approach or objective approach'. The product model view of curriculum development responds to understanding of curriculum as a syllabus and as a product, following the work of those who have based their approach largely on the notion of behaviorist theory. The rationale model was mainly developed around Tyler's (1949) - a dominant theorist of this model - four rationales. Tyler's rationale approach proved particularly useful in pulling together into a related set of questions matters which often had been addressed disparately before and provided basic major commonplaces of curriculum development. The model is formed by principles of behavioral objectives, the selection and organization of learning experiences to achieve the objectives, and the evaluation of outcomes of the educational efforts (Parks, 2011). In this way, the *product* model stresses the achievement of behavioral objectives for better performance, especially in the workplace. The procedures are based on four fundamental questions of:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Tyler 1949, p. 1)

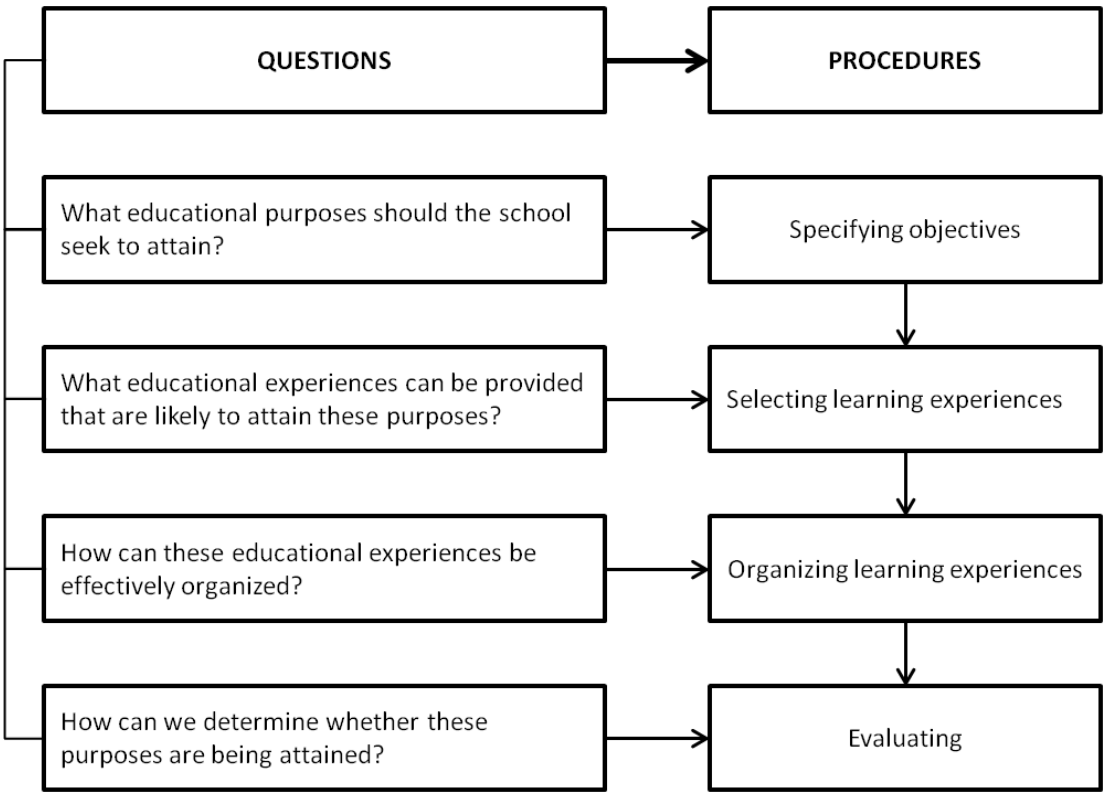


Figure 2.1. The product model for curriculum development adapted from Tyler's work.

These principles have been widely used amongst educators and curriculum developers. The product model, sometimes referred as the traditional model, evolved from these principles as a linear or chronological arrangement (Cowan et al., 2004).

The chronological sequence consists of

1.aims and outcomes are first determined,

2. teaching methods are chosen,

3. teaching plans are prepared,

4. teaching is delivered,

5. students learn,

6. teachers or others assess students,

7. feedback is obtained from students (and perhaps others),

8. the course is evaluated (usually by those who prepared and presented it),

9 revisions are determined,

10. the cycle begins again (p. 448).

Rationality is the key feature for the product model to be successful, and portends "an eminently reasonable framework for developing a curriculum" (Kliebard, 1975:5). The implication of this model is that the making of school curriculum was understood to involve a painstaking planning and development process that culminated in assessing the students to establish their status. It was thus more of a technical process. The model was described to be strong in as far as the behavioral objectives were concerned. First they facilitated communication of what was intended and therefore led to more purposeful learning. Second, they helped in selection of structure and content of teaching, and third, they led to more accurate methods of testing and evaluation.

The organization of teaching and learning in the curriculum as product approach revolves around pre-planning practice. Morgan (1997) adds that in "the educational textbooks, teacher training courses and narratives about teaching, curriculum planning has been presented as a science, governed by rationality in planning and outcomes, or as an art which depends on a teacher's creativity, flair and intuition." (p.29). Hence, learning is defined as the acquisition of pre-specified skills and knowledge with the assistance of teachers. Auerbach (1992) comments that despite some flexibility in teaching materials compared to the curriculum based or an academic rationale, the classroom is controlled by an imposed responsibility to meet the pre-specified behavioral objectives. The evaluation of those who meet the objective is the essential process in this planning approach. The learning objectives are broken down into smaller pieces in order that skills and knowledge can be precisely justified and assessed. The evaluation is accomplished by measuring learning outcomes against these predetermined objectives. Thus, this planning involves issues of high predictability (Auerbach, 1992; Sowell, 2005).

The planning approach is highly regarded as the best-known planning approach and many governmental and administrative curriculum planners took it as a planning model (Rodgers, 1989). This is because the rationale planning model provides a clear direction for the remainder

of the process which supports the belief that the effectiveness of a curriculum is a function of the precision and clarity of objectives and helps those who are uncertain about the curriculum process (Finney, 2002; Brady and Kennedy, 2003).

In foreign language teaching, the emergence of the audio-lingual method is the most striking example of this curriculum perspective as claimed by (Allen, 1984). The audio-lingual method was developed under the combined influences of structural linguistics, behavioral learning theory, availability of electronic gadgetry, and commercial enterprise (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Allen names this "a technological behavioral" method (Allen, 1984). It is based on the belief that learners should over learn the language until they can use it automatically, that is to say, learners form new habits in the target language, the dialogues are learned through imitation and repetition, there is student-student interaction in chain drills or when students take different roles in dialogues and this interaction is teacher-directed (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

The 1970s ushered in an era of change and innovation in language teaching methodology. This was the decade during which Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) came to replace Audio-lingualism and the Structural-Situational approach. And it was during this decade that the Total Physical Response, the Silent Way, and Counseling Learning emerged (Richards, 2002a). These methods took a humanistic approach, based on psychology rather than linguistics and considered affective aspects of learning and language as important (Williams and Burden, 1997). Larsen-Freeman (1986) explains that the Silent Way emerged during the time that cognitive psychologists and transformational-generative linguists argued that language learning does not take place through mimicry but that learning is initially based on the building block of sound, and teachers set up situations that focused student attention on the structures of the language, one structure at a time (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). The Total Physical Response or "the comprehension approach" took a step closer to the change in language teaching for communication. Importance was given to listening comprehension, which also created a relaxed learning environment. However, it limited language learning mostly to listening comprehension. The method focused on speaking in the target language, began with developing listening skills through listening to the spoken target language commands of their teachers. Grammatical structures and vocabulary were also emphasized over other language areas and were embedded within imperatives (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Ellis, 1997). Thus, these methods limited the practice of language to the

processes of imitation and reinforcement, the practice of drills, habit formation, and isolated skills practice (Richards, 1985; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Ellis, 1997; Richards and Renandya, 2002).

The introduction of the Communicative Approach, influenced by sociolinguists, embarked ELT on a concern to use a target language communicatively rather than on the mastery of language usage. Widdowson (1990) explains that *language usage* is learning about language rules and regulations, while *language use* deals with the communicative side of language. The concept of communicative competence plays a vital role since communicative incompetence, general, entails knowing not only the language code or the form of language, but also what to say to whom and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. In other words, it includes knowledge of what to say, when, how, where, and to whom (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Swan, 1990). Dubin and Olshtain (1986) explain that it is a move toward a holistic perspective of language teaching that encompasses sociocultural appropriateness and the meaning of language, rather than a discrete view that concentrates on separate elements of linguistic form as a basis for activities, learning situations and testing items, and materials development (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986).

The communicative approach movement to language pedagogy in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in an alternative method for the scope and sequence of learning content. The scope and sequence of learning content were organized in the light of a notional-functional approach (Wilkins, 1976; Clark, 1987; White, 1988; Ellis, 1997; Richards, 2001; Finney, 2002). According to this approach, curriculum content is sequenced by functions and the notion of a possible language that students need to use in communication within the target language. The 'notional-functional' approach to syllabus design or the so called Syllabus Type B is different from Syllabus Type A that emerges from the linguists' analysis of language, because Type B emerges from international analyses of various kinds, such as those of psychologists and anthropologists (Brumfit, 1984:77). The Type B syllabus, defines objectives in terms of categories of communicative language use and focus on discourse features of language and functional aspects of language proficiency (Allen, 1984; Brumfit, 1984; Allen, 1986). As opposed to the synthetic syllabus (Type A), Wilkins proposed the 'analytical' approach that focuses more on the function of language; the grammatical system is determined afterward (Clark, 1987; Nunan, 2004). Wilkins argues that

learners should be exposed to 'chunks' of language, rather than language broken down into parts as proposed in the synthetic or Type A syllabus (Clark, 1987; Nunan, 2004). Larsen-Freeman (1986) adds that this approach became widely known by definition as the Communicative Approach, that is an approach that uses the target language to accomplish some function, such as arguing, persuading, or promising.

In planning teacher education, this educational philosophy has close links with one component of teacher-education which is teacher training. Freeman (2001) explains that teacher education comprises two components: one is training in the content knowledge about language, while the other is teacher development. Freeman (2001) explains that the teacher training program that aims to transmit content knowledge that is external to teacher-learners and promotes assessment that is based on whether they have mastered the content, often looks for behavioral evidence. In contrast, a teacher development program stems from the teacher's experience and a focus on the learning process.

However, there have been many criticisms of this model. This in part due to the fact that behavioral outcomes are pre-specified, critics have claimed the product model reduces the practice of teaching and educating to a form of instrumental engineering. Eisner (2002) have pointed out that because it focused on evaluation that occurred at the end of learning experiences, it was emphasizing a summative approach while according less priority to what took place along the way (Eisner, 2002).

Proponents view curriculum planning and development under this perspective as a linear and static process (Skilbeck, 1984; Brady, 1992; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Brady & Kennedy, 2003). The curriculum is often viewed as a product that is planned in a linear, top-down fashion and control is exercised over the learning process where the learner's voice is silent (Stenhouse, 1975; Skilbeck, 1984; Freire, 1981 as cited in Auerbach, 1992; Marsh, 2004). The curriculum, which is imposed from outside, also provides learning that is remote from life and unknown to the learner's own experience and environment (Kilpatrick, 1993), and leaves the duty of naming reality to the experts to act as a problem-solver for learners (Auerbach, 1992). Freire calls this situation the "banking system" of education, where all students are fed with bits of information by teachers and then must memorize and store them (Freire, 1998). It is a model related to

training rather than educating, a model that views education as training in skills; it is one that overlooks the interaction between teachers and learners and limits the expression of inquiry and creativity of learners (Finney, 2002). What is to be learned is all predicted from an analyst's view of language - not a learner's - as similar to the structural syllabus that is not centered on the language user's intrinsic values (Johnson, 1979; Widdowson, 1979).

Learning outcomes are not all measurable (such as appreciation, critical thinking) (Richards, 2001). Reducing teaching and learning to the scope of measurability does not cultivate the learner's growth as a human but views the learner as a machine in operation (Brady, 1992; Brady & Kennedy, 2003; Marsh, 2004). Further, the breaking down of learning into small units for the purpose of measurement leaves the integration of essential knowledge to the learners (Sowell, 2005), hence the learning cannot be seen as a larger purpose of education (Beane, 1995). Auerbach (1992) adds that, worse, the recent concern with accountability has led to very detailed specification of content, linguistic/behavioral tasks, outcomes and performance standards. Grundy (1987) states "when interest in product predominates, however, this tends to exclude, by its very nature, a concern for understanding and meaning-making." (p. 100).

### 2.5.3. The Process/Experiential/Learner – Centered Model: Progressivism

As opposed to traditional education, contemporary educational philosophies and theories put learners first. Education is a place of freedom to learn and full attention is placed on developing the growth of children, not the subject matter (Kilpatrick, 1993). Hooks (1994) adds that the practice of freedom in education means that those who teach do so not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. Hooks (1994) further comments that if students and professors regarded one another as "whole" human beings, it would mean that teaching and learning are not striving merely for knowledge in books, but for knowledge about how to live in the world. In other words, this is 'holistic' education that aims to provide a learning process that emphasizes growing that is not only physical but intellectual and moral (Dewey, 1963).

Two curriculum conceptions emerge from the concept of learners as the primary concern of education: the conception of learner-centeredness (or Child-centered progressives (Gutek, 2004)) and the conception of social reconstructionism (or Social-reform progressives (Gutek, 2004)).

While supporting the promotion of individual freedom over imposed knowledge and pre-described curriculum, the social reconstructionist argues that learners should be aware of social issues, and that freedom should be exercised within the condition that they are living in society as a 'social living'.

#### 2.5.3.1. Learner-Centeredness as an Educational Goal

The 'learner-centeredness conception' aims to develop individuals to their fullest potential. It takes account of the needs and interests of the whole person who is not merely a disembodied intellect or a skilled performer (Clark, 1987; Sowell, 2005). According to this view, as opposed to the previous two curriculum perspectives, learners become the central discussion in the organization of subject matter, teaching and learning and testing. Further, the curriculum becomes a place where teachers and learners can freely negotiate what constitutes their learning (Clark, 1987; Sowell, 2005). Clark (1987) states that:

> "In foreign language learning the progressivist approach [Clark uses the term 'progressivism' which has a similar perspective to this leaner-centeredness (Richards, 2001)] is generally represented by those who see progress or growth in terms of interlanguage development. Language learning is seen as an implicit intuitive developmental process for which human beings have a natural capacity, rather than as the product of the deliberate study and practice of knowledge elements and skills towards predetermined objectives." (P.51)

This 'learner-centeredness conception' is greatly influenced by Piaget, psychologist and constructivist, whose learning theory emphasized the ability of the individual's knowledge construction (Clark, 1987; Williams and Burden, 1997; Richards, 2001; Langford, 2005). Langford (2005) names this learning theory 'individual progressivism'. He stresses that Piaget believed that children discover everything for themselves, out of their own interests and curiosity. It is a self-actualization and self-realization process that learners come to know by discovery, by being encouraged to make their own choices for themselves in what and how to learn (Williams and Burden, 1997). Williams and Burden (1997) adds that Piaget is interested in the learning process, how learners 'come to know things', rather than what is learned. However, both learning process and learning product are important in the process of learning. This view is

also influenced by cognitive theorists such as Berlyne (1960), McV. Hunt (1960) and Bruner (1986) as cited in Downey and Kelly (1989), who believe in the importance of intrinsic curiosity inherent in human beings, as opposed to the traditional view of education that sees education as having extrinsic value for children.

Richards (2002a) adds that language educators in the past tended to assume that learners were alike in their needs to learn language. The learner-centeredness movement as well as the more complex thinking about "Communicative Language Teaching" embarked language educators on rethinking language courses that recognize learners' prior knowledge, recognizing learners' needs, goals, and wishes, recognizing learners' learning styles and learning preferences, recognizing learners' views of teaching and the nature of classroom tasks (Diffey, 1992; Reagan and Osborn, 2002). This raised research on motivation, learning styles and strategies that tried to understand the learner's ability to change their own learning and language learning (see Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1990).

**The construction of knowledge**

According to Piaget and the constructivists, the process of knowledge construction is not simply a habit formation nor is the learner passively involved in the process; it involves an active reshaping of knowledge (Reagan and Osborn, 2002; Wren and Wren, 2006). Piaget sees the process of learning as not achieved simply by replacing one set of schemata by another, but based on two concepts: *accommodation* and *assimilation* (Clark, 1987; Williams and Burden, 1997). It is the process whereby the learning is accomplished by gradually building on existing conceptual structures through the *assimilation* of new perceptions and the adapting of what exists to *accommodate* these. Johnson (1989a) states that the schemata and conception process has taken communicative competence to more border concepts in which lists of target behaviors are inadequate and possibly counter-productive either as end specifications or as the basis for program and classroom implementation. Williams and Burden (1997) give examples of the application of accommodation and assimilation to the learning of new language:

> "When we receive new input of the language, for example by listening to a conversation, we need to modify what we already know about the language (accommodation) so as to 'fit' the new information into our existing knowledge (assimilation). In this way, our

knowledge of how the system of the new language operates gradually develops." (Williams and Burden, 1997:23).

Langford (2005) notes that in the extreme form of individual progressivism, it is suggested that teachers should not impart knowledge, for it is important for children to discover by themselves. Its leading principle here is 'Do not teach, let the child discover' (Langford, 2005:135). On the other hand, the weak progressivists, as stated by (Clark, 1987), encourage teachers to determine what is to be learnt in the first place and discussions between teachers and learners are simply to ensure an understanding of the predetermine objectives. Learners have less choice to negotiate what is to be learned and how (Clark, 1987).

**Learning as a meaning negotiated process**

Thus, the construction of knowledge depends on one's prior knowledge and skills (Wren and Wren, 2006), and a process of 'historically-formed meaning- generation' (Lian, A. B. 2006:1). In the process of reshaping knowledge, learners accommodate by making meaning out of the new knowledge through their prior knowledge and their history, as well as through interaction, and they interact and negotiate with peers, teachers and others in order to function (Lian, 2000).

Learning through interaction or negotiation of meaning is opposed to habit formation and memorization of sets of grammar rules in language learning (Richards, 2002a; Nunan, 2004). Interaction requires attention to meaning, to the transfer of information (Richards, 2002a). Bruner (1990) adds that the point of learning is an all-out effort to establish meaning as the central concept of psychology; it is not about stimuli and responses, not overtly observable behavior, not biological drives and their transformation, but a meaning making process (Bruner, 1990). Rosen and Kuehlwein (1996) point out that knowledge and the meaning we imbue data with is a construction of the human mind. Lian (2000) sees meaning-making as essentially a dynamic process rather than a static process which relates to the simultaneous management of both known and unknown variables. Dynamic processes are seen as the process of constructing and re- constructing meaning and static processes are the processes of finding or remembering meanings (Lian, 2000). According to Rosen and Kuehlwein (1996), from a psychological point of view, the process of meaning-making (or making sense of things) is seen as an individually-

generated process based on an individual's history, but shaped by the interactions in which an individual engages.

Rosen and Kuehlwein (1996), add that meaning-making is about the journey of development and the creation of self; it is about the activity of each person. This activity will both shape a self and shape a coherent, meaningful life. Development is a transformation shift that occurs as a person moves from one system of structuring the world to another. It is not a simple cumulative process but a transformational one (Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996). With increasing complexity of thought and self-knowledge comes increasing capacity to achieve personal creative solutions and new forms of knowledge (Carlsen, 1988:12-13, as cited in Rosen and Kuehlwein, 1996).

**Experiential learning**

Learners are encouraged to learn how to learn and how to make their own meaning through experiential learning environments in which learners are the 'active inquirers' and teachers are 'facilitators' (Allen, 1984; Skilbeck, 1984; Lian, 2000, 2001; Richards, 2002a; Nunan, 2004). Learners are seen as active participants shaping their own learning with the teacher cast in the role of guide or facilitator (Clark, 1987). The teacher's task is to create the classroom conditions that would generate in the child a sense of disequilibrium so that the situation could be made problematic by the child and therefore resolved through inquiry (Eisner, 1994). It is the process that increases the child's ability to frame and pursue their own purpose and take more responsibility for their own learning (Downey and Kelly, 1989; Eisner, 1994). "It is about learning how to learn that learners are able to take a growing responsibility for the management of their own learning so that they learn how to learn and how to learn a language" (Breen, 200 1:158).

Clark (1987) asserts that this approach (progressivism) has great interest in learning by doing rather than learning by imposing knowledge, and in the negotiation of what to learn rather than in predetermining objectives. This opens up a more relaxed relation between students and teachers with a focus on activities based on an open inquiry process (Skilbeck, 1984; Kilpatrick, 1993; Gilbert, 2005; Phillips, 2006). According to this argument, learners are provided with a learning environment that is genuine and authentic since it is an experiential learning and teaching environment that focuses on the learner as an organizer of communicative systems

through the practice of participation, observation and reflection; it is not a set up classroom or teacher's imposed environment (Hymes, 1996, as cited in Lian, 2001). The active involvement of the learner is therefore central to the approach. The focus is on the experiential nature of the process, that is, 'learning by doing', and/or activities-based learning, which contrasts with a 'transmission' approach in which the learner acquires knowledge passively from the teacher (Nunan, 2004).

**Curriculum as a Process**

The curriculum development principle of this model is in accordance with the understanding of curriculum as a process. Lawrence Stenhouse (1975), one of the best-known exponents of a process model of curriculum theory and practice, developed the so called 'process curriculum'. The central principle of this model is a mutual construction of content and meaning by both teachers and students (Stenhouse, 1975). Thus, curriculum planning, based on a learner-centeredness conception, is viewed as a process not a product. In other words, the curriculum is a place where curriculum implementers' and/or learners' interests and relevant needs can be negotiated through a meaning-making process. As opposed to the rationale approach where the implementers and learners are neither part of curriculum planning, developments nor the change process, the process curriculum sees change within people as important, and calls for the participation and interaction of curriculum implementers as a part of curriculum development (Sowell, 2005). Downey and Kelly (1989) assert that if part of curriculum development is seen as a joint enterprise between teachers and pupils, a model of classroom interaction that allows for openness, flexibility and collaboration is essential. Education can then be a truly cooperative and interactive process. Learners in this model are not objects to be acted upon. They have a clear voice in the way that the sessions evolve (Brady, 1992). Stenhouse (1975) explains further that the syllabus still exists but it has a different form and plays a different role from the traditional syllabus. Curriculum here becomes a form of specification about the practice of teaching, not a package of material or content to be covered (Brady, 1992).

This model emphasizes the interaction of teachers, students and knowledge, and especially what actually takes place in the classroom (Smith, 2000). The process model of curriculum development aims to facilitate student learning, and to improve their abilities and skills. By

providing appropriate learning experiences, the process model offers students opportunities to develop these abilities. In terms of planning, *intentions* are regarded as more open-ended and are used in the process model instead of *specified objectives*. Teaching and learning strategies in this model are student centered, and emphasize individual interaction.

The process approach to the curriculum is said to be more open-ended than the product approach as it focuses on a continuous process the end result of which is perceived in terms of the development of certain desirable potentialities in such skills as critical thinking. The process model is different from the product model as it focuses on both students' and teachers' understanding and development, not how well the students achieve pre-specified objectives (McKernan, 2008). Therefore, progressive assessment of student learning is an integral part of the process and a continuous activity of reflecting and giving prompt feedback for any changes to be made.

A rather stronger defense of the model was suggested by Knight (2001) that the planning school curriculum should commence by drawing together the processes, encounters or engagements that lead to effective learning. This implies thoughtful consideration of the different subjects and teaching contexts. He contends that the signatures, pedagogies and environment that support a deep approach to learning in each program need to be well-articulated. Students were regarded as participants, and not as objects, with a clear voice regarding the way teaching and learning were being conducted. Thus attention shifted from teaching to learning. The model empowered teachers to select what to teach and all that took place in the classroom was regarded as a way of translating educational ideas into testable practices. The model allows critique contrary to the product model that accepts everything.

Despite the above-mentioned strengths, the model has faced criticism from different angles (For example Ornstein and Hunkins, 2009). They argue that despite its holistic approach and regard to human abilities, there is some difficulty in maintaining this unity as human abilities are usually tendencies and capacities that are closely intertwined at all times. The model is also said to create problems for those who want some greater degree of uniformity in what is taught as it places meaning-making and thinking at its core and treats learners as subjects rather than objects. In this way, when it comes to examining the students as the case is in many instances in developing

countries, there is often loss of quality as the examinations standards will override the subject standards. Another major weakness is that the model rests upon the quality of teachers, meaning that if they are not of the best quality, students will certainly suffer as they (the teachers) will not manage to provide meaningful translation of what they teach. This will still be the case even if they make use of the so called "problem-solving" instructional materials which are believed to reduce learning to sets of skills to be acquired (Grundy, 1987). Thus again it may be problematic in many developing countries many of which face serious shortages of qualified teachers.

It is understood that language teaching has been influenced by different philosophical trends and the educational developments in language teaching are the outcome of such influences. Johnson (1989) states that the language teaching, after experiencing the "communicative revolution" and undergoing "piecemeal reconstruction", possesses "a growing interest in the curriculum process as a whole, attempts to put language teaching back in touch with educational theory in general and curriculum studies in particular".

Instead of objectives, Stenhouse (1975) proposed principles for the selection of content, the development of a teaching strategy, making decisions about sequence, and so on. The distinction Stenhouse (1975) raised between training and education, between mastery and speculation, is at the heart of much argument about the aims of teaching (Stenhouse, 1975). According to the argument that learners learn best when they are exposed to an interactive and meaning-negotiated environment, teacher development has also developed to the extent that a teacher development program should proceed in the same way as the learners'. This shift in the focus on teacher development occurred when previous training principles could not effectively facilitate teachers' curriculum implementation over the period of reform. The shift in teacher development has been where the development of teachers has not been seen solely as the process of knowledge imposition but rather as knowledge construction. As McLoughlin and Holly (1989), point out, "The view on the teacher's role has changed to a focus upon what a teacher can do, rather than upon what the teacher is and can become." (p. 2).

### 2.5.3.2. Social Reconstruction as an Educational Goal

Social reconstructionists criticized the present education enterprise as an oppressed process where the new generation has social ideologies imposed on it and unequal opportunities facing it

in society (Apple, 1990, Giroux, 1983 and Canagarajah, 1999 as cited in Wallace, 2003). Social reconstructionists stress the needs of society as a whole, and view a school curriculum as a means of bringing about desirable social change and preparing people for living in an unstable, changing world (Allen, 1984; Morrison, 1989; Print, 1993; Richards, 2001; Sowell, 2005). Critical theorists, who are highly influenced by the social reconstruction perspective, criticize the educational objectives of traditional education as hegemonic devices in both direct and indirect ways. They argue that the dominating group, the oppressor, either consciously, as in a conspiracy, or without conscious awareness, attempts to legitimize its interests at the expense of those of the oppressed group (Posner, 1995). Social reconstructionists aim to extend the benefit of democracy to all citizens (Brady and Kennedy, 2003) and are concerned with such issues as domination, exploitation, resistance and what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and they question whether education serves the interests of children or a particular powerful group (Gutek, 2004; Marsh, 2004). Thus, they are like the child-centered progressives, in that they account for the learner's interest; however the social reform progressivists take into account the importance of schools and teachers in dealing with important social contemporary issues as well as in working to build a new, better, and more equitable society (Gutek, 2004).

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and prominent critical theorist, strongly disagrees with traditional education that transforms the experience of educating into a matter of simple technique that impoverishes the capacity to form the human person (Freire, 1998). Through this kind of learning, students never learn to reflect upon their circumstances; they eventually become the kind of social members who passively accept, if not actively support, the oppressive practices of their society (Freire, 1993, as cited in Heslep, 2002). Freire (1998) argues that the utilitarian view of education is an oppressive education. He asserts that education should be the place to ***empower*** children, not to oppress learners into particular ideologies. Freire names that education that is concerned with the issue of social practice "Critical Education" and asserts that Critical Education requires critical learning, critical pedagogy and critical educators and learners (Freire, 1998). Inspired by Freire, a number of critical pedagogy writers have emerged who are against education that is dehumanizing and anti-democratic and thus against the effects of humanism (Heslep, 2002; Kellner, 2003; Wallace, 2003). Kellner (2000) argues that critical to the theory of education is the key themes of a democratic reconstruction of education in the 21$^{st}$ century.

**Powerful Language Users**

This view has changed the face of language learning from learning to master the accuracy or fluency of language as an end in itself, to become a powerful language users' tool for different ends in different political causes, such as combating their own oppression or supporting both awareness of and a commitment to counter the oppression of others (Wallace, 2002,2003). Reagan and Osborn (2002) advocate that the language classroom should be a venue for teaching more about the social and political aspects of language and society in order to "challenge oppression" (p.137) and prepare "for life in a democratic society." (p. 138). Wallace (2003) states

> "English is necessarily and always was a political activity, rooted in the power of capital. At the start of the twenty-first century the role of English as a second language has taken on a new urgency with its ever-extending global reach. However, debates about ELT ideology still tend to take place among applied linguists or language planners and a practical critical pedagogy for ELT remains largely undeveloped, as is evidenced by the continuing dominance of what has come to be known as communicative language teaching. That is based on the premise that the goal of language is communication with native speakers in natural, everyday environments." (P-67)

Furthermore, within the context of globalization, capitalism, the industrial era and fast growing technologies thrive and so do the world's Englishes that are likely to impose ideological information on learners through media, newspapers and the internet (Wallace, 2002). Wallace (2002) reverses van Ek's counsel of twenty-five years ago that foreign language learning in its present form has more functions than 'buying tickets' and 'asking for directions';

> "the need today is to help our learners to deal with ongoing contexts with a world community of intellectuals, most of whom will not be native speakers of English, in the public arena beyond the national boundaries either of their own country or any other, English speaking one." (Wallace, 2002:69)

Wallace (2002) argues that we should talk about becoming a literate language learning community who are able to read and write, not only talk or speak (Wallace, 2002, 2003), and further that we should now talk about critical literate language learners and critical

communicators who not only process the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening but who are also able to make value judgments about spoken and written information. To Wallace, foreign and second language learning does not mean the learning of oral English, the English favored by every contemporary teaching approach such as CLT, but of "English language literacy". English language literacy includes both reading, writing and oracy, or both spoken and written language.

All this implies that language learning is not about or for language itself, and communicative purposes are not limited only to communication or only to sending a message. It is communication that is not limited to the orality that Pennycook (1994, as cited in Wallace, 2002; Wallace, 2003) calls ***phonocentrism;*** it is not limited to the concern with orality in current ELT that talks of native speaker-ness and standard English. Foreign language learning here has more meaning than simply talking with foreigners; language learning becomes the process of generating freedom, of becoming critically literate persons who are capable of using language to acquire knowledge and interact with both texts and other people for reflective actions, for more knowledge and more interaction.

**Learning has Both Individual and Social Aspects**

Vygotsky, the best-known social constructivist, proposed a view of learning that extended Piaget's epistemology that learning is not only the process of self-construction, but also the process that is shaped by society (Vygotsky, 1986). Donato and Mccormick (1994) add that sociocultural theory maintains that social interaction and cultural institutions, such as schools, classrooms, etc., have important roles to play in an individual's cognitive growth and development. Similar to the socio-cognitivists, Atkinson argues that language and language acquisition are simultaneously occurring and interactively constructed both "in the head" and "in the world" (Atkinson, 2002:525). Atkinson (2002) adds that socio-cognitivists also view language and its acquisition as social phenomena - as existing and taking place for the performance of action in the socially-mediated world.

As Freire (1998) states, men and woman are ethical beings; it is not possible to imagine the human condition disconnected from the ethical condition. Langford (2005) names social reconstruction as 'social progressivism' and states that the rationale of social progressivism given

by Vygotsky, is that it was better than education by compulsion and rote learning for that was the kind of education that might produce people who are smart in books, but who are perhaps unfit for social interaction (Hooks, 1994). The products of a social progressive education would be active and involved members of the new socialist society, rather than just passive factory fodder (Langford, 2005).

Langford (2005) asserts that Vygotsky's methodology of self-chosen project work - such as free choice of essay topics - reflect, in theory, a learner's understanding of what is socially relevant to them. Langford (2005) gives examples of classroom methodology based on Vygotsky's theory saying that the general area is set as the study of the environment and students choose a topic within that area whereby one group might choose the pollution of a local river and its effect on things that live in the river. Assistance will come both from the input of other members of the group and from the teacher. Freire (1998, p.36) also suggests similarly, as a learning content - "Why not, for example, take advantage of the students' experience of life in those parts of the city neglected by authorities to discuss the problems of pollution in the rivers, for example". Dewey also wanted the inquiry to be based on genuine problems, not merely problems teachers imposed (Phillips, 2006).

**The Provision of Learning Opportunities by *Dialogue***

Freire (1998) argues that most of all for critical learning to occur, learning is not teaching to ***transfer*** knowledge but to create possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge. Hooks (1994) names this critical engagement as "engaged pedagogy" where both teachers and learners engage in life experience within academic discussions. Hooks (1994) states that engaged pedagogy encourages both teachers and students to take risks, to bring any narrative about their experience and discuss how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic materials. Progressive professors working to transform the curriculum to allow individuals willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make this their teaching practice are sites of resistance (Hooks, 1994). Canagarajah (1999a, as cited in Wallace, 2002) states "...pedagogics of resistance need to be rooted in the everyday life of our students" (p. 194). Giroux (1983, as cited in Wallace, 2002) distinguishes between resistance and opposition: opposition can be seen as an instinctive, unreflected upon response to domination;

resistance can be seen as a considered, reflected upon, rational stance, where earlier instinctive responses have been subjected to analysis (Wallace, 2002).

Thus, in regards to dialogue, the skills of memorization, deductive reasoning, and inductive reasoning are not the focus. Rather, it is a process of empowering learners to become powerful learners through communication not only for the purpose of an understanding or ***problem solving*** as the learner-centeredness conception proposed, but also to encourage the ability of ***problem posing*** – the identification by students of questions which are triggered by the text and visual representation (Wallace, 2003) and reflection with 'emancipatory interest' (Grundy, 1987; Wallace, 2003).

**Holistic, Whole Person and Collaboration**

Critical pedagogy promotes critical awareness and engagement in the learning process where everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor (Hooks, 1994; Wallace, 2003). Not only are students empowered but also teachers are/should be empowered in the process. That is what is meant by a ***holistic*** model of learning: in this model participants are not merely intellectuals but encounter the essence of being human in the process of learning (Hooks, 1994).

The process is similar to Vygotsky's holistic approach in which learning encompasses the learner's life and social living experience. According to Williams and Burden (1997), Vygotsky rejected the view that what is to be learned can be broken down into small subcomponents and taught as discrete items and skills. Instead he argued that meaning should constitute the central aspect of any unit of study. Moreover, any unit of study should be presented in all its complexity, rather than skills and knowledge being presented in isolation (Williams and Burden, 1997). This view is different from Dubin and Olshtain's (1 986) holistic approach, discussed previously, that limits language learning to a sphere of language competence, not to the development of the whole person.

According to Vygotsky's view, learning best occurs in a collaborative environment where it is the interaction that can enhance the knowledge and shape what learners will be and become rather than simply focusing on the individual through language (Wells, 1995; Light and Littleton, 1999; Nunan, 2004). Vygotsky criticized Piaget's work on language learning which focuses on

the learner's own construction of knowledge. Vygotsky advocates the crucial role of parents, teachers, peers, and the cultural milieu in the learning process of the individual rather than the individual's own isolated and independent efforts (Light and Littleton, 1999). This position was nicely encapsulated in his concept of the "zone of proximal development," the zone or arena in which children develop with the assistance of others (Phillip and Soltis, 1998, as cited in Williams and Burden, 1997; Light and Littleton, 1999; Phillips, 2006, p.239).

Furthermore, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of language in interaction with people, not just through speech, but also through signs and symbols. This implies that language learning is not only about oral communication, but entails others skills related to interaction between one another (Williams and Burden, 1997). Vygotsky adds that it is by means of language that culture is transmitted, that thinking is developed and that learning occurs (Williams and Burden, 1997; Lantolf, 2000). Williams and Burden (1997) add that Vygotsky also focused on the use of language in all its aspects as a tool in both bringing meaning to and obtaining meaning from learning activities.

Sociocultural theory also supports the view that language learning is about developing an ability to engage and participate in particular environments both in the classroom and other cultural settings (Lantolf, 2000). Reagan and Osborn (2002) state that according to this approach, language teaching and learning is not an additional linguistic system, but is also about social and cultural knowledge, and as outlined previously, it is about helping students to develop critical approaches to examining and understanding such knowledge.

Sociocultural theory proposes a new way of approaching the learner's styles and strategies that go beyond the cognitive psychological conceptions of strategic language learning, which assume that language tasks and contexts are generalizable when, in reality, the contexts in which strategies are used are different (Donato and Mccormick, 1994). Sociocultural theory views language learning tasks and contexts as situational activities that are influential upon an individual's strategies and orientations to classroom learning. Thus, the matter of using a strategy efficiently or otherwise, is a by-product of socialization into the classroom practices of language and learning (Donato & Mccormick, 1994). Donato and Mccormick (1994) strongly argue that the emergence of strategies in this context is a process directly connected to the practice of

cultural groups through which novices develop into competent members of the communities (Donato and Mccormick, 1994). In other words, the term 'learning strategies' is not seen as a static term; rather it is a dynamic term that identifies the process whereby individuals experience the process of participation in the sociocultural practices of the classroom and the community in which they live.

### 2.6. Curriculum Development in Language Teaching

Curriculum development in language teaching includes the notion of syllabus design, which specifies "the content of a course of instructions and lists of will be taught and tested" (Richards, 2001:2). Syllabuses in language teaching, however, are not as exactly the same as curricula. Candlin (1984), for example, notes that curriculum provides a general description of language learning, learning purpose, experience, evaluation, and the teachers' and learners' roles, while syllabuses concentrates on the implementation of curriculum in the classroom. Furthermore, syllabus, according to Nunan (1993), "focuses more narrowly on the selection and grading of content" (p. 8).

This notion of *syllabus design* in language teaching is closely related to *curriculum as syllabus* in the general understandings. The content-based model has been well entrenched as an anchor to language learning and teaching, and considered as scaffolding for higher academic success for language learners (Richards, 2001). This model requires the chosen content to be consistent with the core curriculum of the school, and to meet the specialized academic standard of respective discipline (Kaufman, 2004). Tyler's model, despite many criticisms, used to be dominant in language teaching practice (Richards, 2001).

Alternatives for the linear approach implied by the product model have been offered. Among them, the ends-means model introduced by Nicholls and Nicholls (1972) has been popular in language teaching since the 1980s (Nunan, 1988; Richards, 2001). In this model, Nicholls and Nicholls (1972) proposed four stages for curriculum development as follows:

1. The careful examination, drawing on all available sources of knowledge and informed judgment, of the objectives of teaching, whether in particular subject courses or over the curriculum as a whole.

2. The development and trial use in schools of those methods and materials which are judged most likely to achieve the objectives which teachers agreed upon.

3. The assessment of the extent to which the development work has in fact achieved its objectives. This part of the process may be expected to provoke new thought about the objectives themselves.

4. The final element is therefore feedback of all these experience gained, to provide a starting point for further study. (p. 4)

The ends-means model starts with consideration of the kinds of language skills the learners need in order to accomplish specific roles and tasks. Assessment of students' achievement is conducted in different stages as a tool and provides useful feedback for making decisions. In this way, the ends-means model has something in common with Tyler's behavioral model which pre-specifies objectives in advance, and uses them as criteria for the final evaluation. However, Nicholls and Nicholls' four-stage model differs from that of Tyler because it focuses on prompt feedback during the process, promoting new objectives to emerge. In addition, curriculum evaluation is not a final step of the curriculum development process, which is much criticized in Tyler's model, but rather, is based on several assessments of students' achievement.

The late 1980s, however, are considered a turning point for the theory and practice of curriculum in language teaching. This is because communication became a new fundamental element for teaching and learning languages (Graves, 2008). As a result, communicative goals have become guidelines for developing a language curriculum (Dubin and Olshtain, 2002), requiring course design to reflect the new focus.

Breen (1987) describes this paradigm shift in syllabus design wherein negotiated classroom tasks replace the pre-packaging of language content to be learned. The shift, as Breen (1987) argues, is founded on changing views of language, its acquisition, and the social processes within the language classroom. Approaches to curriculum, also, vary enormously from pre-packaging content to including "principles and procedures for the planning, implementation, evaluation, and management of an educational program" (Nunan, 1988, p. 159).

A systematic approach to curriculum development is needed to ensure the coherence of situation/needs analysis, formulation of aims or goals, syllabus design, materials development, assessment and evaluation (Brown, 1995; Markee, 1997). A more comprehensive definition of curriculum development was introduced by Richards (2001), in which the process focused more on learners. He stated:

> Curriculum development refers to the range of planning and implementation processes involved in developing or renewing a curriculum. These processes focus on needs analysis, situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching, and evaluation. (p. 41)

This definition encompasses three dimensions of curriculum (Marsh and Willis, 2007) including the planned, the enacted, and the experienced curriculum. It also adds some new features to curriculum development definition in language teaching. First, the processes can be either aimed at development, or renewal. The process of curriculum review and evaluation is a continuous one, in which teachers and curriculum planners are engaged to bring about curriculum renewal and change (Clark, 1987). Furthermore, the process starts with a needs analysis and a situational analysis. These are innovative steps that have not occurred in previous models.

## 2.7. Processes of Curriculum Development in Language Teaching

### 2.7.1. Richards' Curriculum Development Processes

The author of prominent curriculum design principles, Richards (1990, 2001), has divided the curriculum design into five aspects: needs analysis, goals and objectives, syllabus design, methodology, and testing and evaluation (See Figure 2.1). The needs analysis process includes involving learners, teachers, administrators, and employers. According to Richards (1990) the initial process of curriculum design starts with identifying needs, either general or specific. Richards has divided needs analysis further into situation analysis, which focuses on the general parameters of a language program, and communicative needs analysis, which deals with the specific communicative needs of language learners.

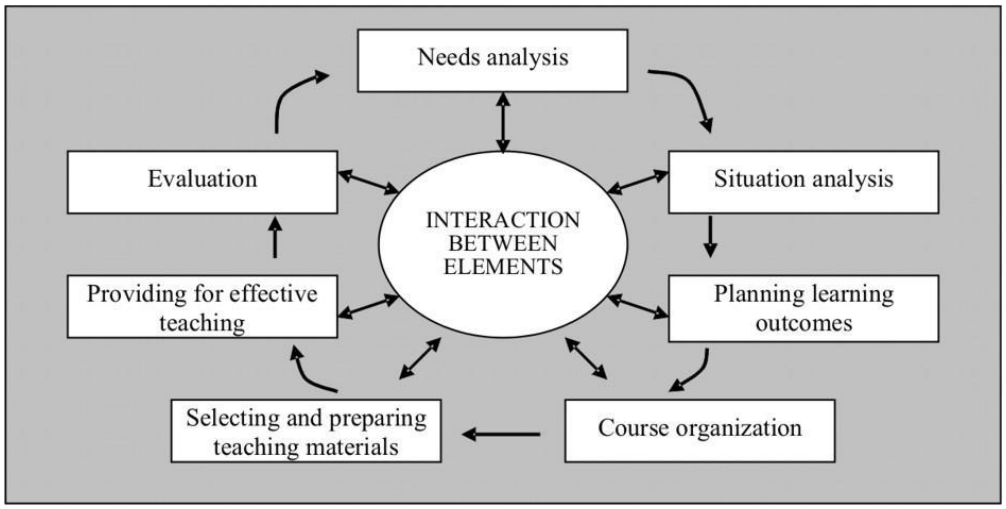


Figure 2.2. Illustration of Richard's Curriculum Development Processes. Adapted from C. W. Storey, 2007, *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *4*(1), p. 88

The *goals* (*planning learning* outcomes in Figure 2.1) aspect of Richards‟ principles entails "general statements of the intended outcomes of a language program" (Richards, 1990, p. 3). Objectives are more specific than goals, and several types of goals exist: behavioral, skills-based, and content-based and proficiency (Richards, 1990).

*Syllabus design* (*course organization* in Figure 2.1) deals with the choice and sequencing of instructional content. The syllabus design looks closely at the goals and objectives derived from needs analysis; thereafter the objectives are prioritized, and it is determined how to achieve those objectives (Richards, 1990).

The *focus of the methodology* phase (*selecting and preparing teaching materials* in Figure 2.1) is to decide what kind of instruction to use to achieve the goals of the program. This is explained more explicitly by Richards (1990): "the activities, tasks, and learning experiences selected by the teacher in order to achieve learning, and how these are used within the teaching/learning process (p. 11). There are five central issues to pay attention to: 1) the approach or philosophy underlying the program; 2) the role of teachers in the program; 3) the role of the learners; 4) the kinds of learning activities, tasks, and experiences that will be used in the program; 5) the role and design of instructional materials.

The final part of Richards' principles is *testing and evaluation*, which is central to the whole process of curriculum development, as it influences the other parts significantly. Through evaluation it is determined whether the goals and objectives set in part two were reached (Richards, 1990).

### 2.7.2. Nation and Macalister's Processes of Curriculum Development

The curriculum design model developed by Nation and Macalister is illustrated using related circles (see Figure 2.2). The inside circle is goals, which shows the importance of having clear goals as the center of the curriculum development process The inside circle of goals is surrounded by a subdivided circle representing content and sequencing, format and presentation, monitoring and assessment. Outside of this are three orbiting circles indicating principles, needs, and environment. Each of these three orbiting circles is divided into three elements. When conducting an environment analysis, learners, teachers, and the situation should be considered. For a needs analysis three types of needs exist: lacks, wants, and necessities. The three groups of principles are content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment, which are the same elements shown in the middle circle of the figure. A large circle is drawn around the model. The circle represents evaluation, symbolizing that it is involved in every aspect of the design and can occur throughout the process (Nation and Macalister, 2010).

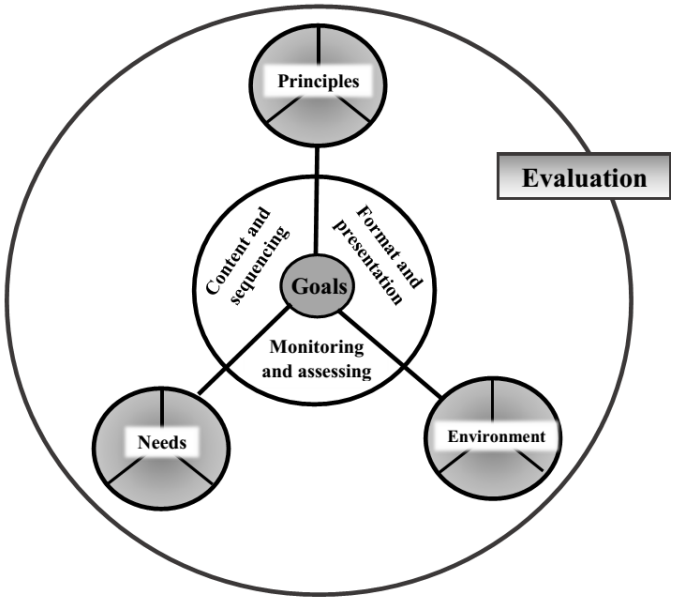

Figure 2.3. Nation and Macalister's Processes of Curriculum Design. Adapted from Nation and Macalister (2010) Curriculum Design, p. 3

Goals are placed at the center of the model, indicating the importance of having clear goals for a course. Goals can focus on the following areas: Language, Ideas, Skills or Text. Also, goals can be broken down further to be more specific objectives (Nation and Macalister, 2010). Connected to goals, Nation and Macalister discuss the content and sequencing of a course – what students should learn and in what order they should do it. As part of the subdivided circle, Nation and Macalister also cover format and presentation. The aim of format and presentation "is to choose the teaching and learning techniques and design the lesson plans" (p. 88). The last part of the subdivided circle around goals is monitoring and assessment. It "represents the need to give attention to observing learning, testing the results of learning, and providing feedback to the learners about their progress" (Nation and Macalister, 2010:2).

Two of the three outer circles deal with analysis. The aim of environment analysis is "to find the situational factors that will strongly affect the course" (p. 14). The purpose of needs analysis in Nation and Macalister's model is to "discover what needs to be learned and what the learners want to learn" (Nation and Macalister, 2010:24). The aim for the third outside circle - principles - is to "decide how learning can be encouraged" (Nation and Macalister, 2010:37). As there is a significant amount of research available on language acquisition, it is important not to ignore this research. The previous research and theory of language learning should be taken into account when developing a curriculum. Evaluation of the course is the surrounding circle in Nation and Macalister's (2010) model, which shows that in evaluation, all aspects of the curriculum design process are looked at. The evaluation covers deciding on the effectiveness of the course, and looking for areas of improvement.

### 2.7.3. Brown's Curriculum Development Processes

Brown (1995) suggests a framework that fits the more general models used to describe long established systems approaches to curriculum design. According to him, the framework is meant to be applicable to language programs and provides both a set of stages for logical program development and a set of components for the improvement and maintenance of an already existing language program. Brown (1995:19**)** considers curriculum development as "a series of

activities that contribute to the growth of consensus among staff, faculty, administration, and students". According to Brown (1995) "the series of curriculum activities will provide a framework that helps teachers to accomplish whatever combination of teaching activities will provide a framework that helps students to learn as efficiently and effectively as possible in a given situation". The figure below shows the curriculum development process as suggested by Brown.

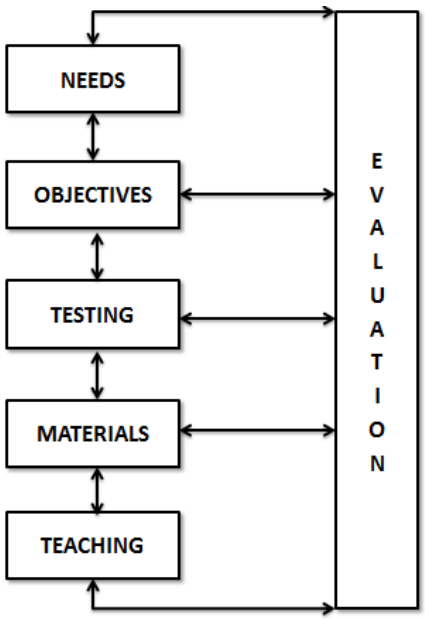


Figure 2.4. Brown's Processes of Curriculum Development

## 2.8. Conceptual Framework

After reviewing the main conceptual approaches to curriculum, this section will clarify and justify the conceptual framework of curriculum that informs the current study.

### 2.8.1. Curriculum Development as an Educational Change

The underlying goal of any educational initiative is to improve teaching and learning. To achieve this goal, schools must be willing to change their existing conditions and practices (Hall and Hord, 2010). *Change* is an umbrella term that is used in the literature for a broad spectrum of concepts such as "initiative", "innovation", "adoption", "reform", and "development". Change can either be planned or unplanned; however, the educational literature focuses mostly on a

planned change that can be viewed as a multi-dimensional process that entangles all facets of an organization including school structure, culture, politics, and most importantly its people (Evans, 2001; Fullan, 2007; Marsh, 2009). Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001) concluded that change can be initiated and imposed, but only the deeper human capacity of individuals and schools can sustain reform efforts over time.

Literature on curriculum development stresses the 'systemic' and ‘reiterative’ nature of the building up of a curriculum. That is, it involves the consideration of several processes, where in any decision made about one process is dependent on decisions made about the others and each process should pave the way for the following one in a cyclical and interrelated manner (Holliday, 1997; Breen, 2001). The process of curriculum development involves 'processes of articulating broad educational philosophies, language policies, conducting needs analysis, setting of goals and objectives’ (also in Brown, 1995; Dublin and Olshtain, 2000, Richards, 2003). It also involves deciding on educational content, materials and methodological approaches. On the other hand, the process of curriculum implementation involves the procedures wherein the processes in the development level are transformed into pedagogical activities in the classroom (Christison and Murray, 2014). At this point, curriculum evaluation comes into play, which “involves deciding whether the objectives and goals set at the development stage have been achieved or not” (Troudi and Alwan, 2010:108).

### 2.8.2. Principles of Curriculum Development

Adapting the principles proposed by Bolstad (2004), the theoretical framework for this study is based on three principles of curriculum development:

- curriculum is process-oriented;
- it is an on-going and spiral process; and
- it is a participatory and collaborative process.

Regarding process-oriented curriculum, Stenhouse (1975) argues that a process curriculum is more appropriate in areas that focus on knowledge and understandings. In terms of language teaching, Nunan (1995) believe that curriculum should be process-oriented to enable the explicit, ongoing classroom discussions and decisions about how the curriculum is constructed. They also

emphasize that product-oriented curriculum can hold back learning because the needs and priorities of learners and the teachers are usually hidden from each other, and often in conflict. Moreover, curriculum as a process can facilitate learning in communities through group work and peer evaluation, and "the process approach puts the casuistry and hypotheticals of outcomes in their place, and brings questions about good learning to the fore" (Knight, 2001:379).

A spiral curriculum, which originated from the work of Bruner (1960), has been commonly used in medical education. Adopting the spiral approach from Harden and Stamper (1999), the proposed model consists of the following key features. First, there is iterative revisiting of curriculum elements (objectives, sequence of content, teaching methods, assessment) throughout the course, at different levels of difficulty. Second, new learning is related to previous learning, and adapted to new situations. Last, learning outcomes increase with each iteration, and suit new requirements. Furthermore, curriculum should be developed by an ongoing "continuous improvement process" (Wolf, 2007:20) in which "once ideas are implemented, assessing and adapting the implementation begins, followed some time afterwards by the next full-scale curriculum assessment" (*ibid*).

This process of curriculum development is described as participatory and collaborative since it recommends that teachers be involved in every stage of curriculum development. This model shares some features with a participatory action research in which "communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008:1). This participatory model involves different stakeholders including administrators, teaching staff, current students and graduates, and employers; allows their voices to be raised and heard; and their knowledge and expertise to be shared and used. Thus knowledge and skills of the researched or grassroots communities are employed, and they are involved as full partners of the process.

### 2.8.3. Stages of Curriculum Development

The curriculum development process systematically organizes what will be taught, who will be taught, and how it will be taught. Each component affects and interacts with the other components. For this reason, it should be a multi-step, ongoing and cyclical process with

consideration of the following components: evaluation, planning, needs and situational analysis, articulating/developing, piloting, training, and monitoring and evaluation.

In the context of this study, the starting point of the curriculum design process would be the evaluation of previous curriculum and the determination of its worth. Once the strengths and weaknesses are visible, a planning phase would be carried out. Accordingly, this calls for the identification of a curriculum development committee made up of the various stakeholders namely teachers, administrators and educational experts, and attributing roles to these members.

The next step is gathering of information about the context that shape the curriculum development process including social, cultural and political factors, i.e. conducting needs and situational analysis. Based on the findings of needs and situation analysis, the following step is specification of curriculum goals which "refer to a statement of a general change that a program seeks to bring about in learners" (Richards, 2001:120), from which specific objectives or learning outcomes are articulated.

Once curriculum objectives have been specified, the curriculum will be developed accordingly. This stage comprises a series of decision making steps such as the types of knowledge and skills to be included, what teaching methods to be recommended, and the types of assessment. Such decisions should ensure the coherence of curriculum in which teaching methods, content and assessment are all consistent with the intended learning outcomes (Biggs, 2002). Once these are agreed upon, content is systematically sequenced and the resource materials are selected to assist with curriculum implementation.

The following stage is curriculum piloting which gives initial feedback on the appropriateness and/or feasibility of the curriculum. In this stage, the planned curriculum is tried out with selected participants including teachers and students. The final step includes training the teachers on how to implement the desired curricular changes. In addition, curriculum monitoring and evaluation will be carried out at different stages during the process so that the curriculum developers receive prompt feedback and make necessary adaptations.

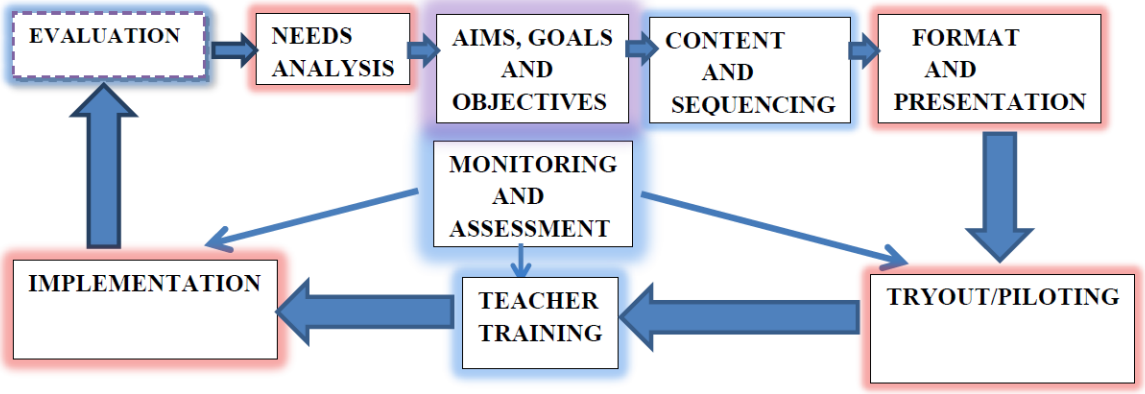


**Figure 2.4. Conceptual Framework: Adapted from Richards (1990), Nation and Macalister (2010), and Brown (1994)**

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology, i.e. the research design, participants of the study and the sampling techniques employed, the data collection instruments, the data gathering procedures, the data analysis methods, the ethical considerations in the research, and the insights gained from the pilot study for the success of the main study.

## 3.2. Research Design

Given the fact that selection of a research design emanates from the nature of the research questions posed and/or the objectives set, this research adopted a qualitative paradigm to examine the process of EFL curriculum renewal. Qualitative approach was employed since the research questions revolve around '*What',* '*How'* and '*Why' of the curriculum renewal;* questions which do not lend themselves to be answered through quantitative approaches since they require in-depth analysis and elaboration which is difficult to obtain through quantitative methods. In other words, the present research seeks to understand the participants' views and its nature is that of an open-ended inquiry rather than one that seeks measurable and observable data where the research questions are specific and narrow (Creswell, 2005).

The current research specifically employed a case study design to explore the phenomenon of EFL curriculum renewal process. The rationale behind the choice of case study design lies within the fact that it enables the researcher to investigate and analyze the phenomenon in question deeply and intensively (Cohen and Manion, 1989). From among the three types of case study (intrinsic, instrumental, and collective), this research adopted intrinsic case study approach since it better suited the purpose of generating deeper insight into the process of curriculum renewal in a single setting (MoE) and it facilitated exploration of the phenomenon so as to generate better understanding about it. Selecting the case and establishing the boundaries are considered vital steps in designing a case study investigation (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2014). In this research, while curriculum renewal process represented the case under study, the Ministry of Education (MoE) served as a spatial boundary, and the year 2008/9 denoted the time boundary.

### 3.3. Sample and Sampling Procedures

This section briefly presents the sample and sampling procedure employed in this study.

#### 3.3.1. Curriculum Experts

Since this study investigates the renewal process of EFL curriculum, its main sample is curriculum experts at the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. These English curriculum experts were selected as a sample since they had first-hand information regarding the renewal process of secondary school EFL curriculum.

#### 3.3.2. Selection Procedures

To meet the research objectives and triangulate results, purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the participants. Patton (2002) notes that the most useful criterion in choosing participants and sites is by determining whether they are "information rich" cases – i.e. those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry (p. 169). Based on this premise, the researcher purposively chose curriculum experts who had first-hand information about the curriculum renewal process. Of the different techniques in purposive sampling, the current study employed maximum variation sampling with the intention to obtain common patterns across variation. The variation of samples in this study has been assured by choosing participants with a variety of experience.

### 3.4. Data Gathering Instruments

In order to gather data for the present study, semi-structured interview and document analysis were employed. The purpose and the rationale for choosing these instruments will be discussed as follows.

#### 3.4.1. Interview

The main instrument employed for collecting the data needed for this study was an interview. The purpose of interviewing is to find out about things one cannot observe directly, things that happen when the researcher is not around, and gain insights on how people organize and apply meaning to these occurrences. From among the three interview types (i.e. Structured, semi-

structured and unstructured), the current study employed semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview was deemed appropriate as a main data gathering instrument for this study since it facilitates large amounts of data and a wide variety of information to be gathered quickly, and makes immediate follow-up and clarification possible. The interview schedule was mainly used for eliciting data from EFL curriculum experts and is comprised of fifteen questions that aimed to find out: contextual factors that drove the curriculum renewal, the evaluation mechanism that informed the renewal process, the needs assessment procedures followed, the source and nature of aims, goals and objectives set, the procedures followed in determining the content of the curriculum, the process through which the personnel involved in curriculum renewal were selected, the steps followed in piloting the curriculum materials, and the challenges encountered, if any, during the renewal processes. The interview items were developed by reviewing literature pertaining to the EFL curriculum renewal (such as Nation and Macalister, 2010; Richards 1990, 2001; and Brown, 1995).

### 3.4.2. Document Analysis

Document analysis is a method which enables researchers to interpret the documents and materials existing in the research context. Document analysis was employed in this study to ensure provision of multiple perspectives needed (1) to corroborate and augment evidence from interview source, (2) to provide other specific details for corroborating information from interview sources, and (3) to make inferences from documents (Yin, 2009, p. 103). Based on these premises, likewise, the researcher collected relevant documents like policies, decisions, decrees, and guidelines related to secondary school curriculum and curriculum development. Some of the major documents subjected to analysis include the Education and Training Policy (ETP), Education Sector Development Strategy (ESDP I-V) documents, General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) reports, Curriculum documents like guidelines and reports, syllabuses, and domestic researches, among others. These documents were analyzed not only to examine the phenomena in detail but also to shed light on, enrich and triangulate the data collected through the interview.

### 3.5. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

#### 3.5.1. Validity and Reliability of the Interviews

When it comes to determining validity of interviews, Gray (2004) notes that "in the case of structured and semi-structured interviews, the issue of validity can be directly addressed by attempting to ensure that the content of the question directly concentrates on the research objectives" (p. 219). Likewise, validity of the interview was ensured in this study by making the interview schedules focus on the research objectives and/or research questions. In qualitative researches, studying the same phenomenon using different sources of information is recommended as a powerful means of enhancing the validity or trustworthiness of data interpretation (Yin, 2009). The use of document analysis as a secondary data source for this study, thus, served the purpose of triangulating the interview data, thereby enhancing the validity or trustworthiness of the findings.

Since the reliability of interviews can be endangered by conscious or unconscious bias the interviewer may induce in the procedures, the use of more than one interviewer and/or the use of the same interview protocol for different interviews can minimize this bias (Gray, 2004). To ensure the reliability of the interview findings, hence, the researcher employed the same interview schedule/protocol for all the interviewees.

In addition to these, a range of measures were applied to ensure the quality of the interviews. For instance, an interview protocol with note-taking spaces to record participants' remarks was employed to structure the interview. The interviews used in this study included *briefing* and *debriefing* phases intended to provide the interviewees a context. Briefing was used to give a short introduction about the interview including the purpose, the focus of the interview, and the use of data. Debriefing was used at the end of the interview to address any issues that occurred during the course of the interview, and to end in a relaxed manner.

### 3.6. Data Collection Procedure

This study involves collection of a qualitative data through interviews and documents in order to answer the research questions using the following procedures.

### 3.6.1. Interview

Data collection for this study was started with interview schedules. Before conducting the actual interview, the interviewees were given the approval letter issued by DFLL, AAU and then were asked to sign a consent form that explains: the purpose of the research, the potential risks and benefits of participating in the research, the confidentiality of the data they provide, and the freedom they have in refraining from answering any question or even seceding from the research. During the interview, the researcher read the interview schedules sequentially by giving the interviewees ample time to respond. Averagely, the interview sessions lasted about 40 minutes.

### 3.6.2. Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted following the completion of the interview data collection. While such documents as Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education and Secondary School EFL Syllabuses were obtained from the curriculum experts at MoE, the remaining documents were referred from the archives/library of the MoE and were downloaded from the internet sources for further detailed analysis.

## 3.7. Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out in a step-by-step procedure with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding about the curriculum renewal process. The analysis began with organizing the data to manage the information collected during the research. Accordingly, a thematic analysis approach which involves "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79) was used to analyze the interview and document data. Thematic analysis was chosen for this study, because it is the most useful data analysis method for interpreting the meanings of qualitative data. To this end, the six phases of conducting thematic analysis were applied to generate insights into the phenomenon under study. These phases include: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. In relation to the interview data, the first phase (familiarization) occurred during the transcribing process. The second phase involved generating codes. When the raw data was transcribed and stored in the

case record as data items (Bassey, 1999), these items underwent a process of generating initial codes. A code is a noticeable characteristic of the data (semantic content or latent) which is interesting to the researcher, and refers to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998: 63). The transcribed text data was read iteratively, and divided into segments of information labeled with codes. The codes were checked, compared, and revisited to reduce overlap and redundancy.

In the third phase the themes, which are broader units of analysis than codes, were formed by developing major ideas in the database through combining similar codes. These themes captured something important about the data in relation to the research question and represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The themes then underwent reviewing, defining and naming phases and were interpreted based on the researcher's "hunches, insights, and intuition" (Creswell, 2005: 251) and in comparison with the literature and past studies. The findings, together with the researcher's expertise and personal views supported and/or contradicted the conceptual framework and finally, conclusions were made and reports produced.

**Analysis of the Document Data**

Documents were dealt with as a topic based on the content (Prior, 2011). This approach allowed the researcher to not only focus on what is in the document, but also how the documents were used (Prior, 2011). The findings that emerged from analyzing the document data were used to corroborate the analysis of data collected from the interview to ensure reliability. Based on the research questions, the researcher developed the following question to provide a focus for the process of document analysis:

(a) What is the nature of secondary school EFL curriculum development in Ethiopia (when viewed in terms of the experts involved, summative evaluation, needs analysis, setting of aims/goals/objectives, determination of contents/syllabus/textbooks/teaching-learning methods, and provision of training?

The findings of the document analysis were not separately presented, but were integrated with those from the interviews to show a complete picture of the processes of the EFL curriculum development.

### 3.8. Ethics

Ethics are the principles and guidelines that assist researchers to conduct their investigation (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). Ethical issues consist of considering how to present the research to intended participants, the potential impact of taking part in the research, the consequences that sampling strategies may cause, and how findings are reported (Barbour, 2008). This study was granted ethical clearance by DFLL, AAU.

Ethical concerns were taken into consideration for the potential participants. Likewise, the participants were fully informed of the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternative procedures, and limits of confidentiality. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from each participant (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). Written informed consent included the right to withdraw from the research. The use of the results was also specified, and any social consequences the study may have for participants' were addressed (Creswell, 2005) (see Appendix A). Participant codes were created and pseudonyms used to assure the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants (Barbour, 2008; Creswell, 2005; Johnson and Christensen, 2012) (See Appendix C).

Ethical concerns were also shown during the data collection. Any impact on participants was minimized by asking open-ended questions and in a sharing manner, not to influence their perspective and experiences of the topics for interview (Barbour, 2008). Member checks were applied after transcribing the interview data to make sure the collected information matched what the participants wanted to share. In the reporting period, data were reported honestly without changing or altering the findings to match certain predictions or interest groups. This showed respect both to the data reported as professional ethics (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), and to those who read and use the findings (Barbour, 2008).

### 3.9. The Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small scale implementation of a larger study or of part of the larger study. It can be conducted for various research functions. Pilot study can be viewed as feasibility study. As a small scale implementation of a larger study, it can be used to examine potential concerns before launching the main study and to determine whether the full study can be accomplished. That is, it forewarns a researcher when there is concern that a full-scale study may not be possible due to concerns about instruments, procedures, cost and other issues. It can also be used to try out the adequacy of the data collection tools and procedures that the researcher plans to employ in the main study and revise the tools and procedures prior to they become operational based on what the trialing reveals. Accordingly, the researcher conducted the pilot study not only to pre-test the research instrument, namely interview protocols, but also to improve his interview skills to ensure that responses yield rich information in a practical research environment.

The pilot study comprised two one-to-one interviews with curriculum experts. Procedures planned for the main study were applied in the pilot to trial the research techniques and methods in practice (Blaxter et al., 1996). As advised by Blaxter et al. (1996), after the interviews, the transcripts were translated into English, and a summary report written. Then critical evaluation of the interviews was conducted as it was helpful in revising the interview protocol and interview questions, and hence, the following insights were gained and changes were made during the main study.

1) The improvement in the procedure of the interviews:

Some questions placed at the beginning of the interview protocol were so specific that the respondents were providing very brief responses rather than detailed explanation. It was felt that this happened due to lack of probing from the researcher in the course of the conversations. Hence, the researcher used probing in the main study when similar cases occurred.

2) Order of the interview questions

As the presentation of the interview questions had an impact on procedures of the interview, the questions were re-ordered from more general to specific ideas in the main study, enabling interviewees to be comfortable and to share their experiences and expertise more easily.

3) The need to retain items of the interview:

The items of the interview guide were found focused on the right traits, sufficiently detailed and defined covering all possibilities to answer the research questions. Therefore, the researcher has decided to use the guide in the main study without modification.

4) Feasibility of the overall research design

The research methodology designed, the procedures used to pilot the research instrument, and the method of data analysis employed were found effective to meet the research objective set and/or were feasible for conducting the main study.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSIONS

## 4.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the findings, analysis and discussion of empirical data pertaining to the EFL secondary school curriculum renewal process. The findings will be presented according to the themes generated from the data analysis.

## 4.2. Findings Gained through Interview

This section discusses in detail the findings gained from interview with the curriculum experts. The findings drawn from interviews with curriculum experts are discussed in terms of thirteen themes: 1) the experts involved in the renewal process, 2) summative evaluation, 3) the contextual factors driving the curriculum renewal, 4) needs analysis, 5) the source and nature of aims, goals and objectives, 6) type of the selected syllabus, 7) the textbooks, 8) the criteria for determining content of the EFL curriculum, 9) the recommended teaching methods 10) the assessment strategies, 11) piloting of the curriculum and/or curriculum materials, 12) teachers' training, 13) challenges of the EFL curriculum renewal process.

### 4.2.1. The Experts Involved in the Curriculum Renewal Process

Experts involved in curriculum development endeavors need to have not only a sound knowledge of the subject matter in concern as well as the general curriculum, but also a refined experience of designing curriculum. It's on the basis of this premise that the respondents were asked to give account of those involved in the renewal of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum. Upon describing the profile of the experts involved in the curriculum renewal, one of the curriculum experts maintained that:

> *Generally, the trend of English curriculum design in our country is the same throughout primary and secondary schools. In other words, foreign experts are hired to design the English curriculum when the need arise to change and/or revise the curriculum. For example, during the 2008/9 curriculum design, international bid was announced to contract foreign organizations to design the English curriculum both for primary and secondary schools. Accordingly, an organization based in Uganda won the bid to design*

*the primary education English curriculum while a British based organization named Pearson won the bid to design the English curriculum for secondary schools. (CE1).*

Contrary to this, while discussing the issue of experts involved in the curriculum renewal and process through which they were selected, another respondent contended that the experts were recruited from the MoE based on their experience of curriculum development:

*…the responsibility of developing the curriculum was given to curriculum experts at the MoE…in my opinion; they were selected based on their experience. (CE4)*

Stressing that the curriculum development unit at MoE conducted the curriculum development, one of the respondents stated that English curriculum experts had also participated in the task of syllabus design:

*Experts at curriculum development unit of the MoE participated in the renewal process. For instance, during the 2008/9 curriculum revision, English subject experts at MoE have also participated in preparing the English syllabus along with English experts from Voluntary Service Oversees (VSO)… (CE3)*

These claims were finally summed up by another informant who stated that curriculum development task force was established for the purpose of conducting and overseeing the curriculum renewal process:

*Previously, the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) conducts curriculum development…Currently, it is the responsibility of Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID)… in my opinion the experts are selected based on their expertise and experience of curriculum development. (CE2)*

While discussing the issue of experts involved in the curricula reform processes, the respondents express differing views. While one of the respondents claims that the experts were foreigners, the remaining three concur that the experts were from the former Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) and the current Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID) of MoE. In either case, it is apparent from the finding that the curriculum renewal process did not provide space for teacher involvement. This indicates that

the process is based on the top-down approach which views the process of curriculum development as the responsibility of researchers, theoreticians, or administrators, and which holds a notion that materials are the product of "experts" and "innovators" that are handed down to the teachers, who are viewed as the "neutral transmitters" of the curriculum message (Enns – Connolly, 1990; Gough, 1977).

Language curriculum development process requires the participation of different stakeholders as teachers, students, administrators, curriculum managers, materials and test developers. All stakeholders with their diverse roles and perspectives add varied features to the process; teachers by being both the planner and doer provide the implementation of the process, so their views and work are to be taken into consideration during the whole stage. Since the students are the reason for whom all the processes are taken, they are the ones whose views should be taken in order to investigate the gap between the published curriculum and the real curriculum which is represented in students' "transcripts"; and in this way, it might be possible to track the curriculum on a "flow chart" in order to determine what is needed for improvement in the process. However, without teachers' help it is not ultimately possible to reveal students' needs on the grounds that teachers are the ones who spend the most time with students. The success of the whole work of administrators, curriculum managers, materials and test developers also depends on teachers as they act as a bridge between what is planned and what will be obtained as a result of the implementation process.

To obtain success in implementing curriculum depends on teachers' knowledge, awareness and active participation during the whole process. Teachers having the knowledge and class experience contribute to the process by conveying their ideas and transmitting know-how; they must be in the planning stage of what they are going to implement. Teachers have their own "perceptions of problems and issues in their classrooms, schools, and professional lives" and thus "teachers have a right to have their voices heard in creating the curriculum" (Beane, 1995). The other point is that teachers are the ones who have been acquainted with both the prevalent school culture and the physical conditions of that school and thus able to analyze whether the related innovation to the curriculum will work in their institution or not.

Teachers share and experience the school culture, and they have the power to change the prevailing system into the desired new one; if one can do it, it is the teachers because if the change is not approved and adapted by the teachers, it does not last long. Teachers are the ones who can detect and compensate the problems and deficiencies in a curriculum (Richards, 2001); this provides "a backwash possible from the classroom to the curriculum" (Candlin and Rodgers, 1985:104), which makes teachers come up with constructive ideas in designing and revising a curriculum. Therefore, teachers need to become active participants in curriculum development because through understanding the framework of curriculum development, teachers are not only able to contribute their part in the process, but also "make sense" of what they are doing rather than just doing it (Graves, 1996:6).

### 4.2.2. Summative Evaluation

The process of curriculum evaluation can be viewed as an essential group of activities performed by curriculum developers and implementers, which enable the latter to gather data to either judge the individual achievements of those experiencing the curriculum (assessment) or curricular programs in general (evaluation). That is, this process of evaluation will then facilitate the decisions to either "accept, change, or eliminate something, the curriculum in general or an educational textbook in particular" (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1997: 319 – 320). The major objective of evaluation is to determine whether the implemented curriculum is yielding or capable of yielding the anticipated outcomes as planned. The assessment of individual achievements is seen as part of the overall process of curriculum evaluation, as the data gathered can be used to guide "decisions regarding content topics, organization of content, teaching methods, and even the physical organization of the class" (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1997). Evaluation is then "the heart of the systematic approach to language curriculum design" (Brown, 1995: 217). Based on this premise, the respondents were asked whether the EFL curriculum was based on summative evaluation or not. According to the respondents' claims, other than broad educational strategies, programs and policy-related evaluations, (EFL) curriculum – targeted evaluation as an independent entity has not been conducted so far:

> *Yes, evaluation had been conducted though the evaluation is done for the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) not specifically for English*

*curriculum. It was conducted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) together with the Regional Education Bureaus. (CE1)*

Similar view was also echoed in the response of another respondent who states that:

*Mostly, summative evaluation is not conducted specifically for curriculum (including its reform)…rather evaluation is limited to broader policy and strategy aspects like the Education Sector Development Programs which encompasses several components of the general education system including the curriculum… (CE4)*

This claim is consolidated by the claim of Curriculum Expert 2 as he says:

*As far as I know the curriculum reforms are not based on evaluation. Evaluations are mainly conducted during and at the end of the general Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP) to determine the extent to which the programs are being implemented. Rather than this, curriculum evaluations are not specifically planned and executed targeting the EFL curriculum… (CE2)*

In contrary to these views, another respondent stated that evaluation of curriculum has been conducted though he believes that it was not satisfactory:

*In my opinion, curricular reforms are based on evaluation to some extent though its not satisfactory…for instance the current curriculum had been evaluated formatively once in 2014 after four years of implementation though summative evaluation was not conducted…After that single evaluation, summative evaluation hasn't been conducted…(CE3)*

Thus far, the interview data indicates that summative evaluations were mainly conducted to assess government initiated programs and packages in which curriculum is treated as one of the components rather than as an independent entity. For instance, as indicated in ESDP documents, curriculum, teaching and learning materials is placed together with teachers' and leaders' development, school improvement program, information and communication technology, and quality assurance as sub – components of the development programs geared towards the improvement of the education sector. With regard to this, Norris *et al* (2009) stress that

"evaluation methods must be designed with maximal articulation and situatedness vis-à-vis the actual language educational milieu, and the specific programs and stakeholders within it" (p. 8-9).

There is a widely held consensus within the curriculum development literature that once a developed curriculum is implemented in schools, appropriate evaluation procedures should be devised to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in achieving the aims, goals and objectives it set out to materialize. Feedback obtained should also include any unintended outcomes so that information about the curriculum can provide useful data to enable further modifications in the curriculum, if necessary. A new curriculum once implemented in schools is in progress until a time when the need arises to terminate it. Therefore, evaluation should be considered as an integral part of this process in order to keep the curriculum valid, reliable and keep it in the right direction because the goals of education can be attained only through valid and reliable curriculum and proper evaluation of the process for updating and fulfilling the required target.

### 4.2.3. The Contextual Factors Driving Curriculum Renewal

To begin with, the interview with curriculum experts began with a question that probed the reasons that necessitated revision of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum. According to the respondents, the major reasons for the renewal of the EFL curriculum that was in effect from 2003/4 to 2008/9 include difficulty for the students, absence of learning competency criteria, content overload, and the need to align the curriculum with the development goals of the country. According to one of the respondent:

> *the curriculum was deemed too difficult for the students, it did not consider minimum learning competency criteria that the students needed to possess, and above all it was too large for teachers to cover within the given time frame… (CE1)*

While reflecting on the reasons that necessitated the curriculum reform, one of the respondents claimed that the curriculum renewal was made in response to government's policy initiatives like Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP), etc.:

*In addition, the relatively recent curriculum was revised in response to government policy strategies like Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (CE2)*

The respondents also indicated that the curricular reforms were initiated because the curriculum contents did not respond to the needs of the learners and the society, there was difficulties of implementing continuous assessment, and the contents were bulky in nature:

*the major ones include, among others, the curricula and the contents were not integrated with the realities of the learner and the society at large; and the curricula have not laid out the objectives of particular level of education in accordance with the country's requirement; content overload, difficulties in implementing continuous assessment, etc…(CE3)*

Similar theme also emerged from the response of another respondent who encapsulates the contextual factors driving curricular reforms saying:

*The previous curriculum was revised because it lacked relevance to (meet) students' needs and interests, it was less diversified, it put less emphasis on problem-solving and its content was overloaded… (CE4)*

To put in a nutshell, factors that drove the 2008/9 curriculum reform include irrelevance of the curriculum contents to learners' and society's needs, overload of the curricular contents, too much difficulty for the students, absence of minimum learning competency, challenges in implementing continuous assessment, and the need to align the curriculum with government policies and strategies.

### 4.2.4. Needs Analysis

One of the main purposes of the needs analysis is to understand the necessary changes which should be done in order to improve the curriculum by means of content specification in the field of English language learning. English language needs analysis for students is mainly carried out in order to obtain deep insights and greater inputs about the current and future needs of language learners from multiple perspectives to assist in making well-advised decisions on the objectives

and the goals that a new curriculum should address and to ensure that the curriculum content matches the students' needs as closely as possible (Cowling, 2007). When it comes to the theme of needs analysis, the respondents claim that needs analysis was conducted as part of the curriculum renewal process by curriculum development experts at Ministry of Education (MoE) and the data sources were teachers, students, directors, supervisors and parents. One of the respondents, for instance, stated that:

> *…needs analysis had been conducted as part of the curriculum design process…the General Education Curriculum Framework Development Department conducted the needs analysis by gathering data from the teachers, students, directors, supervisors and parents.(CE1)*

Another respondent corroborated this view saying that:

> *Before designing the current curriculum, for example, situation analysis was conducted through desk research, and consultation inputs…it was conducted by a group of experts at MoE who were responsible for conducting the curriculum development…the data sources were teachers, school directors, and society members. (CE4)*

According to one of the respondents, both situation analysis and needs assessments were conducted during the 2008/9 curriculum renewal:

> *Initially, situational analysis is conducted at broader scale and then it was followed by specific needs assessment… the needs analysis is conducted by experts from Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID) at MoE. Teachers', directors' and parents' attitudes were collected and analyzed at the preliminary stage of the 2008/9 curriculum revision… (CE2)*

Respondent CE3 shares similar view as he briefly stated:

> *Needs assessment was conducted and analyzed to some extent during revision of the current curriculum…it was conducted by curriculum development experts at MoE…teachers as well as some members of the society were data sources of the needs analysis.. (CE3)*

In summary, the interview data reveals that needs analysis had been conducted before designing the EFL curriculum by curriculum development experts at MoE through collecting data from students, teachers, school directors, supervisors and society. The literature proposes that needs assessment be undertaken at different levels and stages, each being distinguishable by certain unique characteristics. "Macro-level" decision making calls for an assessment where major attention should naturally be paid to subject matter and society as relevant information sources for purposes of identifying "educational needs" (Unruh and Unruh, 1984), while relatively less attention can be paid to students for purposes of extracting "psychological needs". On the contrary; "micro-level" needs assessment represent an activity which require stronger emphasis put on students as a data source aiming at the identification of "psychological needs". While less strong emphasis on other two sources, namely subject matter and society, is required. Given the fact that the needs analysis process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum involved students, teachers, school directors, supervisors and society as data sources, it is possible to infer that both "macro" and "micro" contexts had been taken into account. This indicates that the needs analysis had asked the right questions and identified the limits and constraints of the context in deciding goals and objectives; developing teaching materials; and fulfilling teaching, testing, and evaluation goals.

### 4.2.5. The Source(s) and Nature of the Aims, Goals and Objectives of the EFL Curriculum

Aims serve as broad purposes or goals and are generally over-arching statement of the intentions of the course/subject rather than specific statements of what students learn or do. Goals are commonly meant to be general, somewhat general statements of long-term, ultimate, desirable consequences of schooling while objectives are specific, measurable, and precise statements of short-term, proximate desirable consequences. Objective**s** of the curriculum provide: (i) a planned direction to the teacher, the students and the administrator, (ii) a basis for rationale and logical curriculum planning for employing appropriate content, learning activities/experiences and evaluation strategies, and (iii) a direction for students' assessment. It is important for the curriculum designers, therefore, to determine exactly what the stated objectives seek to achieve and to decide the most suitable learning experiences and activities that ultimately result into the achievement of the objectives.

While reflecting on the sources and nature of the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum, the respondents stated that they were developed based on the objectives of the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (ETP, 1994) and on the results of the needs assessment; and that they were mainly intended to develop and enhance communicative language skills of the learners. According to one of the respondents:

> *The aims, goals and objectives are mainly derived from the Education and Training Policy of our country and from the findings of the needs analysis that was conducted during the initial stage of the curricular reform…they emphasize development of students' communicative language skills (CE4)*

This view was also echoed by another interviewee who says that:

> *The aims, goals and objectives were designed based on the findings of the needs analysis….the aims and objectives emphasize the development and enhancement of learners' communicative language abilities… (CE1)*

In line with these views, CE3 added that the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum are geared towards enhancing communicative ability of the learners through engaging them in active learning pedagogy:

> *The aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum are mainly derived from the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia as well as the results of the needs analysis…the aims, goals and objectives are geared towards fostering communicative ability of the students through engaging them in active learning processes… (CE3)*

As a crucial stage of curriculum development, this step of formulating and defining goals and objectives involves translating the information from the needs assessment into realistic goals and short – term objectives for the course/subject. It is apparent from the findings of this study that the 2008/9 EFL curriculum was designed following this procedure since the data indicates that the aims, goals and objectives of the curriculum were formulated based on the objectives that the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (ETP, 1994) strives to attain and based on the results of the preceding needs analysis.

Having categorized curricular goals into four types of knowledge, reflective thinking, attitudes and skills, Taba (1962) maintains that the goals of the course/subject can include as many or as few of these types as needed based upon the data in needs analysis. For example, if data indicate a focus on knowledge and skill objectives, then the curriculum should contain more of these and fewer of the attitude and reflective thinking ones. Accordingly, for example, the goals of a course/subject might be built around the teaching of language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) or their subcomponents (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar). Some courses might put emphasis on communication and oral skills and give priority to communicative competence. However, it depends on the objectives and goals of the course to determine what should be emphasized and taught. When viewed in light of this, the above findings indicated that the EFL curriculum is geared towards the development of the students' communicative competence with the focus on integrating the teaching of the four language skills and their subcomponents.

### 4.2.6. Content of the EFL Curriculum

Content can be defined as consisting of knowledge (facts, explanation, principles, and definitions), skills and processes (reading, writing, calculating, critical thinking, communication, decision making) and values (the belief, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly). Selection of content is not something independent instead it is dependent upon the objectives of the plan of studies. Print (1993) suggests that criteria for content selection include needs, significance, validity, relevance, utility, learner ability and interest. Finding of interview data is in consistence with this suggestion since it reveals that the content of the 2008/9 curriculum was selected based on the minimum learning competency, the interest of the students, the relevance to Ethiopian life as well as the complementarity to what students learn in other subjects. For instance, CE2 stated that:

> *It is apparent that the current English curriculum is based on Competency Approach. Accordingly, the contents are determined in such a way that they enable students achieve Minimum Learning Competency criteria set in each section and/or unit. (CE2)*

Another interviewee holds similar view as he emphasized that the contents were selected in a way that enables learners possess minimum language learning competency, whether they join world of work or pursue further higher education:

> *As you know, the current secondary schools curriculum allows students the opportunity to either pursue higher education or join the world of work…Accordingly, the content of the curriculum is selected in a way that responds to this demand…In other words, the contents are designed so as to enable the students possess minimum language competency at each grade level in order to succeed both in the world of work and in the higher education. Moreover, contents are chosen based on interests of the students, relevance to Ethiopian life and complementarity to what students are studying in other subjects (CE1).*

Respondent CE4 shared similar opinion as he stated that:

> *The contents are selected based on the Minimum Learning Competency documents. In other words, minimum learning competency criteria were initially set for each level against which students' performance is assessed and the contents are determined in such a way that they enable the students to achieve and/or build up their competencies as they progress through the unit…contents that are deemed interesting and enjoyable to the students as well as relevant to Ethiopian contexts are also chosen... (CE4)*

It is evident in the response of CE3 that the curricula contents were chosen according to their relevance to learners' age, level and background knowledge. According to him:

> *The contents of EFL curriculum are determined according to their relevance and appropriateness to the learners' age, grade levels and background…they are also determined in such a way that they build on the contents the students learned at lower grade levels and that they prepare the learners for higher studies… (CE3)*

According to the interview data, the contents of EFL curriculum were selected on the basis of minimum learning competency criteria; relevance to the students' context, interest, age, and grade levels; and complementarity to what students learn in other subjects. Here, it is vital to mention the key debate in curriculum that revolves around the issue of balance between what is

often termed an academic curriculum that focuses largely on specific subject knowledge and a more comprehensive competency-based curriculum that actively promotes the development of broader competencies, such as problem-solving, initiative, and creativity.

According to the above finding, the 2008/9 curriculum content is based on minimum competency criteria in which learners develop their understanding in ways in which they can apply this in practical situations. Competence is defined as "the ability to produce and understand the sentences of a given language, and identify ambiguous and deviant sentences" (Johnson and Johnson, 1999, p.75). Recent research questions the validity of the notion of ideal native speaker competence that Chomsky (1965) has proposed. Nunn (2007) redefines competence as a holistic, global and international concept, and argues that institutions which aim at educational excellence in an international field need to establish a balance between international and local definitions of competence. Alptekin (2002) finds native speaker competence utopian, unrealistic and constraining, and indicates "for language to be authentic in its routine pragmatic functioning, it needs to be localized within a particular discourse community" (p. 61).

The importance of community in defining the notion of competence has been emphasized by Nunn (2007) as well, who states "Competence is linked to the notion of community. In any local context competence needs of students can be related to the different communities with and within which they will need to communicate" (p. 101). A competency based curriculum goes beyond simple recall of information: the focus is on competencies, such as communication, judgment, analysis, interpretation and problem solving. Given the fact that success of such curriculum requires community of discourse in the target-language, high levels of teacher skills, diverse classroom approaches and substantial resources, one can question the extent of its outcome/success in a context devoid of such attributes (including our country).

### 4.2.7. The Teaching Method(s)

The recommended teaching methods of a particular content need to be informed by sound theoretical foundation and the instructional strategies should also be helpful and applicable in achieving the set objectives. It is evident in the interview data that the EFL curriculum is informed by current trends in language teaching i.e. communicative language teaching. This claim is evident in the interview data where one of the respondents claimed that:

*As you know, the communicative approach, which is active learning method, has become a well-established language learning method since 1980s and the same trend is also recommended in the designed English language curriculum….In my opinion, yes the instructional strategies are designed in a way that can be applied in classrooms and are also helpful in achieving the objectives. (CE1)*

Another respondent agreed to this statement saying:

*Learner-centered teaching methodology is recommended for delivering lessons…in my opinion, the instructional strategies are applicable and are designed in consistence with the set objectives. (CE3)*

In contrary to the above two respondents' views, the other two think that the instructional strategies are not effectively applicable given the constraining conditions of our country. For instance, one of the respondents stated that:

*Obviously, student-centered methodology is recommended with the aim of involving the learners in communicative language learning whereby they learn language through interaction and active engagement in the teaching-learning process. Personally, I believe that the instructional strategies are not effectively applicable within our context given the limited facilities required for implementing it and the low-level language proficiency of both the teachers and the learners. (CE2)*

Curriculum expert CE4 concurred that:

*Learner-centered constructivist teaching method is recommended to be applied in the classrooms…I doubt if it is applicable because it requires various conditions to be met to fully implement it and we lack most of these favorable conditions…for instance, there are such challenges as scarce language resources and facilities, large class size, limited teachers' beliefs (towards) and practices of the methodology, limited students' language proficiency, etc. all of which contribute to achievement of the stated objectives…without meeting necessary conditions required for its application, it remains a mere wish to expect the teaching methods to achieve the objectives! (CE4)*

It is apparent from the findings that student-centered communicative language teaching methodology was recommended in the EFL curriculum. This concept is also reflected in the Curriculum Framework for Ethiopian Secondary Education (KG-12) which stipulates that the curriculum was based on constructivism based teaching and learning process (MoE, 2010a). According to the document:

> …teachers do not spend whole lessons talking, but plan in opportunities for class discussions in which students can exchange ideas, resolve misunderstandings and make sense out of what they are listening to, or engage in a variety of different activities which give them the opportunity to *construct meaning* for themselves out of the information they are receiving (p.2).

The main purpose of possession of the communicative competence is the ability to express personal thoughts and ideas with the use of foreign languages. In other words, learners are expected to have the competence to use the target language effectively and appropriately in various contexts. Developing learners' ability to use a language effectively for their communicative purposes in a variety of professional and social contexts, on the other hand, requires learning environments which emphasize communicative, authentic and meaningful use of target language, and active learner involvement (Finney, 2002). Given the constrained context of our country where classroom interaction is dominated by teacher-talk, where there is lack of authentic language use contexts as well as resources, and where students take little initiative to actively participate in the teaching-learning process; one can question the ground upon which to base an argument of genuine applicability of constructivism-based communicative language teaching methodology.

### 4.2.8. Assessment Strategies

Assessment is a systematic procedure intended to collect information about the teaching and learning process that can be used to make inferences about the characteristics and progress of the students so as to make instructional decisions. In addition to providing teachers with an insight into the progress their students have achieved as a result of the teaching-learning process, assessment serves a purpose of identifying the learning areas that need improvement. This implies that assessment is a systematic process that begins with the identification of learning

goals and ends with a judgment concerning how well those goals have been attained; thus, it is one of the major components of learning that play a significant role in an effective teaching-learning situation.

With regard to the assessment strategies recommended in the 2008/9 EFL curriculum, the data from the respondents indicated that the EFL curriculum was based on "Continuous Assessment". Continuous assessment is a formative means of assessing learners that gives an opportunity for them to improve their performance, thereby playing a developmental role rather than a judgmental one. Here, assessment is carried out at the beginning, during and at the end of the teaching-learning process through observations, oral questions, discussions, laboratory work, class work, home-work assignments, tests, examinations, and other relevant procedures (Ellington and Earl, 1997). In other words, it generally refers to teacher's making ongoing observations and collecting information periodically to find out what a student knows, understands, and how well s/he can do a specific task. There is a long-standing recognition in the literature that students who receive regular feedback through assessment are better motivated to learn as they feel more involved in their own learning.

Cognizant of the merits of continuous assessment, likewise, the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (1994: 9) states that, "Continuous assessment in academic and practical subjects including aptitude tests will be conducted to ascertain the formation of all rounded profile of students at all level." As an endeavor to materialize this, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) has been taking measures continually through making changes in the curriculum and teachers' profile since the inception of the Education and Training Policy (ETP, 1994). Accordingly, the TDP (Teacher Development Program), which is guided by a new view of education, was introduced to assist teachers in promoting continuous assessment in their teaching (ICDR, 1999). A paradigm shift of the ETP (1994) further stressed that the traditional way of assessing students like giving only exams need to be replaced at different levels of the education system by continuous assessment that develops and inculcates higher order thinking skills. The interview data also revealed that the assessment strategy propounded by the 2008/9 EFL curriculum is in consistent with this view. According to CE3's assertion, for example,:

*When it comes to assessment, the curriculum requires the teachers to continuously evaluate the students' performance so as to ensure the extent to which the learners are achieving the required language competencies… (CE3)*

Similar view is also expressed by another respondent who states:

*… this curriculum is based on the notion of continuous assessment which is intended to gauge the students' progress towards the achievement of minimum learning competencies set for each lesson (CE1)*

While reflecting on this issue, respondent CE4 stressed that continuous assessment was intended for the purpose of both keeping record of students' progresses towards Minimum Learning Competencies (MLC) and identifying competency aspects where they (may) need extra support to succeed at:

*Continuous assessment is recommended in this curriculum…in this assessment strategy, the goal is not only to track students' progress, but also to generate feedback on which competency area(s) a student needs additional support or remedial lesson… (CE4)*

This opinion is also evident in the statement of another respondent who claimed that:

*…the students are assessed rigorously on a continual basis against each indicator/criterion of competency level… It is mainly meant to ascertain that students have attained at least minimum competency of a specified level before moving on to the next one… (CE2)*

Here it is possible to observe that the recommendation of application of continuous assessment in classroom by the EFL curriculum is an important step towards the ultimate betterment of students' learning. Despite acknowledgement of the importance of continuous assessment by a number of educators, the literature has documented evidences tremendous pitfalls when it comes to its practical application. In connection to this, Esere and Idowu (2009) found out that continuous assessment has not made the expected contribution to students' school performance due to inherent problems in its operation. Similarly, Diamond (1998) described that the fundamental problem in assessment practices was the mismatch between the learning targets

established and the methods and criteria teachers use to assess their students. In addition to these, scientific evidences have revealed that many educators and learners view continuous assessment as merely assessment of learning (summative), barring assessment for learning (formative) away. For instance, research findings of Obioma (2010) (cited in Awofala and Babajide, 2013) revealed that many teachers misapplied the continuous assessment instruments leading to more continuous testing instead of continuous assessment.

Inherent problems witnessed elsewhere in practical application of continuous assessment have also been confirmed within the Ethiopian context. In this regard, for instance, Fisseha (2010) found that the current state of assessment, particularly formative assessment (also named as assessment for learning) is not in line with best practices to enhance student learning and realize curriculum intentions. Aytaged (2010) further asserted that judgmental role (summative) of continuous assessment is more practiced than the development role (formative) of the assessment. Similarly, some other studies also pinpointed that the teachers practice continuous assessment as continuous tests (Abiy, 2013), and that the practice of the continuous assessment activities to assess students' written work is not sufficient enough to improve the learning and teaching of a writing course (Yiheyis and Getachew, 2014). Similarly, Tefera (2014) confirmed that most teachers did not include a variety of continuous assessment tools in their plan and did not use them in the classroom activities, and that they were not giving sufficient feedback to students in teaching learning process.

### 4.2.9. Type of the Syllabus and the Rationale for its Selection

A syllabus is primarily a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning that maps out body of knowledge and those capabilities which are regarded as worthwhile outcomes from the work of teachers and learners in a particular situation for which the syllabus was designed. The plan must provide an accessible framework of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning which affords continuity and direction for its users. The plan should also function as a retrospective record, a basis for the evaluation of learning, and should itself be amenable to evaluation and adaptation. While expressing their views about the type of syllabus selected and the rationale for its selection, the respondents maintained that theme/topic-based syllabus was

opted for it was deemed appropriate to capture and maintain the students' interest and motivation of language learning. According to one of the respondents:

> *Topic-based syllabus was selected with a focus on popular themes that are deemed familiar to the students… this type of syllabus was selected because familiarity of the topics to the students makes the contents and activities more interesting and motivating thereby promoting their engagement in the teaching-learning process. (CE1).*

This view was echoed in the response of another informant who claimed that:

> *Topic-based syllabus was selected for organizing the content because it allows for a wide variety of language and activities by presenting topics from different subjects familiar to the students in order to engage them in the teaching-learning process… (CE3)*

This view was further corroborated by CE4 who claimed:

> *The current syllabus is mainly topic-based…this kind of syllabus was selected because it was believed that it would engage learners in the teaching-learning process and maintain their interest since it is organized around topics that are familiar to the students and that they most likely encounter (have encountered) in the other school subjects. (CE4)*

Similar view was evident in the response of CE2:

> *Theme/topic-based syllabus was selected both for the current and previous curriculum with the view that students would not get bored with monotony of content since they are provided with variety of themes that introduce them to different topics through engaging them in different activities… (CE2)*

According to the findings, topic/theme-based syllabus was selected for organizing and presenting the content of the EFL curricula in which language skills are developed and other components of language (vocabulary, grammar, social expressions, etc.) are integrated. When it comes to the rationale for the selection, the respondents claimed that this type of syllabus was selected with the assumption that it provides students with different familiar topics deemed interesting and motivating to them. Long and Crookes (1993) acknowledge that the starting points of curriculum design should be from the choice of the units of analysis. The "units of analysis" are also called

"units of progression" (Nation and Macalister, 2010). In a course, these are the items that are used to grade the progress of the course. That is, as explained by Nation and Macalister (2010), "if the starting point of a course was topics, then the units of progression would also be topics with progress through the course being marked by an increased number of topics being covered" (p.71).

Nation and Macalister (2010) classify the "units of progression" into two types: a type that progress in a definite series, such as vocabulary or grammar levels, and a type that represent a field of knowledge which could be covered in any order, such as topics. They argue that the order of items within a course is determined by pedagogical considerations and that it is important to be aware of the big gap between progress which refers to learning, and progression which refers to how the course moves forward (pp. 71-72). In line with this argument, it is possible to infer from the above finding that the unit of progression of the syllabus under discussion is based on topics/themes.

### 4.2.10. The Textbooks Writers, the Process of their Selection and their Awareness of Current Language Learning Theories

Textbooks play a crucial role in curriculum innovation as they are the first conceptualization of the syllabus that the teacher encounters. The period of curriculum change is often marked by uncertainty and insecurity for teachers because it disturbs the routines that they have built over the years (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994). Since textbooks can give teachers a sense of security and confidence as they steer their way through the innovation, textbooks can be an important agent of change. As they serve as the end product of a curriculum which both teachers and students put to immediate use so as to serve the educational goals for which they are meant, the textbooks need to be of utmost quality and/or standard, thus requiring knowledgeable and experienced designers. Based on this line of argument, likewise, the respondents were asked to reflect on the profile of the textbooks designers, the procedure through which they were selected and whether they were experienced. Accordingly, the respondents concurred that the textbooks were prepared by foreign consultants/firms who were selected through a bidding process based on their experience and/or reputation. For instance, one of the respondents gave a detailed elaboration of the process saying:

*As I have mentioned earlier the curriculum as well as the textbooks was designed by British based company called Pearson. Though I'm not certain, the selection criteria was based on their reputation and/or experience….Our (English experts at MoE) role in the curriculum design process is limited to that of reviewing, let alone editing, whether the designed textbooks meet the required standard set at the beginning….. (CE1)*

Similar view was expressed by CE2 who states that:

*Generally, the textbooks are prepared by foreign consultants…likewise, the current textbooks are written by foreign consultant firm named Pearson. I think that they were selected based on their expertise and/or experience. (CE2)*

Another respondent also substantiated these views saying that:

*So far, the textbooks are prepared by foreign experts… the current textbooks were prepared by Pearson…I think that they were selected since they had adequate experience of the task… (CE3).*

While giving an account of the currently in use textbooks, CE4 claimed that:

*The current secondary school English textbooks were written by foreign based company called Pearson…they were selected since they won the international bid announced by MoE for hiring companies that prepare the textbooks…I think that they are experienced textbook writers. (CE4)*

The literature recommends that a newly designed EFL textbook needs to be informed by current theories of language learning so that the learners get the best out of it not only for effectively competing with other students of their level globally, but also for competently pursuing further education. When giving opinion as to whether the textbook developers were aware of the current theories of language learning, one of the respondents asserted that:

*In my opinion, since they developed the textbooks based on communicative and/or learner-centeredness approach-the trend currently followed in language learning- it can be said that they are aware of current theories of language learning… (CE1)*

The respondents also claimed that the textbook developers were aware of the current language learning theories since they developed the textbooks according to the currently recommended theory of language learning – communicative language learning. For instance, CE3 stated that:

> *Yeah I think they are aware of current language learning theories since they developed the textbooks in accordance with the principles of communicative language teaching theory – the trend which is widely recommended for language teaching-learning… (CE3)*

Another informant believes that the developers have awareness of current language learning theory since they were reputed experts in the field:

> *In my opinion, the textbook developers are well aware of theories of language learning since they are among the renowned foreign experts in field… (CE2)*

The findings indicated that the EFL textbooks were prepared by foreign based consultants who were selected based on reputation and/or experience. The respondents concur that the textbook writers were aware of current language learning theory since they developed the textbooks based on the currently recommended communicative language learning theory. The fact that the textbooks were designed by foreigners indicates that there is/was lack of domestic experts who were competent enough in the area of quality textbook production. Though it is possible to infer that foreign-developed textbooks have the merit of taking into account global language learning standards and trends while designing the textbooks, it is also worthwhile to question the extent to which the designers had considered and/or incorporated local culture of the students and real-life contexts of our country while developing the textbooks since textbooks devoid of such contents may lack relevance and fail to appeal to the students when put into actual use. In addition, the contents that they learn and activities that they do need to make them think about their environment first and eventually go beyond their locality since new ways of doing things and problem solving skills can be cultivated using the local experiences that can be transferred to bigger and new problems through time.

### 4.2.11. The Procedure(s) Involved in Piloting the Curriculum and Curriculum Materials

A systematic approach to change involves a small-scale pilot phase which, among other things, aims at evaluating: (1) the sufficiency of resources including audio-visual aids; (2) the efficacy

of teachers who actually implement the renewed curriculum; (3) and the strengths and weaknesses of the newly designed syllabus and textbook. When it comes to this issue, however, the respondents concurred that there was lack of piloting/tryout during the 2008/9 curriculum renewal. According to one of the respondents, the curricular materials were disseminated without being tried out:

> *To be honest, the curriculum materials are not piloted so far. Once the syllabuses are developed and the textbooks as well as the teachers' guides are written, they will be distributed to the schools without conducting a trial process… (CE4)*

The respondent further elaborated saying:

> *Not only are the materials but also the curriculum package as whole was not tried out and/or experimented before being disseminated to the schools for implementation…teachers and students sometimes complain about the curriculum and the materials during implementation; and these complaints could have been taken into account for taking measures had the curriculum and/or the materials been piloted…these feedbacks would contribute a lot to smooth implementation of the curriculum, but they are left in veins… (CE4)*

This view was also reflected in another respondent's opinion:

> *As far as I know, the curricular materials have not been piloted so far though it is very essential for identifying the problems they might have before putting them to actual use. (CE2)*

CE2 added:

> *With regard to experimentation, I have not witnessed any curriculum piloting in our context…but I remember that a package called School Improvement Program (SIP) was initially initiated in 2006 on a pilot basis before being disseminated on larger scale. Rather than this, the curriculum is usually put into implementation without piloting. (CE2)*

Another respondent recalled the piloting of first cycle elementary English materials piloting, but not that of secondary schools:

> *To my best knowledge, only the English curriculum for grades 1-4 was piloted to some extent. The English curriculum for secondary schools was never piloted, because the practice of piloting textbooks before their actual implementation has not become norm in our country and hence no one gives it a thought. (CE1)*

CE1 further reflected on the issue saying:

> *To tell you the truth, there is no such thing as curriculum experimentation in our country…when put simply, it does not exist. Here curriculum is designed or revised at some point and it will be simply disseminated without any trial or experimentation. I remember that once JAICA informed the MoE that it is willing to conduct the tryout and asked the MoE the permission to do so, but no one considered their appeal because the trend has not been established. (CE1)*

Respondent CE3 reflected similar view as he comments on trialling of the currently in use curriculum materials:

> *The current curriculum materials were normally distributed for use without being piloted…the trend of conducting pilot studies is not established within our country so far… (CE3)*

The respondent further commented that:

> *As I've mentioned earlier, this aspect (tryout and experimentation) is not considered before implementing the curriculum on a larger basis despite its relevance in indicating potential challenges the reform might face during actual implementation. (CE3)*

It is apparent in the interview data that the curricular materials were simply distributed for actual implementation without small scale piloting/tryout and experimentation. This, on the other hand, poses significant challenge for students and teachers during the actual implementation because they grapple with the problems of the newly introduced materials which could have been detected and, hence, remedied during evaluation of the curriculum materials in a small-scale

pilot study. From this, it is possible to observe that the renewal process was ill-planned, hastily introduced and that it was divorced from on-the-ground-reality within which it takes place.

### 4.2.12. Training

Workshops, short – term trainings, in – service training/professional development and academic development are the main means through which teachers translate curriculum goals and curricular materials into classroom practice. The issues of teachers' development and curriculum development become interconnected (Bailey, 2000) in a way which assures that a curriculum is implemented as designed, such that it achieves its goals and objectives (Brown, 1995; Nation and Macalister, 2010). Following this train of thought, it has been suggested that the adoption of a new curriculum necessitates the adoption of new teaching approaches, thus requiring training support for the teachers. The importance of training teachers is to bring the new initiative to the school and implementing it with other teachers. The respondents of this study were asked whether training had been given for the EFL teachers on how to implement the renewed curriculum.

Accordingly, they stated that training of trainers (TOT) was given to teachers selected from each region with the assumption that they would disseminate the knowledge they gained to their respective Woredas/schools. In addition, the respondents claimed that the training was given by curriculum experts at MoE and that it lasted for about 5-10 days. According to one of the curriculum experts' opinion:

> *Yes, training was given as a form of TOT (Training of Trainers) to some teachers selected from the whole regions, but we are not sure whether the trained trainers had cascaded the training at the grassroots level. (CE1)*

The respondent also claimed that the training was given by experts at MoE and the EFL teachers along with regional education bureau English curriculum experts had participated on the training:

> *The training was given by English language subject experts here at the MoE…The training was not given specifically for school administrators, but curriculum experts representing each regional education bureau had participated on the training along with teacher participants of the TOT. (CE1)*

Similar view was also expressed by CE2 who asserted:

> *Whenever curriculum is revised, teachers are trained on how to implement it…the trainings mostly last five to ten days…it is given by curriculum experts at Ministry of Education (MoE)…administrators like curriculum experts at regional education bureau also participate on the training. (CE2)*

Another respondent substantiated this claim as he stated:

> *Trainings had been given for some teachers selected from each region in a form of Training of Trainers (TOT) who are then expected to disseminate the knowledge they gained to their respective woredas and/or schools…it lasted about ten days and it was given by curriculum experts at MoE…curriculum experts who are representative of their region had also participated on the training. (CE3)*

These assertions were wrapped up by CE4 who says:

> *Yes the MoE organized training of trainers for teachers regarding the implementation of the new curriculum at central level and the responsibility of disseminating the training to the teachers at grassroots level is given to regional education bureaus…it lasted for about ten days…curriculum experts at MoE gave the training. Curriculum experts representing their respective regions also participated in the training along with the teachers. (CE4)*

When asked to comment on whether the impact of the centrally initiated training had been traced, one of the respondents stated:

> *As far as I know, no one from MoE has conducted a follow-up to ascertain whether the training had been disseminated properly to all secondary school English teachers, and neither did the regions give us feedback as to whether the training had reached grassroots level because there was/is little or no cooperation between MoE and the regions regarding this issue. So we didn't know the impact of the training. (CE1)*

It is apparent from the above responses that training of trainers (TOT) that lasted 5-10 days was organized for teachers and curriculum experts representing each region though there is lack of

evidence as to whether the trained teachers and experts had disseminated the knowledge and skills they gained from the training to their respective regions/schools since neither the MOE monitored its dissemination, nor did the regional education bureaus provide feedback to the MOE as to the grassroots implementation of the training. The most positive aspect of sharing of knowledge gained through training is that it promotes increased professional interactions and collegiality among teachers, greater openness among colleagues, and more candid discussions about how they integrate the proposed change into their actual classrooms and why they need to incorporate them into their contexts. Teachers within the respective schools could not benefit from these merits where the trained teachers fail to disseminate to the schools the skills and knowledge they gained from the centrally initiated training.

However, it should be noted that briefing teachers with short sessions about the innovation will be insufficient in equipping teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes for successful implementation of the innovation As Adey and Hewitt (2004: 156) put it "real change in practice will not arise from short programs of instruction, especially when those programs take place in a center removed from the teacher's own classroom". Returning one year later after conducting a two week training sessions for English language teachers in Indonesia, Lamb (1996: 147) commented that "a great deal of our original input had simply been lost, and what was taken up was reinterpreted by teachers to fit their own beliefs and their own concerns about what was important to them and their students".

Furthermore, teacher training and development programs which depend on knowledge transmission models – as in the case under study – may not be effective in bringing about the desired change (Adey and Hewitt, 2004; Kennedy, 2005). In these models teachers often act as receivers of specific knowledge which is imparted to them by an 'expert' without taking into consideration the context in which teachers work. Acknowledging the importance of the context, Bax (2003:283) states that "any training course should make it a priority to teach not only methodology but also a heightened awareness of contextual factors, and ability to deal with them".

Thus, change does not only mean adopting new skills and practices, but it also means grappling with one's beliefs and values, and to achieve this level of change, teachers need to be given

opportunities to reflect upon their own practices. As Harris (2003: 378) explains: For teachers to learn effectively they need to be able to reflect on their own learning and internalize new knowledge. Change in the classroom therefore involves much more than acquiring new skills or knowledge. It essentially means changes in attitudes, beliefs and personal theories in order to reconstruct a personal approach to teaching. This cannot be achieved unless there are opportunities to reflect upon their practice and the practice of others.

It is also worth – noting here, therefore, that the MoE needs to see curriculum renewal as a long – term goal and/or process and, thus, should provide training for teachers on a regular basis whether by sending them to conferences or by having mentor teachers provide those trainings so as to effect the change as intended rather than simply arranging a short one-size-fits-all training since reform cannot be accomplished by having teachers learn only the surface form of reform practices. It requires grappling with the underlying ideas and may require deep conceptual change, in which teachers rethink an entire system of interacting attitudes, beliefs and practices. In other words, if change is viewed as a process, not as an event, training should be ongoing and relevant to the needs of teachers and it should be subject specific.

### 4.2.13. Challenges of the EFL Curriculum Design

According to the findings of the current study, the EFL secondary schools curriculum renewal is entangled by a number of bottlenecks. The first theme that emerged from the data analysis pertains to absence of summative evaluation on the preceding curriculum required to inform the one to be renewed. According to the respondents, the previous two curriculum reforms were not based on extensive summative evaluation. For instance, one of the respondents stated that:

> *…Out of a sudden it is decided that the curriculum needs revision and the process is initiated without proper prior research needed to justify the reason for the design/revision… (CE1)*

Similar view was expressed by CE4 who said:

> *In addition, there is lack of extensive studies on which to base curriculum reforms and this begs for question of effectiveness of the reformed curriculum since it is designed with*

*little knowledge of the on-the-ground facts that need to be accounted for before introducing change. (CE4)*

Another respondent shared similar opinion saying:

*As I have discussed earlier, our curriculum development process lacks such crucial aspects as tryout and/or piloting of both the curriculum as well as the materials…one can imagine what happens to curricular reform that lacks these steps because they indicate the strengths of the curriculum that needs to be sustained and the challenges/ailments to be remedied, thereby increasing the likelihood of success of the reform implementation… (CE3)*

The next theme revolves around the issue of monitoring of the EFL curriculum – i.e. continuous and purposeful collection of data about how the curriculum is doing. Regarding this, the findings revealed that the EFL curriculum lacks built in system for follow-up and assessment needed to ensure whether it is achieving the prime target for which it is designed. In one of the respondents' words:

*Moreover, there is no feedback loop within the system that ascertains whether or not the newly designed curriculum has achieved its purpose…this means, we do not know whether or not teachers, students and/or parents are satisfied with the newly designed/revised curriculum since there is no follow – up system in place to track the implementation status of the initiated curricular change. (CE1)*

Another respondent shares similar view as he stated that:

*The major problem, in my opinion, is the weak or loose monitoring of the curriculum… though their mandates are different, there is lack of concerted effort on the part of both the MoE and the regional educational bureaus in closely following – up to ensure the smooth running of the curriculum once it has been disseminated… (CR2)*

Moreover, the findings indicate that the approach adopted in designing the curriculum has also contributed to its flaws. In other words, the traditional top-down "one-size-fits-for-all" strategy

followed in designing the curriculum has resulted into lack of its proper implementation. For instance, one of the respondents maintained that:

> *In addition, the process of curricular design in our country is top-down which is in contrary to the current language curriculum design theories…though some teachers participate in the process; their role is minimal and therefore unsatisfactory or not effective. Nowadays it is recommended that even students and parents should be part of the curriculum design process. (CE1)*

This claim is also evidenced in the response of one of the informants as he asserted:

> *From the reforms made so far, it is possible to observe that the curriculum is developed based on top-down approach with little involvement of public and professional entities. This, on the other hand, affects the curriculum development because it fails to respond to societal needs and lacks relevance when it comes to the implementation stage. (CE4)*

One of the respondents also contends that the main factor contributing to the weaknesses of the EFL curriculum emanates from the fact that the target language (i.e. English) has not been given the appropriate concern it demands from the outset. For instance, the curriculum expert justified this notion when he said:

> *If you even consider the status of the language (i.e. English), it is deemed as a Foreign Language but when it comes to the reality of our country the curriculum is designed as English for Ethiopia. So there is a tendency to deny its status as a foreign language by labeling it for 'Ethiopia'. I think this is the reason why it is simply taken for granted as the other school subjects rather than as a foreign language that need to be internalized because students rely on it for further education since it serves as a medium of instruction starting from secondary schools… (CE1)*

Another theme evident in the interview data focused on scarce budget and human resource needed to effectively implement reforms. According to one of the respondents:

> *the other challenge of the curriculum renewal processes is lack of budget and human resource which usually affects the process of training of teachers for curriculum*

*implementation…for example, it is open secret that the teachers trained at central level (MoE) fail to disseminate the knowledge and experience they gained at the ToT training to their respective schools…had adequate budget and human resource been allocated, the training could have been implemented at grassroots levels providing the teachers with the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills so as to implement the intended reform. (CE3)*

To recapitulate, the respondents claim that the EFL curriculum renewal process is complicated by such challenges as lack of extensive research basis, top-down nature of change initiation, absence of tryout and experimentation, and weak monitoring and assessment.

### 4.3. Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

#### 4.3.1. The Experts Involved in the Renewal Process

The findings of the interview revealed that the experts who participated in the curriculum renewal process were individuals from the MoE unit formerly named ICDR and currently operating CDID. In addition, according to the result, the experts have adequate experience of designing curriculum since they are selected based on their experience. Here, it is essential to mention that developing curricula by depending on domestic experts is advantageous since they are knowledgeable of the culture and realities of local classroom contexts. In addition, since curriculum writing is a manifestation of the values, attitudes, beliefs, theories, and experience of the designers, the curriculum developed by domestic experts is likely to take into account and to respond to the needs of the society for which it is intended.

In addition, the literature recommends involvement of teachers in curriculum endeavor because if teachers get sufficient information about the proposed initiative at the initiation phase and get involved in the decision making about the adoption of the initiative, they might be more supportive of the initiative and develop a higher level of commitment as the initiative progresses. One of the most important aspects of change the literature indicates is that "teachers who have no input into the innovation will have no sense of ownership of it and, consequently, little commitment to it" (O' Donoghue, 2007, p. 74).

According to Fullan (2001), success in curriculum reform depends on informed teachers who themselves are responsible ultimately for the implementation of new syllabi, assessment practices and standards of student performance. Carl (2005) identifies two scenarios in this teacher aspect. In scenario one, they are considered partners in the process of curriculum change, and are provided with a forum to voice their concerns and the right to be to be heard before actual implementation. In scenario two, they can simply be taken to be recipients of curriculum developed by specialists somewhere, and thus their main function remains limited to applying ideas contained in the documents that arrive at school from the government. This is the top-down approach which limits teachers' ownership of what they are teaching. Prior consultation between teachers and policy planners is, thus, required to allow the two sides to be in touch with each other and with current educational practices, and ultimately, the new curriculum does not appear to be an imposition from above. Additionally, prior consultation ensures that practitioners' inputs into the new envisaged curriculum policy are included at the right time. When the formalized curriculum policy document finally arrives at school, teachers would not find it unfamiliar.

### 4.3.2. Summative Evaluation

Evaluation is a means of obtaining feedback to decide whether a curriculum has had the intended effect, to identify areas for improvement and to justify future courses of action. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1997, p. 320), curriculum evaluation "focuses on discovering whether the curriculum as designed, developed, and implemented is producing or can produce the desired results. Evaluation identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum before implementation and the effectiveness of its delivery after implementation". The practice of periodically evaluating and revising existing curricula is widely acknowledged to ensure that the needs of learners are adequately addressed. According to Nation and Macalister (2010), a summative evaluation has the purpose of making a "summary or judgment on the quality or adequacy of the course so that it can be compared with other courses, compared with previous summative evaluations, or judged as being up to a certain criterion or not" (pp. 125-126).

These issues, however, were not addressed when designing the 2008/9 EFL curriculum because the results of the interview data indicate that summative evaluation had not been conducted specifically for the EFL curricula. According to the findings, evaluation is carried out (every five

years) mainly for assessing implementation of broader policy strategies like ESDP and GEQIP which aim to expand access, improve quality, relevance, efficiency, and equity of the general education system. As a result, evaluation of the general curriculum as well as EFL curriculum is relegated to periphery and left in vain. This, in turn, poses major challenge to the education system because where the weaknesses and strengths of previous curriculum is not detected, there exists little ground upon which to justify whether the newly designed curriculum have addressed the prevailing gaps and promoted its pertinent strengths.

The three main factors crucial to the success of any curriculum are the students, the teachers, and the context. This is expressed by Leemar (2012), who writes of the curriculum development process: *'Students' satisfaction, achievement and progress. Also teachers' opinion and feedback should be considered too'* (p.42). Curriculum effectiveness should be dealt with as a dynamic continuous process that aims at development of: teachers' competencies; the learners' needs and characteristics, and the context's demands. As a result, the curriculum can be effective, in Cheng (1994) words', "if it can interact appropriately with teachers' competence to facilitate teacher performance, help students gain learning experiences which fit their characteristics, and produce expected educational outcomes, under the constraints of pre – existing characteristics such as national goals, school goals, school management, subject content, educational technology and resources" (p. 27). Within these concerns, the inclusion of an on – going evaluation process becomes a key component for the effectiveness and usefulness of this proposed curriculum to enable educators to ensure and improve the quality of the new curriculum's delivery as well as its outcomes (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001; Norris *et al.*, 2009; Christison and Murray, 2014).

### 4.3.3. The Contextual Factors Driving Curriculum Change

It is evident from the findings of the interview data that the major contextual factors that necessitated renewal of the EFL curriculum include such problems inherent in the preceding curriculum as too much difficulty of the curriculum for the students, absence of minimum competency criteria, too bulky nature of the curriculum for the teachers to cover the content within the given time frame, irrelevance to (meet) students' as well as society's needs and interests, difficulties in implementing continuous assessment, and less emphasis on problem-solving. Moreover, the curriculum renewal was also initiated in response to government policies

and strategies like Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

With regard to this, the literature purports that the beginning of curriculum change/revision lies in expression of concern with the previous curriculum and curricular practices or dissatisfaction with the *status quo* (Kennedy, 1988: 336). While discussing rationales for innovations in ELT, for instance, Cooper (1989: 34–35) distinguishes between those factors that appear to be an immediate and obvious source of dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, and the presence of less overt and tangible but potentially more important overall drivers of change – ones, for example, of a political, social, economic or scientific nature.

From this it can be understood that the rationales for the EFL curriculum revision falls into both category of factors that drive curriculum change. For instance, the fact that the 2008/9 curriculum was introduced since the preceding one did not meet the needs, obligations, and responsibilities the students as well as the society expects from the educational program indicates that it was intended to respond to an immediate dissatisfaction with the then status quo. In addition, the alteration of the purpose, organization, and structure of the curriculum to suit the social conditions justifies the widely held notion that curriculum is shaped by social conditions, and responds to social norms and beliefs – i.e. a concept characterizing the *social efficiency's* description of the curriculum to, "efficiently meet the needs of society by training youth to function as future mature contributing members of society" (Schiro, 2013, p. 5) and its approach to curriculum development that "the curriculum is purposeful, reflecting the needs of society" (Ratcliff, 1997: 13; Pinar, 2012).

Contrarily, the view that the 2008/9 EFL curriculum sought to meet students' needs and interest can be related to the *experiential* or *learner – centered* approach in which individual needs and interests are met, and student learning experience is highly emphasized. The fact that the pre – 2008/9 curriculum was reformed in a fashion that it enables the government to achieve GTP, MDG, and similar policy and strategic plans validates the notion that presence of less overt drivers of change like political, social, and economic agendas of the government necessitated the introduction of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum.

### 4.3.4. Needs Analysis

The main purpose of conducting needs/situation analysis is to devise educational goals/ objectives, to prepare course contents/materials and to design pedagogical methods that respond to the students' needs, interests and aspirations. As Richards (2007) holds "a sound educational program should be based on an analysis of learner needs." (p. 51). Needs analysis is the starting point which is usually done before, during and after the course in order to determine the course's outline, materials and resources. Any curriculum should be set up based on the students' needs and the designer(s) should be "sensitive to our learners and their needs" (Schmitt, 2000: 136) since needs analysis fines tune the curriculum to the specific demands of the learner.

In order to better study the learners' needs, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) subdivide the needs into *necessities*, *lacks* and *wants*. *Necessities* refer to the requirement of the target setting. In other words, the linguistic elements the learners need to use in the target environment. In this way, the target situation analysis comes to the fore. Determining the necessities of the target situation is one of the aspects of what the learners need to learn. The other more important issue is to know what the learners already know. By determining what the learners have at their disposal, we can identify which of the necessities they *lack*. Therefore, by studying the gap between the necessities and the lacks, we can select and teach the appropriate materials to the learners. The necessities and lacks are the objective points that are determined by the needs analysis. However, the learners themselves have their own wishes and *wants*. Therefore, any curriculum or syllabus designer should consider the learners' wants.

As Peacock (2001) argues, when the learners' needs and wishes are not considered "the results can be frustrated and disappointed students." (p. 283). Ultimately, the curriculum designers should gather enough information about the students and the course and convert "needs analysis outcomes into course content and procedures" (Lynch, 2001: 394). It is evident in the findings that needs analysis had been conducted during the EFL curriculum design by gathering data from teachers, students, directors, supervisors and parents. This indicates that the needs analysis process had identified the gap between what existed and what was actually needed (*lacks and wants*), and it seems that the process was exhaustive because it has made reference to the larger contexts (*necessity*) – like social, cultural and political – within which instruction takes place.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be commended that the needs analysis process needs to be more inclusive by involving different stakeholders who might come up with different opinions about the needs; therefore, it is crucial for employers, program developers, material and textbook writers, administrators, consultants, and academics to be in the process. Though the way of conducting needs analysis depends on the type of procedure selected, Richards (2001) advises a triangular approach, which involves collecting information from two or more sources. He lists the procedures for collecting information as follows: questionnaires, self-rating, interviews, meetings, observation, collecting learner language samples, task analysis, case studies, and analysis of available information. The needs analysis approach to be applied in our case, therefore, could provide a more comprehensive data needed as an input for the curriculum development if these multiple data collection procedures are employed.

### 4.3.5. The Source(s) and Nature of Aims, Goals and Objectives of the EFL Curriculum

Aims, goals and objectives are normally provided in the curriculum in a hierarchical form according to their degree of specificity and emphasis (Brown, 1995; Print, 1993). That is, according to Dubin and Olshtain (1986, 2000), if language learning has been influenced by the ideas of a particular philosophy of education, the major influence in shaping the course goals would be the process dimension rather than the language content or outcomes. On the other hand, when specific attainments are desired from the general goals stated during the process of shaping the curriculum, the emphasis should then be on the product and the outcomes. In other words, the objectives of a curriculum are linked to its goals and, thus, affect the language content and outcomes. The goals address general concerns of a language curriculum, whereas objectives are specific results of courses outlined in a syllabus. Goals guide materials development, while objectives serve as a guide for teachers and learners (Dubin and Olshtain, 2000).

Today's students come to the language class with different goals and demands and that this information provides helpful insights for designing curriculum and defining the objectives of a language program. Objectives have rubric significance in selecting and organizing content, teaching methods, techniques and means of measuring intended learning outcomes. Goals and objectives should be *measurable* in order to determine the extent to which the students have learned what they are supposed to learn, as stated in the curriculum's original goals and

objectives (Christison and Murray, 2014). Brown (1995) defines language program goals as "general statements concerning desirable and attainable program purposes and aims based on perceived language and situation needs" (p.71). He posits that the process of goal-defining requires the curriculum designer to consider the program's aims with specific reference to what the students are expected to be able to do by the time they leave the language program. Therefore, the curriculum should be organized around the goals of the program, which might be language and situation-centered goals, functional or structural goals, or goals related to feelings and attitudes (*ibid).* In line with this, the findings of this study revealed that the aims, goals and objectives are geared towards development of students' communicative ability in the target language.

Language program instructional objectives, on the other hand, are defined as "specific statements that describe the particular knowledge, behaviors, and/or skills that the learner will be expected to know or perform at the end of a course or program" (Brown, 1995: 73). The way objectives are formulated appears to profoundly influence nature of curriculum, instruction and language proficiency of the learners. One way of formulating the language program's goals and objectives is by considering the results that have been gathered from needs analysis and transforming them into useful statements that describe the program's purposes (Brown, 1995; Dubin and Olshtain, 2000). Likewise, the findings of this study is in consistent with this notion since it indicated that the aims, goals and objectives were designed based on the results of the needs analysis and the objectives set in the Education and Training Policy (ETP, 1994).

### 4.3.6. The Content

Content is regarded as the subject matter of the teaching/learning processes and it includes the knowledge, processes or skills and values associated with that knowledge. Making sensible and well-justified decisions about content is one of the most important parts of curriculum design (Nation and Macalister, 2010:71). Content selection is an important component of a curriculum development and clear criteria for content selection give guidance on the selection of materials and learning activities and assist in assessment and evaluation. Clark (1987) explains that an analysis of the content of a particular subject into its constituent elements of knowledge determines what is to be taught and learnt. The criteria for choosing the content is usually based

upon the function of the course/subject, the significance of the content, the interests of the learners, the type of balance in depth and breadth, and the needs of the community. Decisions pertaining to the organization of content and the presentation of new topics depend upon linguistic theories and current views in language learning. However, generally this organization is influence by the selected text and is based upon the shape of the syllabus.

The literature stipulates that the content of a curriculum should cater for the target learners' interest, motivation, age range, culture, background, learning preferences, educational expectations, and different learning styles. The content should also be accurate and up-to-date, cover comprehensive content to meet students' needs and be suitable for the local context and situation. The finding of this study is in line with these assertions since it revealed that the contents of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum were chosen based on the interest of the students, the relevance to Ethiopian life and the complementarity to what students are studying in other subjects. Likewise, this finding is in line with the suggestion of Tomlinson (1998) that the content of any material should be integrated with topics of interest to the target learner; topics which offer the possibility of learning something new, engaging stories, universal themes and local references. In addition, the results indicated that the contents were based on the criteria that they enable the students possess minimum language – learning competency required at each grade level in order to succeed both in the world of work and in the higher education – i.e. Competency – based content.

Competency – based education (CBE) emerged in the 1970s in the US and it refers to an educational movement that advocated defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable description of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course of study (Guskey, 2005). Competency Based Language Teaching (CBLT) emphasizes what learners are expected to achieve with the target language. In other words, the approach sees outputs very importantly rather than the learning process. This means, starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens. The keys to having a competency based system include developing a clear set of learning outcomes around which all of the system's components can be focused, and establishing the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all students to achieve those essential outcomes.

CBLT is based on a functional perspective on language teaching and its framework is often tailored to meet learners' needs and the language skills they need can be fairly accurately predicted or determined. CBLT also has a notion that language form can be inferred from language function. That is, course designers should accurately predict the vocabulary and structures that are possibly to be encountered in that particular situation and they can be organized into teaching and learning units. Learners are expected to meet standards framed around goals which are explicated by descriptors, sample progress indicators and classroom vignettes with discussions. Definitions of series of short-term goals are clearly given and each builds upon the one before so that learners advance in knowledge and skill.

Docking (1994) summarized what CBLT is: "it is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. The focus moves from what students know about language to what they can do with it. The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting. Instead of norm-referencing assessment, criterion-based assessment procedures are used in which learners are assessed according to how well they can perform on specific learning tasks (p.16)."

The positive consequence of implementing CBLT is that it serves as an agent of change and it improves teaching and learning (Docking, 1994). Since competency-based approaches to teaching and assessment offer teachers an opportunity to revitalize their education and training programs, quality of assessment can be improved, and the quality of teaching and students learning will be enhanced by the clear specification of expected outcomes and the continuous feedback that competency – based assessment can offer.

### 4.3.7. The Teaching Methods

It is apparent from the findings of the interview that the underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum were thought significant and beneficial to the students in terms of assisting them master the language skills for the development of their communicative competence. The interview data reveals that the EFL curriculum was designed based on communicative approach and that the recommended teaching methods can be applied in classrooms and are also helpful in achieving the objectives. The Ethiopian education policy documents and curricular materials

(MoE, 1994; MoE, 2003; MoE; 2009; ESDP IV, 2010) advocate the use of varieties of active teaching – learning methods including lecture methods, demonstrations, discussion methods, assignments, problem – based learning, project based learning, workshop practices, internships, etc. The syllabuses of the curriculum under discussion also stipulates that the teaching – learning methods are designed to encourage students' natural curiosity and appetite for discovery together with enjoyment of learning through debates, presentations, surveys, role plays, stories, projects and research activities appropriate to their age (MoE, 2009).

This is an indication that the curriculum is based on the assumptions of Communicative Language Teaching Method which emphasizes the implementation of methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events like games, role plays, pair activities, and small – group activities. The methods assume the provision of a learning environment in which learners are active participants in the classroom, and encourage learners' self – construction of knowledge rather than imposing knowledge from outside. Likewise, the recommended strategies put more emphasis on the process of teaching and learning that promotes teacher's role as a facilitator, rather than knowledge-transmitter, with the focus on maximization of interaction and cooperation among the students. Students do not learn language by absorbing transmitted knowledge but they need to practice and produce language in meaningful contexts in order to acquire it.

Undoubtedly, one of the effective ways of practicing language and involving all the learners in purposeful activities is the communicative language teaching trend. On the whole, communicative language teaching nurturing message-focused activities, contributes to learners' freedom, enhances fluency, promotes meaningful activities (e.g. tasks and projects), and develops learners' linguistic, pragmatic, discoursal and strategic competence. Johnson (2001) suggests the following activities as some of the instances of communicative language teaching: "role play and simulation, communication games (e.g. board and card games), discussion and debates." (262-263). At this juncture, one of the effective dimensions of classroom teaching is the grouping of the students (Richards, 2001). Teachers need to organize classroom activities in different groups (individual, pair, group and whole class work) in order to meet diverse student levels and tastes. Clearly, there is no single method that might be presented to be used in the classroom. In fact, Long (2001) argues that the use of methods may harm rather than help

teachers to implement classroom activities. In this regard, Brown (2000) is in favor of "an eclectic blend of tasks" (p. 179) which might suit different learners in different contexts.

When it comes to applicability of communicative language teaching methodology in EFL contexts, the literature lists various context-related factors that need to be taken into account. One of the major factors that influence the success of CLT is the context in which it is applied – EFL context in our case. Brown (1994a) defined foreign language contexts as "those in which students do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their class-room" (p. 16). Dubin and Olshtain (1986) further explored the concept and put it into categories such as language setting, patterns of language use in society, group and individual attitudes toward language, and the political and national context. Any given EFL context consists of specific and general factors in a certain English language program that directly influence how and the extent to which foreign language learners are exposed to, and acquire, a foreign language inside and outside the class-room. These factors interplay, and comprise both the condition and the provision of the language teaching program in a cultural, political, and educational situation; and these factors may hamper the likelihood applicability of CLT especially in such contexts where English is neither an official language nor the native or working language of all or part of the citizens in the society.

Another factor that affects success of applicability of CLT is the prevailing educational tradition within the EFL context. Educational tradition refers to the positive and negative heritage of education history including traditional methodology and its effect on the preconceptions and behaviors of teachers and students, administration, parents, and other associated groups. The negative side of this heritage produces some substantial obstacles and unconscious preconceptions that impede CLT. This negative side causes extra pressure in teacher training; moreover, students often take longer to become accustomed to new classroom activities, which involve different views of knowledge and learning, of teacher roles, of learner roles, and of the student-teacher relationship. Where language teaching is teacher, and textbook – centered with the emphasis on delivery of knowledge rather than learning for language competence; and where teachers believe grammar and language points are the infrastructure of a language, and their students should be able to communicate effectively if they master this knowledge (as widely reflected within our country's context), the applicability of CLT will be jeopardized.

The specific language setting also poses crucial impact on successful implementation of CLT. Language setting refers to how the target language is used in a country. It defines the availability of resources for authentic language input outside the classroom and how students use the foreign language after graduation. It could be interactive or passive. Language setting focuses on: (a) the extent of students' English input outside the classroom; (b) the language exposure; (c) the authenticity of the input; and (d) the appropriateness of the input. In our country, unfortunately, the language setting is not promising since the students get little or no input outside the classroom and, thus lack the necessary language exposure. Moreover, majority of the students have limited access to authentic language inputs like English Newspapers and Magazines, English radio broadcasts, and TV channels.

Last but not least, the characteristics of teachers and students have its own merits and demerits on the applicability of CLT. For instance, CLT teachers are required to have native or close to native language competence and a good knowledge of the culture and society in English speaking countries. Within our context, teachers encounter two specific problems with CLT.

The first is their lack of native – level proficiency in English, and since English is a foreign language, English culture is foreign to them. The second problem is a tradition of language teaching that is characterized by teacher – centered teaching, structure – based instruction, and drill repetition. EFL students may have variations in their purposes for learning a foreign language. This implies that they may have different motivations for, and attitudes toward, English learning. For CLT, student personality also plays an important role. Are the students used to learning individually or cooperatively? Are they independent or dependent learners? How adaptable are they to new ways of learning? In general, the stereotype of Ethiopian students is that of shy learners who enjoy rote memorization of grammar rules and spend most of their time sitting in the classroom emotionlessly refusing to participate in communicative activities.

Given these constraints, the literature recommends certain context-specific measures that need to be taken into account while designing curriculum based on CLT. Since one of the most common problems in implementing CLT in EFL settings stems from teachers' lack of proficiency in English, providing the teachers with professional in-service training courses is absolutely crucial. Teachers can, for example, enroll in the teacher education program to build up their English

proficiency in general, or they can join the training course to improve their specific teaching strategies and skills and learn some practical know-how such as how to deal with large classes successfully, to teach communicatively, to motivate students to actively engage in communicative activities, to design materials for communicative classes, and to overcome other difficulties in practicing CLT in their classrooms. The teacher education program may also focus on other classroom management skills, particularly skills in managing different classroom interactions tasks such as individual, pair, or group work successfully.

As mentioned earlier, the principles of CLT seem to be in conflict with the educational values and beliefs of many non-western countries. Therefore, a strong need to adjust such values and beliefs, particularly beliefs about the roles of teachers and students, is crucial for the success of implementing CLT in EFL classrooms. The traditional conception of the roles of teachers and students and their relationship in the classroom should be refined. Put it another way, teachers should no longer regard themselves as the knowledge holders who are responsible for transmitting knowledge to their empty – vessel students; however, they should function as facilitators whose main jobs are to create a classroom environment conducive for the students to learn and grow and to assist and encourage them to actively participate in classroom activities designed to develop their communicative competence.

Similarly, students themselves should be seen as classroom participants who are actively engaged in different activities and tasks rather than a group of audiences who sit still and do nothing besides listening to their teacher and making responses only when spoken to. Moreover, teachers need to promote learners' willingness to communicate in the classroom by facilitating and creating a safe classroom environment in which learners would feel more comfortable and less nervous to take the risk of speaking in front of their peers. To promote students' willingness or intention to interact with other students in the class using the target language, teachers need to consider several major variables, such as learner personality, their attitudes towards the learning situation, their motivation and anxiety level, and their perceived language competence and self-confidence, which play influential roles in students' willingness or unwillingness to communicate in the target language.

It is obvious throughout the aforementioned discussion that the central focus of language classrooms in EFL settings tends to be on the development of learners' grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, reading, translation, and test – taking skills, with little emphasis on enhancing their oral skills or communicative competence. To facilitate the implementation of CLT, increasing emphasis should be placed on learners' communicative abilities. This can be one by including more listening and speaking activities in the classroom and creating a school environment that not only fosters the development of students' communicative competence, but also evaluates it on an ongoing basis. Teachers also need to maximize fluency practice activities and minimize emphasis on accuracy. In other words, the activities have to be structured (having time limit and clear rules), appealing, and not too cognitively challenging.

Regarding the promotion and development of students' oral skills, it might be useful to incorporate Nation's (2007) four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning – focused output, language – focused learning and fluency development into the classroom. Nation explains that meaning – focused input involves learning through listening and reading while meaning-focused output involves learning through speaking and writing. Thus, the first two strands involve students in using language receptively and productively, that is, using the four macro skills. The third strand which should not make up more than one-quarter of the class time is language-focused learning, also known as "focus on form, form-focused instruction, deliberate study and deliberate teaching, learning as opposed to acquisition, intentional learning and so on" (Nation, 2007: 5). In this part, learners are introduced to activities and tasks which require them to deliberately learn language features such as spelling, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and other language elements. The last strand, fluency development, involves putting what learners already know into practice in the four macro skill areas. Put simply, fluency development is not about "learning new items", but about "getting good at using what is already known" (Nation, 2007:7).

### 4.3.8. Assessment

Assessment is one of the key factors critical to a students' success in education. The reality is that in all teaching – learning transactions, students assessment is an inevitable construct that evokes and sustains effective learning. Assessment has long been recognized as maintaining a

central position in students' learning since it has a powerful influence on the learning behavior of students. Nowadays, scholars believe that students can learn best and become effective if continuous assessment is effectively implemented in the teaching learning process. Offering a variety of assessment methods is often recommended as good practice in response to numerous critiques of the over-reliance on traditional tests. The arguments include the need to use strategies which more appropriately assess different kinds of learning processes, the need to cater for differences in students' learning preferences and styles and the need to enhance learners' psychological approaches to learning.

Educationally, continuous assessment is based on the constructivist epistemology which views knowledge as something produced through the meaningful interaction between the learner and the world around him/her; and which in turn requires change in educational practitioners' view of knowledge acquisition and competence. This, in turn, places pupils in the center of teaching-learning process where thereby making them active knowledge – constructors rather than passive knowledge – recipients and/or "empty – vessels" to be filled with knowledge poured from the "all - knowing teacher". The insights from this learning theory and other emerging educational philosophies (like cognitivism) led to a set of changes in the modality of educational system from reliance on rote-learning to emphasis on higher – order learning/thinking processes (like analysis, synthesis, evaluation, etc.). This paradigm shift in learning gave rise to a change rise to classroom assessment trolls and frequency of the assessment itself. The implication is that assessment should move away from the narrow focus on simple tests to assessment methods that address the overall development of pupils. The other area of change is the form of regularly monitoring the teaching learning process and using varied ways of assessment and providing frequent and constructive feedback on how learning is progressing rather than merely auditing learning.

It is apparent from the findings of the interview that the 2008/9 EFL curriculum is based on this internationally renowned trend of continuous assessment. This finding can also be corroborated from the data of the document analysis which asserts that the practical task of implementing the new curriculum at different educational levels (primary, secondary and university) requires continuous assessment as part of the curriculum in general and instructional process in particular (ETP, 1994). The Ministry of Education specifically contends that "a teacher is expected to use

continuous assessment to monitor the progress of students, understand the principles of continuous assessment and [identify] the varieties of techniques that can be used." (MoE, 2006:144). According to the Ministry (MoE, 2006), beyond purpose of grading or marking students' performance, continuous assessment should serve the purpose of monitoring learning progress of students, providing students with constructive feedback, identifying learning difficulties and examining effectiveness of teaching methodology.

Accordingly, every educational institution, in Ethiopia, irrespective of its level, has been using continuous assessment as a key to determine students' learning achievement and identify their learning difficulties for special supports, to improve teacher's pedagogical practices, and to improve quality of education in general. In line to this, Ethiopian Ministry of Education pinpointed that:

> An essential element of the move to personalized learning is the use of assessment for learning (formative assessment) as well as assessment of learning (summative assessment). Teachers are encouraged to use a range of assessment techniques that are appropriate to the learning activities of the students in order to fulfill the primary aim of assessment which is to support learning (MoE, 2011:119).

Undoubtedly, effective practice of continuous assessment yields great contribution in the campaign to assure quality of education. In this regard, continuous assessment has abundant purposes to serve including improvement of the teaching and learning process and motivating students to work harder, and thus, its success should be measured in terms opportunities it provides for educational quality enhancement. In light of this argument, research evidences reveal that frequent assessment and feedback is the one of the variables that contribute to better student learning outcomes and quality of education. For instance, research findings by Birhanu (2013) and Desalegn (2014) documented that continuous assessment is a good practice for improving students' performance, monitoring students' learning progress, improving methods of teaching, motivating and grading students' achievement.

Moreover, Kapambwe (2010) maintains that in addition to promoting the use of formative assessment for further improvement of quality of learning and teaching, continuous assessment serves the purpose of establishing a regular system of managing implementation of the program

or curricula. Similar notion is expressed by Arega (2014) as he claims that continuous assessment is a powerful instrument for enhancing the attainment of learning outcomes to ensure quality education and academic excellence in the education institutions. This, on the other hand, requires the need to view continuous assessment in light of assessment of learning, assessment as learning and assessment for learning. In other words, student learning should be continuously assessed and timely feedback should be given so that it is possible to capitalize on the outcome of the assessment and take possible action (re – teaching and reassessment) for better learning.

The literature on assessment suggests a number of conditions that need to be considered so as to create conducive context for successful application of continuous assessment including the focus on learning with the goal to encourage, assist and enhance learning, not to punish students who perform poorly but rather to reward students who struggle to take risk for their learning; the need to treat it as an integral part/fabric of curriculum and instruction and must be done before, during and after instruction so as to facilitate students learning; the aim at looking into students' ability to apply knowledge and skills successfully in meaningful or authentic tasks, which show their ability to use what has been learned; the emphasis to reduce competition, and increase cooperation in the classroom and should be equitable without bias in terms of race, gender, abilities, culture, socioeconomic status or language background; the need to providing students with many opportunities to learn before actually assessing them; and the consideration to include consistent and meaningful reporting (Jarolimek and Parker, 1997, and Ruddell, 1997).

It is in accordance with these notions that the Ethiopian Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR, 2004) – i.e. MoE, developed guidelines to be followed by educational enterprises within the country in order to promote successful implementation of continuous assessment stipulating that: clear guidelines/procedures and appropriate time (interval) must be put into place; the teacher must be equipped with adequate knowledge and capacity about assessment techniques; the assessment should take into consideration the actual condition, time, place and social factors of the classroom; and it needs to respond to pupils' level of knowledge and the nature of instruction (ICDR, 2004: 36). Moreover, variety of items and assessment techniques should be selected and applied; reliability, validity, objectivity and discriminating power of the assessment techniques must be considered and checked; the items should be

prepared in a clear, readable and precise language; and assessment should be well administered and its result must be recorded, documented and reported (ICDR, 2004: 36).

Here it is imperative that though setting clear guidelines for schools/teachers to implement continuous assessment in their classrooms is encouragingly a necessary condition, it is not sufficient to guarantee its successful implementation unless its practice is backed up with periodical follow – up support to ensure the required physical/infrastructural, human, economic, social, and capacity – related (in terms of attitude, knowledge, and skill) conditions are met. From a close scrutiny of on-the-ground reality of our country and a review of domestic researches on assessment theme, it appears that the MoE has left the practical applicability of continuous assessment to a mere chance since it failed to take into account the necessary conditions needed for its successful implementation.

With regard to this, for instance, the findings of the research by Birhanu (2004) indicated that proper handling of student assessment in general and continuous assessment in particular at high school level is poor and not up to the standard compared to the contemporary assessment system. This finding further revealed that the major problem in implementing continuous assessment include lack of awareness about the techniques and procedures, lack of guideline/directives in implementing continuous assessment, inadequate preparation of teachers on continuous assessment, lake of technical support, unmanageable large class size, lack of adequate learning materials, lack of adequate supervisions who can guide practitioners, lack of students motivation and learners negative attitude towards project and assignment.

Derebsa (2003), also in his research findings on assessment techniques and the implementation of a learner-centered approach indicated that with the constant focus on the right answer to on examination question, students commit a large part of their time to memorizing chunks of information, as replied by 90.3 % of the sample students because teachers mostly emphasize facts and informative in their questions for exam/tests. He further explains in his findings by saying that assessment, particularly in the form of examination, which emphasizes recall of wide range of very specific information system employed by teachers, only allows a student to pass by replaying information from lecture and textbooks. The purpose of evaluation in the learner centered learning approach is not merely to rate the learners' performance and to maintain

academic standards, but it should be used instead to encourage independent learning and critical thinking.

Moreover, a research by Takele (2012) revealed that the practice of continuous assessment is low because: most teachers concentrated on summative components of assessment as they had incomplete understanding about continuous assessment; they didn't include a variety of continuous assessment tools in their plan and did not use in the class room activities; most of the teachers considered continuous assessment as a series of paper and pencil test activities to measure students' performance; most of them considered continuous assessment as tiresome and more time consuming; and there was no continuous assessment guideline to measure practical skills. In a similar vein, Emebet (2015) found out that examinations were the most frequently used form of assessment because of such the major challenges as unmanageable class size, lack of training for teachers, teachers overloaded with work, and students' poor preparation for the proper implementation of continuous assessment.

Dereje (2019) backed up these results confirming that continuous assessment was not fully implemented by EFL teachers as desired since teachers gave more emphasis to grammar skill in assessing students' performance by using the dominant assessment tools like tests, quizzes and final examinations. With regard to challenges, there were multiple determinants that hindered the effective implementation of the continuous assessment such as teachers being overloaded with teaching duties that consume most of their time, large class size, the bulky size of textbook that consisted lessons that should be completed within the prescribed academic year, and lack of cooperation from other subject teachers during invigilation.

Given the crucial role of exams in determining what happens inside the classroom, hence, one could argue for a change in the examination system to match the aims of the proposed change. Wedell (1992:338) claims that "the success or failure of any proposed changes in teaching content and methods depends on whether the examination system is altered to reflect the proposed changes". It is clear, then, that the mismatch between assessment and the curriculum is among the factors that work against the successful implementation of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum innovations. Though it takes a relatively longer time span and a painstaking concerted effort to

address the multitude bottlenecks inherent in the practice of continuous assessment within our country, it is not too late to take some practical measures towards the betterment of the situation.

Some of these measures may include, for instance, provision of clear and understandable manuals and guidelines (which includes procedures for preparation of assessment tool) of continuous assessment for the front line practitioners including teachers, principals and supervisors; arrangement of training for teacher on how and when to assess and provide feedbacks for students, as well as practical demonstration for students on how and when to practice self and peer assessment so as to enhance their knowledge, attitude and skills of continuous assessment; more involvement of students in the process of continuous assessment so as to enable them take responsibility for their own learning, thereby developing their confidence to broaden their knowledge, attitude and skills; considerations to minimize the number of students in classrooms; continuous supervision and follow up to ensure proper implementation of continuous assessment; and consideration of motivational factors like, recognition, award and promotion for teachers to encourage and promote system – level and/or large – scale implementation of the practice, among others.

### 4.3.9. The Syllabus

A syllabus generally includes the specific details of what will be taught, how it will be taught, what competencies will be developed and how, and what learning outcomes will result at each stage/year/grade of schooling. The syllabus for each subject and each stage or year can be expected to give sufficient details for teachers to deliver the curriculum, for textbook writers/publishers to produce appropriate learning materials and for examination and assessment bodies to be able to test what has been learned. In other words, a syllabus is an outline of specific subject for a grade which shows the general objectives/learning outcomes of the subject at the end of the specified grade, or the learning competencies expected at the end of each unit, the contents to be covered in the particular grade including time allotment, the suggestion of the possible methods of teaching, the instructional materials, the evaluation and follow up mechanisms to be employed for each unit. In syllabus development, subject syllabi are organized after the preparation of the subject matter content flow charts that breakdown the major content areas into detailed components. This makes it easy for the selection of contents without omission

of the fundamentals of the subject and help planners maintain the criteria of continuity, sequence, scope and depth of the contents including balance in the curriculum organization later.

Though the literature on language teaching lists various types of syllabuses, the most common ones include: structural syllabus (focuses upon the systematic and rule-based nature of language itself prioritizing the workings of the subsystems of phonology, grammar, lexis or morphology); notional-functional syllabus (concerned with the analysis of language in use and with the relationships between the language code or textual system and how people behave with language in social groups in certain social situations); topic – theme based syllabus (the experiential content of the learner provides the point of departure and it is usually derived from some fairly well defined other subject areas in school curriculum such as science); skills-based syllabus (based on the assumption that in order to become competent language-users, the learners have to acquire the basic language skills and skill – based syllabuses are organized around these language skills); task-based syllabus (known for its representation of communicative competence as the undertaking and achievement of a range of tasks, its direct reliance on the contributions of learners in terms of the mobilization of the prior communicative competence which learners bring to any task and its emphasis upon the learning process as appropriate content during language learning); and process syllabus (focuses upon how something is done rather than the mere provision of a plan of the knowledge of language as subject matter to be worked on).

Theme-based syllabus is one of the types of content-based syllabus. Content refers to the subject matter students learn through language, which is used as a tool to convey the learning experiences (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Content – based instruction can be explained as the teaching of the content or information in the language being learned without any effort to teach the language itself separately from the content (Khranke, 1987). In other words, it is the integration of particular content with language aims. Being the most frequently adopted form of content – based syllabus, theme – based syllabus can be described as the syllabus in which "the teacher selects a theme from which language outcomes are to be realized" (Met, 1999: 8). The course is formed around themes and the material used in the classroom provides basis for language analysis and practice. Therefore, themes can be chosen in accordance with students' interests, needs and aims. They are considered as a source for meaningful and contextualized

activities. The topics can be chosen from a wide variety of contents which will lead students to expand their background and integrate themselves into the course easier.

Theme – based syllabus is organized in two ways. The first way is organizing the syllabus with unrelated topics like sports, literature, and business and this way is more preferable for students coming from different backgrounds. The second way is defining one major topic as title and attaching some subtitles to it. For instance, sports can be taken as the main theme and the syllabus can be organized around it by adding some subtitles such as extreme sports, popular sport, Olympics and etc. When viewed from these perspectives, the contents of the 2008/9 curriculum materials were organized based on the first way. The grade 10 textbook, for instance, deals with different themes divided into twelve units: Unit 1: Sport and Fitness, Unit 2: Health – First Aid, Unit 3: I like Reading!, Unit 4: Moral Education and Personal Responsibility, Unit 5: Advertising, Unit 6: Drugs, Unit 7: Natural Disasters, Unit 8: Education, Unit 9: Seas and Rivers, Unit 10: Energy, Unit 11: Applications for Jobs or College, and Unit 12: Births, Weddings and Funerals.

The most powerful argument for popularity of topic – theme based syllabus lies in its providing a natural setting for language learning. Learners focus on the topics that they can experience in real life, so they have intrinsic motivation to participate in the course and need to be involved in purposeful, meaningful real life activities (Met, 1991; Snow and Brinton, 1987). Moreover, like all other aspects of learning, language learning values the meaning most and degree of meaning depends on how it serves for the needs of the learner. Krashen (1985) suggested comprehensible second language input as the main element of successful language learning. He claims that successful language acquisition is possible when instruction focuses on meaning rather than form. Crandall (1993) also claims that successful language learning is possible when there is a sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful use of language and thematic instruction is good strategy for it.

Crandall (1987) also provided another significant theoretical support for theme-based instruction as he suggests that students may develop communicative competence to some extent, but they may not achieve more abstract, formal, contextually reduced language of texts, lectures, discussions of science or mathematics, or social studies. As a result, a course organized around

themes can create an environment surrounded by communicative elements like background information, visual or contextual cues and equip students with the skills to reach the level required for academic language proficiency. Moreover, Genesee (1994) favors theme – based syllabus maintaining that since the themes or topics can be chosen in accordance with students' needs and interests, it is possible to build the teaching on background knowledge of learners. He emphasizes that learning becomes meaningful when learners apply their already existing schemata and skills into new learning situations. As students make use of their existing schemata, learning becomes more meaningful and comprehensible facilitating the progress in linguistic, cognitive and academic skills recursively. This situation also decreases anxiety, increases motivation and self-esteem (Kasper, 1995).

The findings of the interview revealed that topic – based syllabus was selected with the view that it maintains students' interest and motivation of getting engaged in the teaching – learning activities. This finding is in consistent with the literature which purports that topic – based syllabus promotes the students' continuing interest in the topic since it provides a way of organizing the syllabus which many teachers and students find attractive, and precisely because it does not insist on the teaching of language for its own sake, but to use it in the service of interesting subjects. The inclusion of such topics would ensure the active participation of the learners who now become involved in debates, discussions and decision-making. The topic syllabuses thus emphasize the process and the quality of learning and the knowledge acquired is contextualized. Since such syllabuses allow for curricular integration, co – operative learning and widening of classroom activities, students benefit greatly from these merits.

### 4.3.10. The Textbooks

Textbooks are the most important instructional materials used in Ethiopian schools for the teaching and learning activities. Students' textbook for a subject describes what a teacher is required to teach in a particular subject, provides the materials to which reference can be made by students before the lesson and for self-learning, saves the students form mechanical note taking in class, helps the teacher interpret and delineate the syllabus and course of study, is a means to cultivate desired attitudes and values, and serves to disseminate knowledge. The process of syllabus development, the preparation of students' textbooks and teachers' guides

require thorough knowledge of the subject matter, pedagogical, psychological, sociological knowledge along with strong belief in curriculum localization, current global practices and the trends. This has become so important because the dominant contemporary philosophies of education, the global trends and thinking about curriculum and curriculum planning process in diversity demand to go along with time. When it comes to textbooks, the findings of the interview indicate that the textbooks of the 2008/9 curriculum were designed by foreign British based company named Pearson.

The textbooks' contents are prepared by considering the preset learning outcomes and their preparations need textbook writing skills, good knowledge of pedagogy and psychology of learning, where the support of specialists in the preparation of the texts is needed to achieve the diverse educational objectives. According to the literature, the question of the author's competence is largely answered through an examination of her/his product, i.e. the textbook. When it comes to the issue of the competence of the textbooks designers, the findings of the interview reveal that the designers have adequate experience and expertise. This is further substantiated by the findings of the interview which indicate that the textbooks designers are aware of current theories of language learning since they designed the textbooks based on communicative language teaching theory.

It is worth mentioning here that not only are current theories of language learning important elements for curriculum design, but also the observation of teachers' practice and intuition as well as the research of language teaching and learning give valuable guide to course content decision-making. Hence, textbook designers need to use the knowledge obtained through research, as it is reliable and can clarify language learning processes and acquisition.

### 4.4.11. Tryout and Experimentation of the Curriculum and Curriculum Materials

The next stage in the development of a curriculum is the preliminary try out of the drafted syllabus, students' textbooks teacher's guide, manuals and worksheets will be distributed to sample schools. Tryout or pilot test can serve as a trial run for the curriculum and can help determine if any adjustments or adaptations to implementation plan are necessary and can also reveal unforeseen challenges that might arise during implementation. During the tryout stage, the curriculum developers carefully observe the teaching – learning process in the classroom

situation. They employ a variety of formative evaluation instruments. Tests and worksheet activities will be conducted. The developers encourage both teachers and students to point out any problems or difficulties encountered in using the materials in the program. This is tried out in carefully selected sample schools to find out any weakness in the curricular materials. The purpose is to improve them on the basis of the feedback. At this stage, every instructional material will be tried out and revisions are made for further testing in larger sample schools. In addition, pilot testing provides the opportunity to determine if more time and/or resources need to be spent on particular aspects of the curriculum.

According to the findings of this study, however, tryout and experimentation systems have not been incorporated into the process of the EFL curriculum design. It seems that the curriculum planners and textbooks designers did not anticipate potential problems that could complicate success of this innovation in the absence of tryout. For instance, on the basis of a study of a large number of different types of innovations, Rogers (1989) identified trialability - the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis – as one of the set of innovation characteristics likely to enhance or reduce the possibility of adoption. In addition, the literature documents trialability as among the factors that engender positive teacher attitudes towards innovation because classroom evidence of the success of innovation is considered a powerful force in creating positive teacher attitudes. Since teachers are at the sharp end of educational innovations, it is axiomatic that applicability of the innovated curriculum be demonstrated to them through piloting so as to affect their attitude which plays a significant role in the adoption, reinvention or rejection of the new curriculum.

The literature recommends that EFL curricular materials should be properly and extensively piloted in a local context before use so that the teacher's notes and suggestions for use, or accounts of how the textbook has been used or tested in the classroom can be incorporated during the publication. Absence of piloting appears to be problematic because at the first glance, curricular materials may seem appropriate for a particular student population, but after using it as a course material for months, teachers and students may discover deficiencies of the materials. At this point, teachers' thoughts and beliefs about the efficacy of the materials are important, as they are the only group in classroom settings who can evaluate the features of the materials in a professional as well as localized way.

At certain stages of the curriculum pilot testing, only teachers who are involved in delivering the new materials can make a beneficial or meaningful contribution towards its evaluation, whether by testing the materials themselves, comparing them with previous materials or making use of their previous experiences in this field and with those of their students. The teachers' observations in class are equally important as they can gain information about the teaching methods used in implementing the materials and measure and monitor how efficient each method is in increasing the students' skills. They can also ascertain which points and methods need to be changed or modified. Teachers' observations about the curriculum content can also be beneficial in determining the appropriateness, depth and the structure of: the topics; the language skills; the grammar; the vocabulary, and the communication skills which need to be covered. The teachers can also advise about the supplementary material needed to enhance the students' knowledge of certain features of language. By involving teachers in the process of curriculum evaluation, they can play an active role, that may facilitate achieving a better understanding of the learning and teaching processes. Therefore, the curriculum needs to be piloted since putting it into large scale implementation without piloting may put its effectiveness at risk, and since problems that would have been remedied after piloting could manifest during the actual implementation.

### 4.3.12. Training

There is a longstanding recognition in the literature that to effect change, curricula need to directly address teachers' learning and professional development. The importance of appropriate professional development is stressed in bringing about curriculum change and how it can be expected to go a long way towards helping teachers to understand and commit to the proposed changes. The results regarding training of teachers indicate that the two groups of respondents hold differing views. According to the interview data, the training of trainers had been given for teachers and curriculum experts representing the regional education bureaus so that they would disseminate the training to their respective secondary school (teachers).

From these findings, it can be inferred that the teachers and experts trained at the ministry level may not have transmitted the knowledge they gained as intended and according to the findings of the interview the experts who initiated the training at the top level appear to have disregarded ascertaining whether the training had been implemented at grassroots/school level. Moreover, the

results indicate that neither the English Unit at the Ministry conducted a follow – up regarding dissemination of the training, nor did the regional education bureaus give feedback regarding the implementation of the training.

The fact that the training initiated at the top – level did not take root as envisaged could be attributed to the weakness that lies in the dissemination process – the cascade approach. Cascade systems have been criticized for offering diluted training the further one progresses down the cascade and the lack of take – up at grass-roots level may be a function of the lack of consultation with teachers by policy makers in the initial stages of curriculum. Teacher training and development programs which depend on knowledge transmission models may not be effective in bringing about the desired change since teachers often act as receivers of specific knowledge which is imparted to them by an "expert" without taking into consideration the context in which they work.

In order to ensure the continuation of proposed changes, therefore, there is a need of exposing teachers to continuous training programs because, without sufficient training and support, even teachers initially enthusiastic about the change may become frustrated and turn against the project and revert to the security of their previous teaching methods. In other words, there is a need to enhance teachers' understanding of the theoretical and practical assumptions of the curriculum reform through organizing context-based continuous professional development program as opposed to top – down, one – shot and transmissive mode of training. One of the most productive means of achieving this is through engaging the teachers in a reflective approach of professional development which models the methods and principles advocated by the reform. In essence, this means that if, for example, an activity-based, learner-centered curriculum is to be introduced in schools, the training methods used on courses for both trainers and teachers should model this activity – based and learner – centered approach. Without such reflexivity, it is likely that teachers will see a divorce between their own training and the innovative practice they are being asked to implement in the classroom.

### 4.3.13. Challenges of the EFL Curriculum Renewal Process

The findings of curriculum expert interview indicated that the EFL curriculum renewal was entangled by certain bottlenecks. One of the major issues pointed out by the respondents is lack

of research/evaluation basis to determine students', teachers' and society's needs before initiation of the curriculum design process. Making changes in any area of the educational setting initially requires the identification and evaluation of the current situation. There is an agreement within the literature that summative evaluation is essential to establish a foundation for curriculum development, and is a crucial step in any curriculum design endeavor.

According to the findings of the interview data, there was no proper monitoring and follow – up system to track the process, progress and impact of the renewed curriculum as well as the training of teachers. No matter how well – planned an educational initiative is, the leaders of curricular change should expect concerns and problems that people may experience while being engaged in the change process. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) noted that implementation failure can be explained by inability of change – initiators to adequately supervise the implementation process. Louis and Miles (1990) recommended constant monitoring of the change process to identify the problems when they first appear in order to act accordingly. The formal methods for monitoring may include surveys; informal methods include interaction between change leaders and people implementing the initiative. The resulting information should lead to consulting and assisting implementers.

As a continuous and purposeful collection of data about how the curriculum is doing, curriculum monitoring need to be practiced in order to ensure that the curriculum is performing as intended, that the curriculum innovation is sustained and that ongoing adjustments are made whenever defects are detected. Regarding this, Hall and Hord (2010) warned that quite often the change effort might be lost when the change leaders fail to routinely check the progress of the initiative implementation and address the concerns and problems of the implementers. If the leaders monitored the progress, they would be able to collect data from teachers about their needs and concerns and plan some interventions and design some strategies to address implementers' needs and concerns and to pave the way for curriculum successful implementation.

The researchers of educational change warned against punitive purpose of monitoring, stressing that monitoring should be used to identify teachers that needed additional help and provide that help in a timely manner. Monitoring and checking on how the implementation is going would signify to the implementers a continuous interest of school leaders in the initiative progress and

that the implementers' efforts are "worthy of notice and support" (Hall and Hord, 2010, p. 150). The efforts of administrators in keeping the hand on the pulse of the initiative might help increase teacher buy-in and commitment to the initiative.

The top – down process of change without incorporation of voices of the end – users including teachers was reported to be another source of challenge. The fact that teachers, students, parents and other educational players are typically given no choice with respect to their participation in an externally derived, top – down change effort significantly affects success of the reform. Given the arguments for control and cost-efficiency, there is a natural tendency on the part of the government to centralize curricular change. Paradoxically, however, too much centralized control impedes the implementation of change and innovation, and stifles the development and creativity among teachers and learners (Kennedy, 1996).

Decentralization, in opposition to centralization, is commonly characterized as leading to participation, relevance, ownership and (hence) increased commitment and motivation from those implementing the change, in our case, teachers. However, just as over-control can lead to rigidity, so too much decentralization can result in chaos (Kennedy, 1996). It is preferable if the two dimensions can be managed together in a state of flux to suit the context and purpose of the innovation. For instance, a national team may take responsibility for the development of materials, provision of resources, teacher development, and evaluation, and for generally providing a coordinating role, while the periphery (at the level of the school or groups of schools within an area) designs or adapts materials, and conducts staff development and teacher training, both of which are carried out as "close" to the classroom as possible.

Regarding top-down change process, Hall and Hord (2010) discussed the role of mandates in the change process maintaining that despite being criticized for being ineffective due to their top – down orientation, mandates can work very well. "With a mandate, the priority is clear, and there is an expectation that the initiative will be implemented…when a mandate is accompanied by continuing communication, on-going learning, on-site coaching, and time for implementation, it will work" (Hall and Hord, 2010, p. 15). For the initiatives to succeed, therefore, mandates should be supported with all the needed interventions during the change process.

The findings also pointed out to the downplayed significance of English language as another area of weakness that contributed to deprivation of the attention it needs by treating it simply as a subject to be taught rather than as a language to be developed and internalized. It is worth mentioning here that despite the significance of English language as the lingua franca, its status and/or role among the general Ethiopian people's daily lives is still insignificant. But this fact should not be taken as an excuse for depriving it of the needed concern since the students need it later in life in the world of work and/or in their pursuit of further education. Therefore, there is a necessity to seriously reconsider promoting conducive curriculum design procedures that take into account the significance of the language in this globalized world as well as the role it plays in shaping prospects of the students within this broader context.

### 4.4. The Curriculum Development Model Underpinning the 2008/9 EFL Curriculum

Based on the premise that EFL curriculum is not an independent entity that exists without its precedent policy context, there is a need to elaborate, discuss and analyze the Education and Training Policy (ETP, 1994) of Ethiopia upon which the secondary school EFL curriculum was based.

#### 4.4.1. The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy vis-a-vis the Secondary School (EFL) Curriculum

So far, different reforms targeting the social, economic, and political sectors in Ethiopia were introduced with the changes of government regimes. In a similar vein, when a change of government had taken place in May 1991, a reform was automatically begun with consideration of changes by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in such aspects as peace, stability, democratization, and liberalization of the economy. It was apparent then that towards the end of the collapse of the socialist Derg regime, the education quality had become severely affected with accessibility and equity to educational opportunity being among the major problems of the then education system (Solomon, 2008). In addition, the education system was divorced from practice, the contents were largely restricted to abstract book learning, and the curriculum was less capable of solving the problems of the country (MoE, 2002).

Due to these dissatisfactions with the education system in general and the curriculum in particular, the necessity to bring about reform was quite apparent when the current government led by EPRDF assumed political power in May 1991 (Seyoum, 1996: 22). Having established a Transitional Government, the EPRDF continued to inculcate its ideological and philosophical foundations to serve as underlying assumptions for a series of national policies including the Education and Training Policy that was issued and published in April 1994, though a de facto policy had been in operation since 1992 (Areaya, 2008: 56).

The two main policy guidelines in place for reforming the education sectors were: a) a policy guideline produced based on the Charter adopted by the 'Conference for Peace and Democracy' in 1991; and b) 'The Education and Training Policy' which was adopted in 1994. Before the adoption of the new Education and Training Policy, major provisions of the policy guidelines were produced based on the charter adopted by the 'Conference for Peace and Democracy' in 1991 (EHRCO, 2003:27):

I. Amharic as medium of instruction would continue in the areas where it is the mother tongue;
II. Afan Oromo, Sidamigna, Wolayitigna and Tigrigna would be used as a medium of instruction as of 1991/92. [Latin script was chosen for Afan Oromo, Sidamigna, Somaligna and Wolayitigna while the Geez script was retained for Amharigna and Tigrigna].
III. Studies would be carried out on the use of other nationality languages as a media of instruction as soon as possible, while, in the meantime education would be offered as in the past.
IV. English would continue serving as a medium of instruction for junior and secondary education, and it would be taught as a subject as of grade one.

Based on these guidelines, the translation of the Amharic textbooks used in Elementary schools into the above languages was made through the ICDR. Two major criticisms were forwarded by EHRCO (2003: 27-28) on this task. First, the decision made on choosing the Latin script "has totally deprived a large number of people in all regions of the benefits of literacy gained in the campaigns carried out during the previous military government." Second, although curriculum

development and textbook writing require skill and experience, the translation work was carried out without any prior investigation of the previous constraints that were to be encountered during implementation.

Although modification or adjustment of curriculum development was necessary, it was felt by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) to make a paradigm shift of objectives, contents, mode of delivery, structure, evaluation, etc. of education. To this end, the Education and Training Policy was introduced in 1994 with the aim of addressing problems reflected in the education sector of the country which include: i) the irrelevance of the curriculum with clearly defined objectives; ii) the high emphasis given for theoretical knowledge with little connection to da-to-day life; iii) the domination of rote – learning; iv) de – emphasizing problem – solving; v) the overcrowding of schools; vi) the scarcity of instructional materials; vii) insufficient training materials; viii) the high emphasis given to the centralization of education; ix) ignoring the issues of relevance, quality, accessibility, and equity (TGE, 1994: i). A few writers had also identified other problems including "The schooling system in Ethiopia undermined many Ethiopian cultures and imposed cultural values of a single dominating 'national culture' upon the others." (Teklehaimanot, 1999: 6).

With the intent of overcoming such problems, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia made the following major changes: a) decentralization of the education system; b) the use of nationality languages as media of instruction; and c) adopting a new structure of education. The Education and Training Policy consists of objectives of education and training, overall strategy and education areas of special attention and action priority (ETP, 1994). Likewise, the ETP (1994) stipulates that the general objectives of Ethiopia's education and training are to:

1. Develop the mental and physical potential and problem – solving capacity of the individual;
2. Bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely;
3. Bring up citizens who are endowed with democratic culture and discipline and who respect human rights, stand for the wellbeing of people as well as for equity, justice and peace;

4. Bring up citizens who can differentiate harmful practices from useful ones, who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetic and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society;
5. Cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and social needs. (TGE, 1994: 7-8)

In order to achieve these general educational objectives, the ETP (1994) divided the educational organization and/or curriculum into two major groups where each group accommodates a different educational mission and values, despite attaining the same national overarching goals: General and Specialized or Vocational Education. According to MoE (2000), the general education fulfills the basic educational needs and includes all aspects of learning and prepares the student for pursuing subsequent specialized education. On the other hand, the special or vocational education prepares the student to engage in junior, medium, vocational and higher level education and vocational skills (MoE, 2002). In order to achieve the goals set out by the policy, the curriculum emphasized the teaching of English, mathematics, the natural and social science subjects that will prepare students for specialized education and training.

The structure of Education indicated in the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia is 8-2-2 (MoE, 1996: 95). The primary education consists of 1-8 grades and this is sub-divided into two cycles of Basic Education (1-4) and General Education (5-8). The cycles following the primary education are the general secondary education 9-10 and the preparatory/senior secondary education 11-12. The first cycle of primary education concentrates on functional literacy and that of the second cycle on preparation for secondary education. The secondary school first cycle continues subjects taken in primary school with the purpose to provide general education that will enable the students to identify their needs, interests, and potential; to enable the students to continue further education and training; and to prepare students for the world of work. The secondary school second cycle continues the natural science and social science streams with the intention of enabling the students to choose subjects or areas of training; to prepare them for higher education and the world of work. The medium of instruction as indicated in the Language and Education Section of the ETP is as follows (TGE, 1994: 23-24):

a) Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality language.
b) Making the necessary preparations, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own languages or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.
c) The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area.
d) Amharic shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication.
e) English will be the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education.
f) Students can choose and learn at least one nationality language for cultural and international relations.
g) English will be taught as a subject starting from grade one.

In an effort to materialize the ETP, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) granted the MoE the practical responsibility for developing the education policy of the country as of the Proclamation no. 41/1993 which stated that the Ministry shall have powers and duties to:

- formulate the country's education policy and strategies and, upon approval follow up and supervise their implementation;
- determine and supervise the implementation of the country's educational standard;
- determine the educational curriculum offered at the level of Senior Secondary Schools, higher education institutions…(TGE, 1993: 237)

The policy constitutes a number of components such as educational governance and finance in addition to curriculum development as its aspects of translating policy into practice. Likewise, every curriculum framework as well as school practices, legislative bodies, curriculum stakeholders and communities observed and pursued this policy. Subsequently, the MoE established the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) which had three coordinating departments and nine teams with the mandate of developing the curriculum. In planning the curriculum, the working committees (ICDR) encompassed the statement of ETP

1994 and stated explicitly in the curriculum framework the appropriate overarching goals of secondary education which include to:

a. enable the students to identify their needs, interests and potential so that they can choose their field of study;
b. enable the student to continue further education and training;
c. prepare students for the world of work;
d. prepare students for higher/tertiary level education. (ICDR, 1994a:4)

Based on these policy directives and goals, a new curriculum was developed and implemented in different languages where over 20 languages were employed as medium of instructions depending on the objective realities of the regions (MoE, 2002: 8). The responsibility of developing the flowchart and syllabus was given to the Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR). Based on the approved syllabus, developing the textbooks for primary education (1-8) became the responsibility of the regions while the responsibility of preparing textbooks and teachers' guides for grades 9-12 rested on ICDR.

The ICDR, then, translated these general goals into curricular materials and prepared the secondary school program that encompassed delineation of subjects taught, period allotment, syllabi development, and textbook and teachers' guide development. This started by translating the goals into training profiles at various levels and these profiles represent the goals to be achieved on completion of a level and type of education in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes considered necessary for a given type of training or education. The subjects delineated to be taught in the secondary level are: Languages (English, Amharic, and regional languages), Mathematics, Natural Science (Physics, Chemistry, and Biology), Civic and Ethical Education, Social Science (Geography, History, and Civic Education), and Physical Education. Furthermore, the preparatory secondary school (11-12) students learn additional subjects of Basic Business, Economics, Information Technology, and Basic Technical Drawing based on the streams of Natural and Social Science. Likewise, the ICDR (1993: 32) adopted a working framework for the Ethiopian secondary education curriculum development which encompasses 12 processes/steps. According to this model, the of the general secondary education curriculum development the following steps:

***1. The Education and Training Policy***

***2. Goals and Profile at each cycle***

***3. Preparation of flow-chart***

***4. Designing draft syllabus***

***5. Revising and endorsing the draft syllabus***

***6. Preparation of textbooks, teachers' guide and other reference materials***

***7. Field trial and testing of standard***

***8. Improving materials based on findings of evaluation***

***9. Orientation workshop to introduce new materials***

***10. Nation-wide implementation***

***11. Summative evaluation***

***12. Curriculum renewal or change***

Following the development of the curriculum, such schemes as national and regional workshops, short-term training, in-service training, and teachers' academic development were devised for practitioners to translate the national educational goals and its curricular materials into classroom practice. Likewise, the ICDR assumed the responsibility of disseminating and introducing the innovations and/or curriculum changes to secondary school teachers by adopting a cascade approach. In an effort to facilitate successful implementation of the curriculum, the government developed the first five year education development program in 1997 – the Education Sector Development Program I (1997/98-2001/02). This was the outset of a series of the ESDPs which has continued to be updated for the subsequent 20 years. The objectives of the ESDP I were to improve the quality, relevance, efficiency and equity of education and to expand educational opportunities, and mechanisms of sector – wide approach dialogue and joint review were established to follow – up its progress.

Following the initial trial program of the new education curriculum, implementation took place at two grades every year since 1996. The new curriculum of secondary education was planned to be implemented as of 1999/2000 at grade 9 and continue to be implemented every year at every grade up to 2003. On the basis of this schedule, syllabus and learning - teaching materials were developed and follow – up studies and evaluation schemes were made while the curriculum was on trial in the experimental schools. Formative and summative evaluations were made on the implementation of the curriculum package (See the Executive Summary Reports of ICDR, May 2002, March 2004, and June 2005). Some of the findings on the First – Cycle (9-10) secondary education curriculum revealed that: students scored far below average (35.8%) on profile attainment test, which is below the expectation; regarding the quality of curricular materials some of the objectives stated were not realizable, the instructions for exercises were vague, the language was difficult for the students, the assessment techniques and activities lacked variety, the allotted periods were inadequate to cover the content, and the pictures, the charts and the diagrams lacked clarity, etc.

The findings of the second cycle (11-12) secondary education (Preparatory education) revealed that the overall profile attainment of the students was below 50%; the curriculum materials had such limitations as lack of stating objectives clearly, lack of sequencing contents logically, failure to use simple and clear language in the textbooks, absence of applying appropriate methods in relation to active learning, etc. Some of the recommendations forwarded in the same study include (ICDR, 2004: 49-5): i) users conference to be held annually separately for each subject at different times as one way to include participation of stakeholders in the development of the curriculum; ii) a continuous review of the decentralization of the curriculum to be conducted in order to identify the strength and weakness of the policy, and to suggest solutions to its improvement; iii) the need for supplementary materials to enrich the curriculum; iv) a research on textbook writing in accordance with the development level and maturity of the students; v) teaming up experienced teachers and writers for writing textbooks; and vi) the need for thematic units that will help teachers develop integrated unit plans. These factors taken into account, likewise, the Ministry of Education planned revision of the curriculum where the following factors were considered (ICDR, 2004): i) Discussing the formative and summative evaluations of the curriculum as well as the findings gathered from teachers, students, parents, and others by the help of focus groups; ii) gathering opinions and comments of prominent

people, representatives of civic society, and pertinent organizations; and iii) gathering comments and suggestions of professionals to improve the syllabus.

With these factors taken into consideration, revision of the curriculum was initiated as of 2003/4 academic year. This revision, between 2003 and 2005, mainly focused on re-arranging the content and including current issues of concern such as civics and ethical education, gender, HIV/AIDS education, and other government policies and strategies (MoE, 2009: 1). However, analysis of research carried out by the General Education Curriculum Framework Development Department (GECFDD, formerly ICDR) indicated that "there are major drawbacks in the present curriculum, notably a lack of relevance of some of the content, problems in the assumed methodology of teaching, as well as difficulties in the implementation of continuous assessment" (MoE, 2009). The findings of the research also evidenced that contents of textbooks, which follow the subject syllabuses in the curriculum are highly overloaded and often conceptually too advanced. Moreover, although the policy advocated a student-centered approach, the teaching learning materials do not promote this method. As the result of these, the Department concluded that "For our curriculum to address effectively the needs of both society and the individual and bearing in mind the crucial issues of poverty reduction and sustainable development strategies, Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a major revision was felt to be necessary" (MoE, 2009).

To this end, the MoE (2010) developed the Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education which outlined ways to address these deficiencies, based upon international good practice in terms of curriculum design and teaching methodology. The 2010 revision was primarily intended to make the school curriculum responsive to international economic and social realities, national democracy and gender equity (MoE, 2010). The features of the newly developed 2010 curriculum were the changes from the objectives – based curriculum to the competency – based curriculum with the aim of developing the three domains of (1) affective, (2) cognitive, and (3) psychomotor abilities of the students. The development of a Curriculum Framework has enabled the MoE to revise basic curriculum documents in line with the Competence Based Approach. These include Minimum Learning Competence materials (MLC) for pre-primary, primary and secondary education up to grade 12, content flow charts, syllabuses and quality textbooks for all

subjects (MoE, 2010: 20). To this end, the following issues have been taken into account in the new curriculum:

(1) The existing syllabuses contain too much to be taught in the time available. A revised syllabus must show an appropriate reduction in content.

(2) Some of the content of the existing curriculum is too difficult for the grade in which it is to be taught and the overall content is not arranged in order of difficulty both within and across grades. A revised syllabus must address these problems.

(3) The existing curriculum is not sufficiently relevant to the lives and needs of students. It has been suggested that this contributes to the high dropout rate of students from primary education particularly from rural communities. A revised syllabus must better reflect the needs of students from both rural and urban communities.

(4) The existing curriculum was not thought to give sufficient emphasis to development of values. Each revised subject should identify subject specific skills to develop.

(5) The existing methodology of teaching lacks active methods of learning where the students involved. A revised syllabus must introduce well-structured and wider range of activities.

### 4.4.2. The Top-Down Process and/or the Objective Model of Curriculum Development in Ethiopia

The issue of the model of curriculum development revolves around the two well – known policy terms of top – down and bottom – up approaches. Currently, there is much debate on whether curriculum development should be based on either top – down or bottom-up approach. The Top down approach is sometimes referred to as the Power – Coercive Strategy (Nation and Macalister, 2010) and it is applied in situations where change is initiated by governments or authority. The top – down approach is said to be applicable in highly centralized systems, it involves less time for planning and management, and it does not consider a collaborative approach, consequently, it is good for those in power but not for recipients of change. Critics argue that a disadvantage of this approach is the issue of ownership because change imposed

from outsiders seems to be contentious, particularly if practitioners interpret the change concept differently.

The bottom-up approach for change, on the other hand, is a collaborative effort that is initiated by concerned peoples living with issues. This approach is not only concerned with the adoption of innovation but equally emphasizes the development processes of individuals involved in the change. Thus, teachers can, for instance, apply action research in their classrooms through strategies designed to enhance their professional development. This approach can also be perceived as the opportunities of each school to develop its own teaching – learning system and/or curriculum which gradually aggregates with others to be a common educational system for the nation.

When it comes to the nature of curriculum renewal within our country, it is evident from the findings presented thus far that the process is entirely based on top – down approach since the curriculum renewal was planned and/or initiated at the top/center i.e. the MoE where aims, goals, objectives, content/syllabus/textbooks, teaching methods were pre – determined, and then diffused and/or prescribed to the bottom/periphery i.e. the schools. Here it is vital to note that the unidirectional straight line administrative structure that connects every school with the central government puts the applicability of bottom-up approach questionable to the Ethiopian context.

In addition, the limited capacity of the bottom in terms of resources and skills jeopardizes the feasibility of bottom-up strategy within our country. However, top – down approach does not necessarily mean everything is negative since changes initiated at the top could effectively achieve the desired outcome if managed properly and if it takes into account/reflects the reality, needs and interests of those at the bottom. Though the renewal process of the EFL curriculum followed the top-down approach, it is possible to argue that it has attempted to account for the needs and interests of the bottom since the process was based on needs assessment practice.

With regard to the curriculum development model, the literature presents the objectives and process models of curriculum design as the dominant models used in most education systems of the world. The objectives model of curriculum development is based on predetermined behavioral objectives and assumes education as a means towards end. The process model, however, assumes development of a curriculum to be done without starting by pre-specifying the

anticipated outcomes of that process in the form of objectives. When examined from these perspectives, the steps and procedures followed in renewing the EFL curriculum depict the objectives model of curriculum development. Tyler's (1949) four basic questions could best describe the nature of the EFL curriculum:

*1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?*

*2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?*

*3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?*

*4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Tyler 1949, p. 1)*

Likewise, the 12 steps of curriculum development adopted by ICDR (1993: 32) as a working framework for the Ethiopian context can be dubbed another version of Tyler's (Product/Objectives) model of curriculum development.

In a similar vein, it is apparent from the findings of the document analysis that the Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID) (of the MoE), which borne out of the former ICDR through the recently introduced concept of Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), adopted the same traditional 'top – down' approach followed by its former counterpart i.e. ICDR with little or no input from the 'bottom' while introducing the 2008/9 curricular change. According to the mandate given to it, "…the Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID) of the MoE develops the curriculum framework of the government, and the secondary curriculum; and the regions develop the primary curriculum based on the framework…"

The data from the document analysis further reveals that the directorate, in line with the development plans and education policies of the government, (1) conducts needs assessments with the regional government, (2) revises the old curriculum and develops syllabuses, teachers' guides, and minimum learning standards, and (3) the region validates (for the primary) or sensitizes the finalized version (for the secondary). This data from the document analysis substantiates and corroborates the findings of the interview **(See section 4.4.1.)** that as part of the curriculum development process, the CDID overlooked steps ***7 (Field trial and testing of***

***standards)*** and ***8 (Improving materials based on findings of evaluation)*** of the procedure employed by the former ICDR.

Although efforts have been made to realize the intent of the Education and Training Policy (1994), the cultural aspect in the development and implementation process of the curriculum was equivocal. In light of this argument, Amare Asgedom (1998) indicated that the implementation of the "Education and Training Policy (1994) – which aims at making curriculum relevant by considering cultural factors – will not, however, be easy as the inherited curriculum was developed on the model of modernization which requires a completely radical approach to make operational the intent of cultural synthesis of curriculum development and implementation." Similarly, Kassaye (2005, 2014) argued that despite some attempts made to incorporate culture into the curriculum, there is no systematic way of considering it in the curriculum development.

Contrary to the MoE's claim that experts from different organizations have been actively involved in drafting the policy and that discussions were made on the draft policy involving teachers, some authors claim that, to date, there was little or no national debate in the country's educational endeavor. With regard to this, Solomon (2008), for instance, claims that the process of ETP (1994) formulation did not imply a democratic process and neither was it based on intensive research and/or formal needs diagnosis. He justifies this notion by further asserting that the researches conducted during the preceding regimes including the Education Sector Review (ESR) and Evaluative Research of General Education System in Ethiopia I (ERGESE) served as sources for diagnosing the problems and needs of the country, and subsequently for the formulation of the current policy since there was no study undertaken by the MoE as a basis/an input both for the ETP (1994) and the corresponding curriculum development endeavors. Based on similar line of argument, therefore, Nardos (1998) recommends that such a policy should be considered as a dynamic and evolving instrument that could be improved through periodic evaluation and review by all stakeholders.

On the other hand, Lemlem (2010) and Yayeh (2017) studied the Ethiopian education system, the curriculum development, and implementation endeavor being the means to realize the intentions of the education system and came to the conclusion that there is a state of decline in terms of quality in education. Lemlem (2010) attributed this to factors related to curriculum

development and implementation endeavors including organization, administration, provision, staff quality, evaluation system, academic freedom, and political control of the education system. According to Yayeh (2017), many educational institutions have no formal administrative unit responsible for curriculum design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Moreover, the vacant positions which required curriculum professionals are not staffed with curriculum specialists (Yayeh, 2017).

According to the research by JAICA (2012), though curriculum development specialists and teaching staffs of teacher training colleges have received international trainings, the following are pointed out as issues of the curriculum of Ethiopia: "the mismatch between the curriculum and instructional time, and the over-complexity of the curriculum" and "(even teachers) do not understand the concepts" (WB, 2008a). Moreover, the findings indicated that school heads and teachers do not understand the curriculum or Minimum Learning Competencies developed at the federal level, and some schools have no syllabus. Furthermore, the study revealed that the National Organization for Examinations (NOE) and the regional curriculum bureau continue to implement examinations to assess only cognitive skills even when the national curriculum moves to competency based (JAICA, 2012). In the ESDP-IV, it is stated that improvements were not seen in students' performance in National Learning Assessment (NLA) and there is an urgent need to take measures to improve students' achievement.

### 4.4.3. The Theoretical Approaches and Orientations of the 2008/9 EFL Curriculum

More children than ever before in Ethiopia have access to education, and knowledge and understanding must be made accessible to them. This means that what and how they learn needs to be approached in a way that allows children from all backgrounds and with different abilities to develop as fully as possible and achieve to the best of their ability. The curriculum framework (MoE, 2010) stipulates that traditional teaching methods such as rote-learning and memorization have their uses and may enable some students to pass exams and gain certificates, but they do not necessarily lead to understanding and the ability to apply knowledge successfully to meet the challenges of modern society. Research suggests that memory improves with understanding and that to remember something for a long time one needs to give it meaning. According to the framework (MoE, 2010) the greater the number and complexity of things to remember, the

greater the need to have meaning. A successful curriculum achieves a balance between theory and practice, and encourages the use of a variety of teaching and learning methodologies so that different learning styles are accommodated and learners are given opportunities to consider, verify and practice what they learn in order to give it maximum meaning (MoE, 2010).

This Curriculum Framework adopts the principles of Active learning and a competency-based approach to education as the most flexible means to achieve the desired changes. Research indicates that children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process through participation, contribution and production. Key words for active learning are: ***doing, observing, and dialogue***. ***Doing*** refers to learning activities where the student actually does something: e.g. conducting experiments, conducting investigations and interviews, discussion or debate, role playing and simulation activities and case studies. ***Observing*** occurs when the student watches or listens to someone else doing something: e.g. the teacher giving a demonstration or an example, a film about agriculture, a visit to a factory. Reading is also a form of observing: e.g. reading a story about illness. ***Dialogue*** implies an interactive exchange. This can be with others: e.g. the teacher, small discussion groups, visiting experts and letters or emails. It can also be with oneself (reflective thinking): e.g. asking yourself what you feel or think or have understood about what you are learning or what you still need to find out about it.

The document further contends that modern teaching methods recognize that there is a need to give students the chance to think about what they are being taught or what they are learning. This means that it is essential that teachers do not spend whole lessons talking, but plan in opportunities for class discussions in which students can exchange ideas, resolve misunderstandings and make sense out of what they are listening to, or engage in a variety of different activities which give them the opportunity to construct meaning for themselves out of the information they are receiving. This approach is based on the constructivist theory of teaching and learning, which underpins the concept of competency – based education.

In the Framework, competency is taken as the capacity of learners' to apply knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in independent, practical and meaningful ways. Modern teaching and learning approaches emphasize the development of students' competencies in all curriculum areas. Each competency is the outcome, or result, of a specific learning experience or set of

learning experiences. The outcome itself is an overall competency made up of one or more contributing competencies.

Competencies describe the genuine abilities of students to demonstrate that they have understood the concepts and have developed the required skills and values. Competencies emphasize the transfer of learning. When a student is competent in a particular area of learning, he/she has not only mastered the ability to carry out an action but also knows why he/she is doing that action and when to employ it. Using this approach, students should become more active participants in their own learning through exploring, observing, experimenting and practicing rather than simply being passive receivers of knowledge. This Curriculum Framework aims to encourage flexibility in teaching and learning methodologies and strategies and will require a shift in teachers' thinking to enable them to include a variety of more appropriate activities to enhance students' participation in their learning.

Current theories of multiple intelligences state that different children may learn better through different modalities – visual, auditory or kinesthetic. For example: students with a strong visual memory might learn best from pictures, those with a better auditory memory from listening and talking, and those with a strong kinesthetic memory might learn better by physically interacting with the information they are presented with. This theory provides a theoretical underpinning for using a wide variety of methods for teaching.

However, cognitive scientists believe that since most memories are stored as meaning rather than in terms of whether you saw, heard or interacted physically with the information; teachers should focus on the best modality for presenting the content rather than on the students' varied best modalities for learning. Students with good auditory memory may be able to learn the correct pronunciation of foreign languages quicker than others. Those with stronger visual memory may be better at visual tasks: e.g. memorizing where countries are on a map of the world, and those with good kinesthetic memory may be better at sport or quicker to develop good handwriting. But most of what students are expected to learn is based on meaning and, however the information is presented, the student must extract meaning from it.

Thus, if the teacher wants students to remember what something looks like, the presentation should be visual rather than a verbal description. Similarly, a science experiment should be

physically conducted, ideally by the students in groups, rather than read about or given as a lecture. Many topics may require a range of information presented in a variety of modalities. For example: a Social Studies unit on war could demand reading, listening to lectures from the teacher or a visiting speaker, watching a film, visiting a battle site or museum, looking at maps or old pictures, interviewing old soldiers, making models of weapons, and so on.

The way in which information is presented can influence the effectiveness of a given lesson for all students in the class. The teacher's aim should be to present the information in the most appropriate and effective way possible. The modality matters in the same way for all students, regardless of their own preferred learning styles. Whichever of the two schools of thought the teacher prefers; there is the same need to use a variety of modes of presentation and activity. The new Curriculum Framework for Ethiopian kindergarten, primary (Grades 1–8), general secondary (Grades 9 and 10) and preparatory (Grades 11 and 12) levels follows the above principles and has been prepared considering international best practice. The principles will serve as guides in the subsequent development of curriculum materials across all grade levels.

It is apparent from the above discussions revolving around the curriculum documents that the 2008/9 secondary school EFL curriculum was based on competency – approach unlike the preceding ones which were predominantly objectives – based. The term competence pertains to such aspects as ability to do something, ability to select and use knowledge and skills, ability to possess certain attributes and ability to perform at a needed level or standard in the world of work. Mulder (2001) offers a comprehensive definition of competence saying that it:

> "…is the capability of a person or an organization to reach specific achievements. Personal competencies comprise: integrated performance oriented capabilities, which consist of clusters of knowledge structures and also cognitive, interactive, affective and, where necessary, psychomotor capabilities, and attitudes and values, which are conditional for carrying out tasks, solving problems and more generally, effectively functioning in a certain profession, organization, position or role" (p. 120).

Core competency can be broken down into two forms, namely domain-specific and general competencies. The former is associated with groups of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the profession while the latter is linked to the skills needed to help the core competencies in

performing the tasks. The term “life skills” is generally attributed to the latter skill, indicating their importance in supporting today’s lives.

Competency – Based Education (CBE) was mainly introduced with the aim of producing “work-ready” students by equipping them with the essential skills and competencies needed to effectively function in the world of work. This, as a result, gave rise to the development of curriculum based on competency-philosophy whose goal was to bridge the gap between educational processes and employment through incorporating professional competencies into the curriculum design. Since the principle of curriculum arrangement is not the disciplinary content, but professional competencies that should be acquired by the end of the program, the curriculum design can be said to follow what Richards’ (2001) calls ‘backward’ process of curriculum development.

Competency – Based Language Teaching (CBLT) is a teaching approach which focuses on the outcomes of language learning with the emphasis on what learners are expected to achieve with the target language. In other words, the approach sees outputs very importantly rather than the learning process. This means, starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens. The keys to having a competency-based system include developing a clear set of learning outcomes around which all of the system’s components can be focused, and establishing the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all students to achieve those essential outcomes.

In the context of English language teaching, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the application of the principles of CBE to language teaching results in the Competency – Based language teaching (CBLT). Griffith and Lim (2014) assert that CBLT requires that rather than being taught in isolation, language should be connected to social context. The ability of learners to demonstrate what they can use with the language to communicate effectively characterizes the core principles of the CBLT (Paul, 2008; Wong, 2008, Richards and Rogers, 2001). CBLT, according to Docking (1994): 1) is designed around the notion of competency, not the notion of subject knowledge; 2) shifts the focus from what students know about language to what they can do with it; 3) applies the curriculum framework, syllabus specification, teaching strategies, and

assessment to achieve competencies; 4) uses criterion-based assessment procedures in the learners' assessment instead of the norm-referenced ones in which learners are assessed based on how well they can perform on specific tasks.

Well-designed competencies, according to Griffith and Lim (2014), have several characteristics. Firstly, the description of the specific knowledge and skills which is applicable to complex and new situations is necessary. Additionally, the knowledge should be useful for students‟ whole lifetime, so that students must be able to obtain values beyond classroom. Secondly, there must be clear performance criteria in each competency, allowing students to identify their weaknesses and to find ways to improve them. Finally, as non – explicit tasks and criteria will likely to cause possible failure, the competency must be personalized since this will avoid difficulty in specifying what needs to be done what competencies have been achieved.

A new approach to teaching in which classes must be student-centered is required in CBLT. Classes must be student – centered emphasizing what tasks students can carry out and the ability to recall the previous information is not sufficient to measure competence. In the context of English language teaching, identifying errors in writing or reciting grammar rules is not adequate to measure competence. Instead, competence is demonstrated by students' ability to achieve specific tasks that they are likely to have in the real situation using the target language (Griffith & Lim, 2014).

In the context of language learning, CBLT requires teachers to apply learning models related to student-centered learning, namely: 1) small group discussion; 2) simulation and role plays; 3) discovery learning; 4) self – directed learning; 5) cooperative and collaborative learning; 6) contextual instruction; 7) project – based learning and 8) problem-based learning. As pointed out by Sturgis and Patrick (2010), the use of student – centered learning modes shifts the teacher's role from one of being an information-giver to that of a facilitator. This does not mean that teachers must not act as information giver; instead, they deliver the information in different ways. Paul (2008) says that as facilitators, teachers are responsible in providing materials, creating activities and providing students the opportunities to practice what they have learnt. Hence, as Paul (2008) points out, the authenticity and quality of the learning materials are crucial to the success of the class. To function their roles as facilitator, teachers should devote a large

amount of time to creating activities related to the specific competencies which are important to meet the competency – requirement (Griffith and Lim, 2014).

The learning modes used to promote student – centeredness in CBLT have several advantages. For instance, Barkley (2005) suggests that role plays improve the self-development of the students through discussing and reflecting on their activities. Additionally, Carol (2007) argues that role plays contribute to the improvement of students' learning and teamwork skills. Along the same lines, there is a consensus that the role play is effective in leading students to improve their understanding of what they have learnt. The positive consequence of discovery learning is that learners are more likely to understand concepts provided they discover the concepts by themselves as opposed to those which are directed by teachers (Bruner, 1961). In self – directed learning, students' initiatives such as planning, executing and assessing their own learning are encouraged (Holec, 1981). Johnson and Johnson (1989) suggest that cooperative learning, in the form of whole group discussion, is effective in helping quiet students and enabling them to be more active and sociable. In contextual teaching, Miller (2006) suggests that the learning process is active and socially engaging others. Through project-based learning, instead of simply being informed with facts and information from their teachers, students become active learners, using reasoning and discussion for problem solving (Eyring, 2001). Problem-based learning encourages students' autonomous learning with students confronting real life problems.

#### 4.4.3.1. The Language Theory: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The 2008/9 EFL curriculum promotes *functionalism* which relies on language as a system of communication facilitated by a systematic exposure to the target language. In this respect, it emphasizes an *interactive view* of language, that is, its meaningful use in interaction, *contextual learning*, *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1971) and *fluency*. It favors *free language production* through simulations, communicative and mediation activities focusing on meaning, information processing, actual language use with a goal of communication and on the *negotiation of meaning* which concerns the way learners encounter and grapple with several communication difficulties.

The Curriculum Framework, for instance, purports communicative language teaching as the core teaching method and defines it as "The approach to language teaching is communicative and

skills based: students learn and practise language which is meaningful to them and which has a real purpose and context. For this reason the focus is on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing…Language is about communicating with others and learners are encouraged to interact with each other in a variety of patterns: pairs, groups and plenary (MoE, 2010).” The above statements imply that teachers can develop any language methods and techniques to enable their students achieve the sole purpose of ‘communicating with others’. Nunan (2004) argues that CLT is assumed to be unitary, but in reality consists of a family of approaches. Furthermore, not all those approaches represent CLT in the same way. Similarly Johnson (1989b) argues that CLT, though it has broadened the repertoire of teaching techniques, does not offer a principle basis for selecting a particular set of techniques that can clearly guide methodology and syllabus designers for selection among them. The Syllabus did not contain more detail about CLT, only describing it as the teaching of language for communicative purposes with a learner – centered approach.

Although the EFL curriculum did not state clearly that oral skill is most important, the language used in the syllabus did accentuate the practice of oral skill, as can be seen from the above statement. Communicative competence according to Hyrnes (1967, as cited in H. D. Brown, 2000, p.246) is "the aspect of competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts". Therefore, teaching for communication is not only about speaking skill but the ability to negotiate meaning. As Williams and Burden (1997) add, Vygotsky focused on the use of language in all its aspects as a tool in both bringing meaning to and obtaining meaning from learning activities, not only in speech but by sign and symbol. This interpretation of CLT of curriculum developers and stakeholders as equivalent to oral skill development is generally accepted in the ELT area. Internationally most people value the teaching of speaking skill over the other three skills (White, 1988; Lee and VanPatten, 2003). Modern language educators nowadays question this interpretation as well as the CLT itself and argue that CLT promotes talk that is mostly limited to the language classroom. As stated in the literature, English language education in the 21$^{st}$ century should move forward to the development of critical literacy approach to ELT that is the promotion of powerful language users who are capable of coping with vast information, capable of criticizing ideologies and the power of influences on communities and society (Wallace, 2002).

#### 4.4.3.2. The Learning Environment

The issue of practical/actual implementation of the CLT in English language education in Ethiopia has been of central concern since its introduction into the curriculum, especially given the problem of real/authentic language environment for the students to enhance their skills. This is similar to what Freire (1998, p.36**)** asserts - "an 'intimate' connection of any school curriculum and knowledge . . . is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals". From the analysis of the suggested learning environment in the EFL curriculum document, we see that despite the focus of ELT on relating English to the real world, the suggested learning resources and materials do not appear to accentuate the necessity to provide various authentic inputs to language learning.

For instance, other than vaguely proclaiming that "…students learn and practise language which is meaningful to them and which has a real purpose and context" (MoE, 2010), the EFL syllabus does not explicitly indicate the kinds of "real purpose(s) and context(s)" in which the pupils will be engaged. Moreover, despite implying and/or hinting that "The third column [of the syllabus] contains activities and resources for the teacher to use with students to facilitate learning of the corresponding content/language items and build up the corresponding competencies. The resources that are needed are included in the activities" (MoE, 2010: VIII), the curriculum and/or the syllabus developers did not basically state in the manual the type and nature of "learning resources" made available for teachers and learners. The two concrete instances of learning environment and learning resources suggested by curriculum/syllabus developers are the one that reads "The activities are also designed to encourage students' natural curiosity and appetite for discovery together with enjoyment of learning through ***debates, surveys, games and stories*** appropriate to their age" (MoE, 2010: V), and "…Under reading and writing, the language content also contains the text type (such as ***sentences, paragraphs, newspaper article, story, descriptive passage*** etc.) the students will be working with" (MoE, 2010: VIII).

It is evident in these suggestions that a classroom environment is deemed to be enough contexts for learners of English to engage in learning the language since real world and/or authentic examples/scenarios of communication the students are likely to encounter in their out-of-classroom daily life are not provided, at least, in the syllabus. There is a need, therefore, for

curriculum and/or syllabus developers to incorporate authentic real-life learning environment and learning resources likely to be found in the surrounding environment such as tourist spots, cable TV, satellite TV, movie galleries/cinemas, international news broadcasting, social-media network sites like Facebook, WhatsUp, LinkedIn, etc. and embassies such as those of the United States of America, Britain and the like. Because of the focus on the oral communicative skill practice, these learning environments can be seen as ideal places where real spoken language can be met. Real situations and authentic environments are not only related to these, but rather the learning environment involves auspices of everyday communication which includes every contact possible to send and receive messages and then to discuss them.

#### 4.4.3.3. The Learning Process: Progressive education

The emphasis on 'the learning process and the learners' in the secondary schools curriculum framework presents a view of progressive education that sees learning as a dynamic process that is not limited to the sphere of imposed knowledge outside the learner's repertoire of experience (Dewey, 1963; Kilpatrick, 1993). Rather, it aims to expand the learner's view of the world and of reality by allowing learners to engage in real and authentic learning according to their interests (Dewey, 1963; Kilpatrick, 1993). Progressive education also influenced views about subject matter in the development of the curriculum, hence the application of knowledge to human problems and affairs, to interdisciplinary subject matter, activities and project work.

According to the progressive movement, the role of teachers is as facilitators, and learners are active participants within and beyond the classroom environment. Within this view, learners are empowered to take charge of their own learning, incorporating their own needs at all times and acknowledging that learning is for their life time or part of lifelong learning. This process of teaching and learning allows learners to construct knowledge based on their own interest with the guidance of teachers, and to cooperatively negotiate meaning of the world through self-reflection and with peers and teachers. This process is based on the belief that providing learning opportunities in this way gives learners more freedom to draw upon their own intrinsic values and attitudes toward education rather than being oppressed by education (Charlesworth, 1988). Here, it worth noting that three major progressive views of education are found in the 2008/9

Ethiopian secondary education curriculum: the learner-centeredness conception, the social progressive or social-reconstruction conception and the concept of learning by doing.

## I. Learner-centeredness conception

The 'learner-centered approach' in learning reform places learners at the heart of education as opposed to the 'teacher-centered approach' that sees learners as passive recipients. In addition, education development in Ethiopia reflects the constructivists' belief in teaching and learning that should at best emphasize how learners learn rather than what the outcomes are. In the Curriculum Framework "A learner – centered approach" is proposed that if learners are given opportunities to think for themselves, do and create, with teachers providing an ambiance conducive to learning, these opportunities will best facilitate the learner's learning on their own. The Framework stressed that the 'learning process' means learning how to learn rather than learning the content of various subjects. To illustrate this, for instance, in the Curriculum Framework it is stated that:

> This Curriculum Framework adopts the principles of Active learning and a competency-based approach to education as the most flexible means to achieve the desired changes. Research indicates that children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process through participation, contribution and production. Key words for active learning are: ***doing, observing, and dialogue***. ***Doing*** refers to learning activities where the student actually does something: e.g. conducting experiments, conducting investigations and interviews, discussion or debate, role playing and simulation activities and case studies. ***Observing*** occurs when the student watches or listens to someone else doing something: e.g. the teacher giving a demonstration or an example, a film about agriculture, a visit to a factory. Reading is also a form of observing: e.g. reading a story about illness. ***Dialogue*** implies an interactive exchange. This can be with others: e.g. the teacher, small discussion groups, visiting experts and letters or emails. It can also be with oneself (reflective thinking): e.g. asking yourself what you feel or think or have understood about what you are learning or what you still need to find out about it (MoE, 2010).

This view of student-centeredness can be further evidenced in the English syllabus for secondary education which contended that "The syllabus demonstrates practical implementation of active learning and learner-centeredness" and further elaborated this claiming that:

> With all the skills students should be encouraged to work on activities in a variety of interaction patterns: pairs, threes, small groups, larger groups and plenary. For listening and reading activities students should check and compare their work together, practising their English as they do so. For reading, students should read aloud in pairs and small groups rather than reading silently. The skill of writing is as much about process as product. Indeed Secondary English follows the six stages of writing model (think/brainstorm, plan, draft, check, rewrite, proofread) and students must be encouraged to follow this model both individually and in pairs/groups for every writing activity (MoE, 2009: IX).

### II. Social - reconstruction conception

While learners learn at their own pace and are capable of self-development, the learning process should also encourage learners to be active and involved members of the society, rather than just passive factory fodder. This represents the views of social progressive education (Langford, 2005, p. 131) or social-reconstruction. These principles are contained in the statement of the Framework which stipulated that:

> …modern teaching methods recognize that there is a need to give students the chance to think about what they are being taught or what they are learning. This means that it is essential that teachers do not spend whole lessons talking, but plan in opportunities for class discussions in which students can exchange ideas, resolve misunderstandings and make sense out of what they are listening to, or engage in a variety of different activities which give them the opportunity to construct meaning for themselves out of the information they are receiving. This approach is based on the constructivist theory of teaching and learning, which underpins the concept of competency-based education (MOE, 2010).

In his argument in favor of a social progressive education, Professor of Medicine, Dr. Prawase Wasi states that it is essentially a shift from focusing on subject matter to human beings or learners involved in social issues. He further states that

> "Society at present is interconnected, highly complex and undergoing rapid change. Human inability to face such complexity and fast movement and change has led to an inevitable crisis. In other words, people are unable to cope with difficulties arising from poverty, unemployment, stress, violence, drug addiction, HIV-AIDS, accident, conflict, crime, environmental degradation etc.; as a result, stability and harmony in their way of life and society cannot be attained. Education through rote learning or focusing on subject matter will not enable us to face and cope with these problems. The academic world in fact differs entirely from the real world. Focusing on subject matters divorces learning from the realities of life and complexities of society with its rapid movement and changes" (Wasi, 2000, p.1).

As can be seen from the preceding extract from the curriculum framework, the curriculum represents this perspective and encourages language learners to be skillful problem-solvers, problem-posers, active citizens and responsible members of society in their future lives.

### III. Learning by doing

It is apparent from the Framework that the recommended active-learning process involves "learning by doing". It is not surprising that "learning by doing" is promoted in Ethiopian education because it is an essential learning principle that focuses on the process of becoming to know as such in progressive education (Nunan, 2004). The analysis of the document, for instance, shows that learning occurs when learners have practiced what they learned and/or that the learning process means 'what students should know and be able to do'. The following statement about the learning process is included in the curriculum framework:

> Research indicates that children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process through participation, contribution and production. Key words for active learning are: ***doing, observing, and dialogue***. ***Doing*** refers to learning activities where the student actually does something: e.g. conducting experiments, conducting investigations and

> interviews, discussion or debate, role playing and simulation activities and case studies. ***Observing*** occurs when the student watches or listens to someone else doing something: e.g. the teacher giving a demonstration or an example, a film about agriculture, a visit to a factory. Reading is also a form of observing: e.g. reading a story about illness. ***Dialogue*** implies an interactive exchange. This can be with others: e.g. the teacher, small discussion groups, visiting experts and letters or emails. It can also be with oneself (reflective thinking): e.g. asking yourself what you feel or think or have understood about what you are learning or what you still need to find out about it (MoE, 2010).

Again, when "learning by doing" is interpreted in a limited way into the practice of language skills, there is a risk that what students should know and be able to do is graded in behavioral objective terms that may promote habit formation, rather than a process of coming to know. Furthermore, the interpretation could be, for example, an emphasis on ***should know*** and what the learner ***should be able to memorize.*** In other words, the policy statement emphasizes the progressive approach, but in practice the learner may experience a reconstruction approach that values skills development rather than the learning process.

#### 4.4.3.4. The Teaching Approach

When it comes to teaching approach of the EFL curriculum, the Curriculum Framework explained that:

> Current theories of multiple intelligences state that different children may learn better through different modalities – visual, auditory or kinesthetic. For example: students with a strong visual memory might learn best from pictures, those with a better auditory memory from listening and talking, and those with a strong kinesthetic memory might learn better by physically interacting with the information they are presented with. This theory provides a theoretical underpinning for using a wide variety of methods for teaching.

In addition, the syllabus stated that:

> Learning strategies (or study skills) are the skills students need not only to improve their competency in English and therefore their ability to access other subjects through the

> medium of English, but also to improve their ability to learn generally. The aim of developing learning strategies is for students to understand how they learn and ultimately for them to become independent learners. The syllabus for grades 9 and 10 also incorporates activities which aim to improve generic study skills such as being aware of their individual learning styles and time management.

It is hoped that this focus on learning strategies in English will help students to cope with the English speaking environment at secondary school as well as give them vital skills for future studies in any subject.

Moreover, according to the syllabus:

> The approach to language teaching is communicative and skills based: students learn and practise language which is meaningful to them and which has a real purpose and context. For this reason the focus is on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grammar, vocabulary and social expressions are integrated into practice of these skills. Language is about communicating with others and learners are encouraged to interact with each other in a variety of patterns: pairs, groups and plenary. The activities are also designed to encourage students' natural curiosity and appetite for discovery together with enjoyment of learning through debates, surveys, games and stories appropriate to their age.

As can be seen from these extracts, the list was influenced by numerous major international developments in ELT such as: theoretical and practical developments in communicative language teaching (Nunan 1988; Johnson 1989; Van Lier 1996), Task-based Learning (Skehan 1996), learner styles and strategies (Oxford 1990). Another example of recent language learning trend is the whole language approach which is theoretically based on constructivism and neo-constructivism that emphasizes learners as the center of learning and the organization of learning which allows learners to integrate subject matter and life skills.

Within this approach, project – based learning, task-based learning and cooperative learning are preferred teaching methodologies. These methods shared basic principles of progressive education that are based on Dewey's "problem solving as a method of instruction" (Gutek, 2004:

74), process – based, interdisciplinary, and tested in action. The methods assume the provision of a learning environment in which learners are active participants in the classroom, and encourage learners' self – construction of knowledge rather than imposing knowledge from outside. In other words, the methods were categorized in the learner – centeredness perspective and social reconstruction perspective rather than early movement of social-economic efficiency perspectives. This generally indicates the tendency for indiscriminate adoption of Western learning theories and foreign language teaching and learning theories into the curriculum.

From this list it is possible to witness that it contains learning theories and an exhaustive list of approaches to ELT, teaching methods and techniques that are important fundamentals of good language teaching practice. Learning theories generally express the fundamental thinking about teaching and learning; they are a broad set of ideas of how one views learners, learning, subject matter, classroom environment, etc. Richards (1990) states that the word 'approach' indicates which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified. He also suggests that teachers can improve the quality of language teaching by referring to general principles and theories concerning how languages are learned, how knowledge of language is represented, and so different approaches result in different methods despite their connectedness and reliance on one another.

When it comes to the EFL curriculum, both the Curriculum Framework and the Syllabus recommend that teachers may choose a method/an approach they find comfortable or they may not be able to choose because they may find that some approaches are not relevant to language learning. This circumstance, however, may jeopardize the applicability of the 'active – learning' methods given our country's context where the traditional 'teacher – centered' approach is still the most popular and the widely practiced method by majority of the secondary school teachers. With the majority of Ethiopian English language teachers having less familiarity with and/or little experience of using 'active – learning' methods in their classrooms, the choosing of methods will become complicated and frustrating as a result of indecision about what they should choose as the proper methods for curriculum implementation.

Even though there is much being done in the area of Ethiopia's foreign language teacher's development, most teacher development programs focus mainly on the development of a

teacher's language knowledge, and hands – on tips and activities in classroom. A training program that focuses on long term professional development, reflective practices and a teacher's education has not been greatly evident in the government's teacher development programs. The provision of training programs that emphasize the development of language knowledge over professional development implies that teachers with a good knowledge of language can teach the language which, in principle, is similar to the traditional grammar translation method. This method believes that learners who master language knowledge can use the language in real life situations, but that is not likely to be the case. However, the traditional method is not welcome anymore as a major part of Ethiopia's education in the reform period. So, what kind of teacher training should there be? The curriculum designers would surely agree that teachers should be trained in the same way as the learners are to be educated (Hooks, 1994).

#### 4.4.3.5. Analysis of Learning Assessment

An examination of the EFL curriculum manual shows that learning assessment focuses on continuous assessment, a method of assessment that comes from the teacher's observations of student's ongoing performances. That is not a one – off test, but rather on going evaluation on the process of learning. This suggestion coheres well with the concept of promoting the learning process if authentic assessment can be carried out well within the clear meaning of ELT with clear understanding of the meaning of knowledge, learner, learning, and society. On the other hand, the assessment itself influences all those meanings of knowledge and how the learning should be. As Luke and van Kraayenoord (1998) state it is seems obvious in curriculum theory that practice and what counts as knowledge are influenced by the assessment system. A test is one of the influential factors in the success of any language program. As Johnson (2001) 'states, if teachers perceive learning assessment is based on an observation of the learner's growth, then language teaching and learning may well be perceived the same way.

#### I. The Linear Approach and National Testing

The EFL curriculum development took a linear approach to curriculum design and, as a result, the test was left to be discussed at the end. Despite the introduction of a continuous assessment that coheres with the overarching curricular goals and theories, as discussed previously, how the assessment is implemented realistically is not critically discussed. It is the responsibility of the

National Organization for Examination Agency to design the national test. Therefore, matters such as how critical thinking and problem solving take their place in the examination is quite uncertain as this type of assessment is not included in the national level, despite the movement having been initiated long before.

In this regard, for instance, a research conducted by JAICA (2012) confirmed that "The National Organization for Examinations and the regional curriculum bureau [will] continue to implement examinations to assess only cognitive skills even when the national curriculum moves to competency based. In the ESDP-IV, it is stated that improvements were not seen in students' performance in National Learning Assessment (NLA) and there is an urgent need to take measures to improve students' achievement" (JAICA, 2012). Likewise, whether the national test will emphasize the use of English language or not in the future is one concern. What can be seen here is that an examination that tests knowledge about the language (such as grammar) is likely to prevail/continue provided the fact the country lacks not only infrastructural resources, but also human capital assets (in terms of number, knowledge and skills) required to implement such an ambitious enterprise as testing language use. Here, it is vital to note that the national examination is provided both to ensure that learners are meeting the standards – i.e. for students to get scores that could be used for placement or promotion, and to serve formative role of curriculum evaluation. Therefore, information from it will probably be used to determine whether the students have understood the main concepts in the curriculum and how effectively the teachers are teaching this curriculum.

## II. The Influence of Test on Classroom Practice - "Washback"

As stated above that the national test is likely to be a grammar test or the test of language knowledge, thus that teachers have to teach grammar knowledge to students in order to pass the national testing system. Even though the concept of continuous assessment coheres with the competency – approach adopted in the curriculum, if the national test is not changed, then it affects the actual classroom teaching – learning process since the goals of language teaching will be only directed towards the testing of mastery of grammatical knowledge which belongs to the traditional teaching method. The issue of "washback" that can greatly influence practices clearly was not part of the discussion in the planning of the EFL curriculum. Johnson (1989b) argues

that the "washback" or the impact of assessment is a kind of hidden curriculum that limits language teaching and learning to a form of test-driven learning. In the end, teachers may interpret standards and benchmarks as objectives that emphasize a learner's correctness knowledge of the target language. They may not pay attention to how their students are to become language competent, good citizens and active social persons in a world that has adopted globalization. The contradictions between in – class evaluation and the national test could bring about the largest non – coherence between implementation of the curriculum and different government agenda.

This means that what the curriculum document(s) claimed as freedom in teaching and learning – when it states "…Using this approach, students should become more active participants in their own learning through exploring, observing, experimenting and practicing rather than simply being passive receivers of knowledge…" (MoE, 2010) – does not exist in reality. In the end, teachers have no choice but to teach for the test. Worse, learners have no choices on what, when, and how to learn English language. In other words, it is an oppressive education rather than the provision of education that promotes the learner's initiative and freedom to think and to be an active participant in the society.

Several ELT studies showed that one of the factors which lead to the mismatch between the curriculum intentions and teachers' actual classroom practices is that teachers often focus on teaching the skills that are tested in the exams and ignore those that are not included in these exams. For example, Orafi and Borg (2009) pointed to a mismatch between the focus of the exams and the aims of the curriculum. Similarly, several studies have confirmed that despite the focus of the curricula to enhance the students' language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, either the students resisted teachers' attempts to implement these activities in the class or the teachers tended to ignore these skills because they did not form a part of the national exams written by the Ministry of Education which tended to focus on testing of reading comprehension, knowledge of grammar rules, vocabulary, etc. (Gorsuch**,** 2000; Macfarlane, 2000; Agrawal, 2004). Fotos' (2005: 666) description of many EFL settings appears to coincide with the findings of the above ELT studies:

> Many EFL situations have a centrally controlled education system with a set curriculum, prescribed textbooks, and highly competitive nationwide examinations determining admission to middle, secondary and tertiary institutions. Such examinations usually have an English component requiring reading comprehension, knowledge of grammar rules, vocabulary….As a result; English language teaching is often aimed at mastery of points tested on such examinations. Therefore, it is not surprising that traditional EFL instruction usually emphasizes the development of knowledge about English…rather than the development of communicative ability.

In many EFL settings, including ours, it is often regarded that it is the teachers' responsibility to make sure that their students can pass the exams. If students cannot achieve this goal, teachers will be blamed for not doing their job. This obligation may force teachers to focus on teaching the skills that are tested in the exams and ignore the ones which are not. Students as well are pressured by the exams and require their teachers teach for the exams.

# CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

## 5.1. Introduction

This research aimed to study the renewal process of the 2008/9 EFL secondary school curriculum by employing case – study research design. The data for the study was collected from curriculum experts and relevant documents using semi – structured interview and document analysis. The major findings and discussion of the results have been elaborated in Chapter Four. This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study, draws conclusions and forwards recommendations and implications.

## 5.2. Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the renewal process of the 2008/9 EFL secondary school curriculum based on the insights from curriculum experts and analysis of relevant documents. Qualitative case – study design was employed to guide the overall research with the use of semi-structured interview and document analysis as the data collection tools.

In collecting data for the study, interview data was obtained from four curriculum experts and document analysis was employed to collect data from such relevant documents as the Education and Training Policy (ETP), Education Sector Development Strategies (ESDP I-V), Education Quality Improvement Package documents, Curriculum documents like guidelines and reports, English syllabuses, domestic researches, etc.

An interpretive thematic analysis approach of qualitative data analysis was employed in this study for the purpose of coding, categorization, and generating theme from the collected data. Following this, the findings of the study were presented, analyzed and discussed in accordance with the themes generated from data analysis. Summary of the major findings are as follows:

- With regards to the experts involved in the renewal process, the findings revealed that EFL curriculum was renewed by experienced curriculum experts at the Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID) of MoE.

- According to the findings, summative evaluation had been conducted though it was not thorough enough since it did not solely focus on the EFL curriculum but revolved around different aspects of the overall general education.
- The study revealed that the major contextual factors that necessitated the 2008/9 EFL curriculum renewal were: inability of teachers to cover the content within the given time frame due to bulky nature of the curriculum; difficulty of the content to the students' level of proficiency; irrelevance of the curriculum contents to learners' and society's needs; lack of indicators of minimum learning competency level expected of the students; difficulty in implementing continuous assessment, and the need to align the curriculum with government policies and strategies.
- It is also apparent from the results that needs analysis had been conducted before designing the EFL curriculum by curriculum development experts at MoE through collecting data from students, teachers, school directors, supervisors and society.
- Moreover, it is evident in the results that the aims, goals and objectives were developed based on the objectives of the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (ETP, 1994) and on the results of the needs assessment; and that they were mainly intended to develop communicative language skills of the learners.
- When it comes to the criteria for content selection, the data revealed that the contents of the EFL curriculum were selected on the basis of minimum learning competency criteria; relevance to the students' context, interest, age, and grade levels; and complementarity to what students learn in other subjects.
- It is apparent from the findings that student – centered communicative language teaching methodology was recommended in the EFL curriculum.
- With regard to the assessment strategies recommended in the 2008/9 EFL curriculum, the data from the respondents indicated that the EFL curriculum was based on "Continuous Assessment".
- According to the findings, topic/theme – based syllabus was selected for organizing and presenting the content of the EFL curricula in which language skills are developed and other components of language (vocabulary, grammar, social expressions, etc.) are integrated. When it comes to the rationale for the selection, the respondents claimed that

this type of syllabus was selected with the assumption that it provides students with different familiar topics deemed interesting and motivating to them.

- The findings further pointed out that the EFL textbooks were prepared by foreign based consultants who were selected based on reputation and/or experience. The respondents concur that the textbook writers were aware of current language learning theory since they developed the textbooks based on the currently recommended communicative language learning theory.
- As an integral process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum renewal, neither the curriculum package as a whole nor the curriculum materials were piloted or tried out on a small – scale basis, and as a result the curriculum together with its pertinent materials were disseminated for actual implementation thereby jeopardizing its practical success.
- As to whether the teachers were trained on how to implement the EFL curriculum, the results indicated that training had been given for teacher trainers at ministry level though further investigation/data is required to justify whether the training initiated at the top had taken root at the bottom.
- The study also found out that the EFL curriculum is complicated by such challenges as lack of extensive research basis, top – down nature of change initiation, absence of tryout and experimentation, and weak monitoring and assessment practices..

## 5.3. Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of the study, thus, the following conclusions were drawn:

It is apparent from the findings of the study that the major contextual factors that necessitated the 2008/9 EFL curriculum renewal were: inability of teachers to cover the content within the given time frame due to bulky nature of the curriculum; difficulty of the content to the students' level of proficiency; irrelevance of the curriculum contents to learners' and society's needs; lack of indicators of minimum learning competency level expected of the students; difficulty in implementing continuous assessment, and the need to align the curriculum with government policies and strategies.

It is apparent from the findings that the EFL curriculum was renewed by curriculum experts/subject specialists at the MoE without the involvement of the front – line curriculum

implementers, i.e. the EFL teachers. As the findings of this study demonstrated, curriculum aims, goals and objectives, curriculum materials and/or contents (including the syllabus and the textbooks), teaching – learning methods, and assessment strategies were all pre – specified, selected and imposed from the top. From this, it can be concluded that the adopted curriculum design approach was almost the same as in Tyler's (1949) linear/objectives model which is characterized as a top – down strategy that imposes on the teachers centrally designed curriculum without giving weight to their voices and concerns. This, in turn, results into the teachers' lack of sense of ownership – the extent to which an innovation belongs to the implementers – commitment, motivation and positive reception, all of which exert a considerable impact on the likely-hood of the reform to simply stay at the surface level thereby obscuring the usefulness and/or the implementation of the envisaged curriculum change.

With regard to summative evaluation, the findings indicated the evaluation system was not thorough enough since it did not solely focus on (the EFL) curriculum. From this, it can be concluded that the process of the 2008/9 EFL curriculum renewal was incomprehensive as it did not include extensive evaluation mechanism as an integral part of the process. Taking into account Richards' (2001) view that curriculum evaluation provides rich and valuable data as "it focuses on collecting information about different aspects of a language program in order to understand how the program works, and how successfully it works, enabling different kinds of decisions to be made about the program" (p. 286), evaluation policies and self – evaluation matters should be further emphasized and specified in advance and practiced on a regular basis. Considering this, therefore, policy – makers and/or curriculum developers should take into account this important role of curriculum evaluation and see this process as one of the essential on-going steps of curriculum development.

It is also evident in the results that needs analysis had been conducted as part of the EFL curriculum design process by curriculum development experts at MoE through collecting data from students, teachers, school directors, supervisors and society. Hence, it can be concluded that while developing the EFL curriculum, the importance of responding well to social needs and meeting learners' individual needs had been taken into consideration as essential factors. This further substantiates the widely held view that, as a social manifestation, curriculum is shaped by social conditions, norms and beliefs (Pinar, 2012; Ratcliff, 1997).

In addition, the findings indicated that the EFL curriculum and/or the curriculum materials were not tried out and experimented before dissemination for large – scale implementation. This indicates that the potential factors that may impinge upon implementation of the curriculum were not identified, possible solutions had not been sought to address these potential hindrances, and facilitating conditions for successful implementation were not also promoted. Thus, from this it is possible to conclude that the change initiation process was abrupt, was poorly – planned, and was not data – driven, thereby jeopardizing success of the changes that the 2008/9 EFL curriculum sought to bring about.

With regard to whether training had been given for the teachers on how to implement the revised curriculum as well as the respective curriculum materials, the findings pointed out that training of trainers – who were responsible for disseminating the training to the schools – had been organized for teachers selected from the regions at the ministry level. According to the findings, since the responsibility of cascading the training at the grassroots level was delegated to the regional educational bureaus, the MoE did not take the initiative to ascertain whether the teachers trained at the ministry level had disseminated the skills and knowledge they gained from the training to the teachers at their respective schools. This implies that the EFL curriculum change process lacks built in system of follow-up/monitoring and assessment. As a result, there is no ground upon which to base the argument that the EFL teachers' previous beliefs, knowledge and practices had been updated and/or upgraded so as to enable them translate the intended curriculum changes into their actual classrooms, which, in turn, makes the curriculum package(s) only a paperwork.

The results revealed that the EFL secondary school curriculum design process had certain weaknesses. Lack of a thorough evaluation mechanism, tendency of top – down imposition of the reform, absence of try – out or piloting of the curriculum, and lack of monitoring and assessment practices were the major hindrances impinging upon the EFL curriculum. It can be concluded from this finding that the curriculum design process was seemingly incomprehensive, was ill – coordinated across center – periphery continuum and/or was ill – monitored and as a result, the curriculum can be deemed as that which is removed from the 'on-ground-realities' of the actual context – schools – in which it takes place.

## 5.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be forwarded:

It was apparent from the findings that one of the major limitations of the EFL curriculum renewal process was the adopted traditional top – down approach. Here, it is crucial to note that a *collaborative approach* to curriculum development (Nunan, 1989) based on the quality of relationships between participants and the sharing of responsibility between the different stakeholders in the educational system (e.g. teachers, researchers, curriculum specialists and administrators) could ensure to a greater extent its successful implementation. In particular, the knowledge, experience and beliefs of EFL teachers should be a necessary tool and reliable guide to reality and should be constantly exploited in the best possible way by curriculum planners because "it is difficult to believe that classrooms and curriculum can ever be improved without the participation of teachers in that improvement" (McKernan, 2008: 85); and since the teachers are the closest to the curriculum and the most knowledgeable of its different elements (Rea-Dickens and Germaine, 1998).

According to the findings of this study, the curriculum renewal process was not comprehensive enough since it overlooked such essential aspects as summative evaluation and try – out or piloting. Here, it is imperative that curriculum and curriculum development should be treated as an independent educational enterprise rather than being considered as a cross – cutting issue and/or being relegated to the periphery in which evaluation and piloting are considered as integral parts of the process. Likewise, the EFL curriculum development wing at Ministry of Education (MoE) should base the process of curriculum design on thorough evaluation and experimentation since these processes would inform not only the weaknesses that should be addressed, but also the strengths that need to be sustained both currently and in the future.

It was evident in the results that the 2008/9 EFL curriculum propounded continuous assessment for gauging students' progresses and/or achievements, but the findings of domestic researches on this theme documented that the actual implementation of continuous assessment is far from practical application due, largely, to teachers' reliance on the traditional summative – oriented assessment modality. Therefore, there is pressing need for the MoE and the regional education bureaus to take measures geared towards promoting conducive conditions for successful

implementation of continuous assessment. Enhancing teachers' awareness, knowledge and skills through trainings, providing them with support through follow – up and supervision, reducing classes to manageable sizes, and empowering the students to practice self and peer – assessment, among others, could serve as viable measures for improving the current state of continuous assessment.

The findings indicated that despite adopting a one – shot cascading approach to disseminate the curriculum changes by simply training the trainers, the MoE did not invest efforts to ascertain whether these trained EFL teachers had disseminated the knowledge and skills they gained to their respective schools. Since such a one – shot training schemes have proven ineffective in preparing teachers for the implementation of the envisaged curricular changes, therefore, the EFL curriculum wing of the MoE should facilitate more feasible context – based, all – inclusive and on – going training and/or professional development opportunities support for the EFL teachers so as to acquaint them with the necessary knowledge and skills they need to implement the intended curriculum reform. Moreover, the MoE should integrate monitoring, assessment and follow – up mechanisms into the curriculum renewal process in general and into the teachers' training program in particular in order to ascertain whether the envisaged curricular reform is being implemented as intended and to generate feedback about implementation impediments, thereby facilitating conducive conditions through taking remedial measures timely.

Based on a scrutiny from a bird's eye view, it can generally be commended that the overall EFL curriculum design process needs to consider stages of curriculum change outlined by Carnall (1999): *beginnings* – when problems are recognized, awareness created, feasibility assessed; *focusing* – when actions are taken to train teachers, to experiment or pilot the curriculum, and to refine the initiative based on the result of the pilot; *inclusion* – when change is implemented at broader level along with communication, follow – up/monitoring and assessment plans.

### 5.5. Implications

#### 5.5.1. Implications for Practice

It is apparent from can from the findings of the study that though the EFL curriculum advocates theory of progressivist curriculum, the process of curriculum development appears to follow the

practice of top – down procedure followed by reconstructionism. Therefore, there is a need to ensure alignment and/or to bridge the gap between the theories advocated in the paper – work and the practice followed in reality by making the curriculum development endeavor a participatory, ongoing and cyclical process.

### 5.5.2. Implications for Further Study

As the major focus of this study was on the process of EFL secondary school curriculum design, it did not delve into the implementation of the curriculum which otherwise would have provided more complete picture of the overall curriculum issues. Therefore, there is a need for further study on implementation of the EFL secondary school curriculum to ascertain whether the curriculum intentions are translated into actual practices.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Consent Form for Interviewees

This research, entitled "The Renewal Processes of the 2008/9 EFL Secondary School Curriculum", is being conducted by Dagne Kebede Taresa, a PhD candidate at Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa University. The purpose of the study is to investigate the renewal process of the EFL curriculum. Accordingly, the researcher asks for your participation in the research so that you will provide him with an interview data needed for this particular study purpose.

Interviews will last for about 30-40 minutes and the information you give will be used solely for the purposes defined by the research. There is no risk for participation in this study since it is purely an academic endeavor. Though there will be few direct benefits to you, the insights you give will have a lasting impact on the success of the study. You are at liberty to refuse to answer certain questions, discuss certain topics or even secede from the study without prejudice to yourself at any time, should you so desire.

The interview data will be will be kept by the researcher in a secure place and will not be made available to anyone else and all identifying information will be removed in reporting the data. Therefore, no names will be mentioned and your identity will be kept confidential. Your identity will be known only by the researcher conducting the interview.

Please make sure that you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in the study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

**Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Curriculum Experts**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CURRICULUM EXPERTS**

1. What were the contextual factors driving the curriculum renewal process?

2. Were the curricular reform processes based on summative evaluation? Who conducted the studies? What were the findings?

3. What procedures and practices of needs assessment were followed, if any, prior to designing the curriculum? Who conducted it? Who were data sources of the need analysis? Is there a copy of the study?

4. Who were the experts involved in the renewal process? How were they selected?

5. What were the sources of the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum? What is the nature of the aims and objectives set?

6. What criteria and/or procedures were used for determining content of the EFL curriculum?

7. What procedure was involved in piloting the curriculum materials?

8. What kind of syllabus was selected? Why was this type of syllabus picked?

9. Who prepared the textbooks? How were they selected? Were they experienced?

10. Were the developers aware of current theories of language learning?

11. What were the recommended teaching methods? Are the instructional strategies applicable and helpful in achieving the objectives?

12. Was tryout and experimentation of the curriculum conducted before its actual implementation? Where? What was the result/finding? Do you think the finding was incorporated into the final draft?

13. What assessment strategy was recommended to assess the students' achievement and/or progress?

14. Was training organized for teachers regarding implementation of the new curriculum and/or the textbooks? If yes, for how long? Who gave the training? Was training given for administrators?

15. What were the major challenges, if any, of the curriculum renewal processes?

**Appendix C: A Transcription of Interviews with the Curriculum Experts**

**TRANSCRIPTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH CURRICULUM EXPERT 1 (CE1)**

**Q1.** What were the contextual factors driving the curriculum renewal process?

**R.** The major reasons for revising the EFL curriculum that existed before 2008 was, among others, the curriculum was deemed too difficult for the students, it did not consider minimum learning competency criteria that the students needed to possess, and above all it was too large for teachers to cover within the given time frame…

**Q2.** Were the curricular reform processes based on summative evaluation? Who conducted the studies? What were the findings?

**R.** Yes, evaluation had been conducted though the evaluation is done for the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) not specifically for English curriculum. It was conducted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) together with the Regional Education Bureaus.

**Q3.** What procedures and practices of needs assessment were followed, if any, prior to designing the curriculum? Who conducted it? Who were data sources of the need analysis? Is there a copy of the study?

**R.** Yes…needs analysis had been conducted as part of the curriculum design process…the General Education Curriculum Framework Development Department conducted the needs analysis by gathering data from the teachers, students, directors, supervisors and parents.

**Q4.** Who were the experts involved in the renewal process? How are they selected?

**R.** Generally, the trend of English curriculum design in our country is the same throughout primary and secondary schools. In other words, foreign experts are hired to design the English

curriculum when the need arise to change and/or revise the curriculum. For example, during the 2008/9 curriculum design, international bid was announced to contract foreign organizations to design the English curriculum both for primary and secondary schools. Accordingly, an organization based in Uganda won the bid to design the primary education English curriculum while a British based organization named Pearson won the bid to design the English curriculum for secondary schools. Though I'm not certain the selection criterion was based on their reputation and/or experience….

**Q5.** What were the sources of the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum? What is the nature of the aims and objectives set?

**R.** The aims, goals and objectives were designed based on the findings of the needs analysis…the aims and objectives emphasize the development and enhancement of learners' communicative language abilities…

**Q6.** What criteria and/or procedure were used for determining the content of the EFL curriculum?

**R.** As you know, the current secondary schools curriculum allows students the opportunity to either pursue higher education or join the world of work…Accordingly, the content of the curriculum is selected in a way that responds to this demand…In other words, the contents are designed so as to enable the students possess minimum language competency at each grade level in order to succeed both in the world of work and in the higher education. Moreover, contents are chosen based on interest of the students, relevance to Ethiopian life and complementarity to what students are studying in other subjects

**Q7.** What procedure was involved in piloting the curriculum materials?

**R.** To my best knowledge, only the English curriculum for grades 1-4 was piloted to some extent. The English curriculum for secondary schools was never piloted, because the practice of piloting textbooks before their actual implementation has not become norm in our country and hence no one gives it a thought.

**Q8.** What kind of syllabus was selected? Why was this type of syllabus picked?

**R.** Topic-based syllabus was selected with a focus on popular themes that are deemed familiar to the students… this type of syllabus was selected because familiarity of the topics to the students makes the contents and activities more interesting and motivating thereby promoting their engagement in the teaching-learning process.

**Q9.** Who prepared the textbooks? How were they selected? Were they experienced?

**R.** As I have mentioned earlier the curriculum as well as the textbooks was designed by British based company called Pearson. Though I'm not certain, the selection criteria was based on their reputation and/or experience….Our (English experts at MoE) role in the curriculum design process is limited to that of reviewing, let alone editing, whether the designed textbooks meet the required standard set at the beginning.

**Q10.** Were the developers aware of current theories of language learning?

**R.** In my opinion, since they developed the textbooks based on communicative and/or learner centeredness approach-the trend currently followed in language learning- it can be said that they are aware of current theories of language learning…

**Q11.** What were the recommended teaching methods? Are the instructional strategies applicable and helpful in achieving the objectives?

**R.** As you know, the communicative approach, which is active learning method, has become a well-established language learning method since 1980s and the same trend is also recommended in the designed English language curriculum….In my opinion, yes the instructional strategies are designed in a way that can be applied in classrooms and are also helpful in achieving the objectives.

**Q12.** What assessment strategy was recommended to assess the students' achievement and/or progress?

**R.** The curriculum was based on the notion of continuous assessment which is intended to gauge the students' progress towards the achievement of minimum learning competencies set for each lesson

**Q13.** Was tryout and experimentation of the curriculum conducted before its actual implementation? Where? What was the result/finding? Do you think the finding was incorporated into the final draft?

**R.** To tell you the truth, there is no such thing as curriculum experimentation in our country…when put simply, it does not exist. Here curriculum is designed or revised at some point and it will be simply disseminated without any trial or experimentation. I remember that once JAICA informed the MoE that it is willing to conduct the tryout and asked the MoE the permission to do so, but no one considered their appeal because the trend has not been established.

**Q14.** Was training organized for teachers regarding implementation of the new curriculum and/or the textbooks? If yes, for how long? Who gave the training? Was training given for administrators?

Yes, training was given as a form of ToT (Training of Trainers) to some teachers selected from the whole regions, but we are not sure whether the trained trainers had cascaded the training at the grassroots level. As far as I know, no one from MoE has conducted a follow-up to ascertain whether the training had been disseminated properly to all secondary school English teachers, and neither did the regions give us feedback as to whether the training had reached grassroots level because there was/is little or no cooperation between MoE and the regions regarding this issue. So we didn't know the impact of the training. The training was given by English language subject experts here at the MoE…The training was not given specifically for school administrators, but curriculum experts representing each regional education bureau had participated on the training along with teacher participants of the ToT.

**Q15.** What were the major challenges, if any, of the curriculum renewal process?

When it comes to the issue of challenges, there are bunch of problems that it entails. For example, since the curriculum is not based on a thorough research and prior evaluation, we are not aware of the students', the teachers' as well as the parents' needs…Out of a sudden it is decided that the curriculum needs revision and the process is initiated without prior research needed to justify the reason for the design/revision…If you even consider the status of the

language (i.e. English), it is deemed as a Foreign Language but when it comes to the reality of our country the curriculum is designed as English for Ethiopia. So there is a tendency to deny its status as a foreign language by labeling it for "Ethiopia". I think this is the reason why it is simply taken for granted as the other school subjects rather than as a foreign language that need to be internalized because students rely on it for further education since it serves as a medium of instruction starting from secondary schools…

Moreover, there is no feedback loop within the system that ascertains whether or not the newly designed curriculum has achieved its purpose…this means, we do not know whether or not teachers, students and/or parents are satisfied with the newly designed/revised curriculum since there is no follow up system in place to track the implementation status of the initiated curricular change. Generally, there is no such things as feedback, assessment, follow up, formative evaluation….In addition, the process of curricular design in our country is top-down which is in contrary to the current language curriculum design theories…though some teachers participate in the process, their role is minimal and therefore unsatisfactory or not effective. Nowadays it is recommended that even students and parents should be part of the curriculum design process.

**TRANSCRIPTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH CURRICULUM EXPERT 2 (CE2)**

**Q1.** What were the contextual factors that drove the curriculum renewal process?

**R.** Though there are various factors driving the curriculum change, the recent curriculum was revised in response to government policy strategies like Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

**Q2.** Was the curricular reform process based on summative evaluation? Who conducted the studies? What were the findings?

**R.** As far as I know the curriculum reforms are not based on evaluation. Evaluations are mainly conducted during and at the end of the general Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP) to determine the extent to which the programs are being implemented. Rather than this, curriculum evaluations are not specifically planned and executed targeting the EFL curriculum…

**Q3.** What procedures and practices of needs assessment were followed, if any, prior to designing the curriculum? Who conducted it? Who were data sources of the need analysis? Is there a copy of the study?

**R.** Initially, situational analysis is conducted at broader scale and then it was followed by specific needs assessment… the needs analysis is conducted by experts from Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID) at MoE. Teachers', directors' and parents' attitudes were collected and analyzed at the preliminary stage of the 2008/9 curriculum revision…

**Q4.** Who were the experts involved in the renewal process? How were they selected?

**R.** Previously, the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) conducts curriculum development…Currently, it is the responsibility of Curriculum Development and Implementation Directorate (CDID)… in my opinion the experts are selected based on their expertise and experience of curriculum development.

**Q5.** What were the sources of the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum? What was the nature of the aims and objectives set?

**R.** The aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum are set based on the stated objectives of the country's Education and Training Policy (ETP)…the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum are generally targeted towards developing and enhancing communicative language skills of the learners…

**Q6.** What criteria and/or procedures were used for determining content of the EFL curriculum?

**R.** It is apparent that the current English curriculum is based on Competency Approach. Accordingly, the contents are determined in such a way that they enable students achieve Minimum Learning Competency criteria set in each section and/or unit.

**Q7.** What procedure was involved in piloting the curriculum materials?

**R.** As far as I know, the curricular materials have not been piloted so far though it is very essential for identifying the problems they might have before putting them to actual use.

**Q8.** What kind of syllabus was selected? Why was this type of syllabus picked?

**R.** Theme/topic-based syllabus was selected both for the current and previous curriculum with the view that students would not get bored with monotony of content since they are provided with variety of themes that introduce them to different topics through engaging them in different activities…

**Q9.** Who prepared the textbooks? How were they selected? Were they experienced?

**R.** Generally, the textbooks are prepared by foreign consultants. For example, the textbook of the previous curriculum was written by an ELT advisor called Robin Taylor, and likewise the current textbooks are written by foreign consultant firm named Pearson. I think that they were selected based on their expertise and/or experience.

**Q10.** Were the developers aware of current theories of language learning?

**R.** In my opinion, the textbook developers are well aware of theories of language learning since they are among the renowned foreign experts in field…

**Q11.** What were the recommended teaching methods? Are the instructional strategies applicable and helpful in achieving the objectives?

**R.** Obviously, student-centered methodology is recommended with the aim of involving the learners in communicative language learning whereby they learn language through interaction and active engagement in the teaching-learning process. Personally, I believe that the instructional strategies are not effectively applicable within our context given the limited facilities required for implementing it and the low-level language proficiency of both the teachers and the learners.

**Q12.** What assessment strategy was recommended to assess the students' achievement and/or progress?

**R.**…the students are assessed rigorously on a continual basis against each indicator/criterion of competency level… It is mainly meant to ascertain that students have attained at least minimum competency of a specified level before moving on to the next one…

**Q13.** Was tryout and experimentation of the curriculum conducted before its actual implementation? Where? What was the result/finding? Do you think the finding was incorporated into the final draft?

**R.** With regard to experimentation, I have not witnessed any curriculum piloting in our context…but I remember that a package called School Improvement Program (SIP) was initially initiated in 2006 on a pilot basis before being disseminated on larger scale. Rather than this, the curriculum is usually put into implementation without piloting.

**Q14.** Was training organized for teachers regarding implementation of the new curriculum and/or the textbooks? If yes, for how long? Who gave the training? Was training given for administrators?

**R.** Whenever curriculum is revised, teachers are trained on how to implement it…the trainings mostly last five to ten days…it is given by curriculum experts at Ministry of Education (MoE)…administrators like curriculum experts at regional education bureau also participate on the training.

**Q15.** What were the major challenges, if any, of the curriculum renewal processes?

**R.** The major problem, in my opinion, is the weak or loose monitoring of the curriculum… though their mandates are different, there is lack of concerted effort on the part of both the MoE and the regional educational bureaus in closely following – up to ensure the smooth running of the curriculum once it has been disseminated… there is little initiative on both sides follow – up and/or guide the process of the curriculum implementation since the curriculum is simply handed down to the schools.

**TRANSCRIPTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH CURRICULUM EXPERT 3 (CE3)**

**Q1.** What were the contextual factors that drove the curriculum renewal process?

**R.** There are different factors that have motivated the previous curriculum reform…the major ones include, among others, the curricula and the contents were not integrated with the realities

of the learner and the society at large; and the curricula have not laid out the objectives of particular level of education in accordance with the country's requirement; content overload, difficulties in implementing continuous assessment, etc…

**Q2.** Was the curricular reform process based on summative evaluation? Who conducted the studies? What were the findings?

**R.** In my opinion, curricular reforms are based on evaluation to some extent though it's not satisfactory…for instance the current curriculum had been evaluated formatively once in 2014 after four years of implementation though summative evaluation was not conducted…After that single evaluation, summative evaluation hasn't been conducted…

**Q3.** What procedures and practices of needs assessment were followed, if any, prior to designing the curriculum? Who conducted it? Who were data sources of the need analysis? Is there a copy of the study?

**R.** Needs assessment was conducted and analyzed to some extent during revision of the current curriculum…it was conducted by curriculum development experts at MoE…teachers as well as some members of the society were data sources of the needs analysis..

**Q4.** Who were the experts involved in the renewal process? How were they selected?

**R.** Experts at curriculum development unit of the MoE participated in the renewal process. For instance, during the 2008/9 curriculum revision English subject experts at MoE have participated in preparing the English syllabus along with English experts from Voluntary Service Oversees (VSO)…

**Q5.** What were the sources of the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum? What was the nature of the aims and objectives set?

**R.** The aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum are mainly derived from the results of the needs analysis…the aims, goals and objectives are geared towards fostering communicative ability of the students through engaging them in active learning processes…

**Q6.** What criteria and/or procedures were used for determining content of the EFL curriculum?

**R.** The contents of EFL curriculum are determined according to their relevance and appropriateness to the learners' age, grade levels and background…they are also determined in such a way that they build on the contents the students learned at lower grade levels and that they prepare the learners for higher studies…

**Q7.** What procedure was involved in piloting the curriculum materials?

**R.** The current curriculum materials were normally distributed for use without being piloted…the trend of conducting pilot studies is not established within our country so far…

**Q8.** What kind of syllabus was selected? Why was this type of syllabus picked?

**R.** Topic-based syllabus was selected for organizing the content because it allows for a wide variety of language and activities by presenting topics from different subjects familiar to the students in order to engage them in the teaching-learning process…

**Q9.** Who prepared the textbooks? How were they selected? Were they experienced?

**R.** So far, the textbook are prepared by foreign experts…the current textbooks were prepared by Pearson…I think that they were selected since they had adequate experience of the task…

**Q10.** Were the developers aware of current theories of language learning?

**R.** Yeah I think they are aware of current language learning theories since they developed the textbooks in accordance with the principles of communicative language teaching theory – the trend which is widely recommended for language teaching-learning…

**Q11.** What were the recommended teaching methods? Are the instructional strategies applicable and helpful in achieving the objectives?

**R.** Learner-centered teaching methodology is recommended for delivering lessons…in my opinion, the instructional strategies are applicable and are designed in consistence with the set objectives.

**Q12.** What assessment strategy was recommended to assess the students' achievement and/or progress?

**R.** When it comes to assessment, the curriculum requires the teachers to continuously evaluate the students' performance so as to ensure the extent to which the learners are achieving the required language competencies…

**Q13.** Was tryout and experimentation of the curriculum conducted before its actual implementation? Where? What was the result/finding? Do you think the finding was incorporated into the final draft?

**R.** As I've mentioned earlier, this aspect (tryout and experimentation) is not considered before implementing the curriculum on a larger basis despite its relevance in indicating potential challenges the reform might face during actual implementation.

**Q14.** Was training organized for teachers regarding implementation of the new curriculum and/or the textbooks? If yes, for how long? Who gave the training? Was training given for administrators?

**R.** Trainings had been given for some teachers selected from each region in a form of Training of Trainers (ToT) who are then expected to disseminate the knowledge they gained to their respective woredas and/or schools…it lasted about ten days and it was given by curriculum experts at MoE…curriculum experts who are representative of their region had also participated on the training.

**Q15.** What were the major challenges, if any, of the curriculum renewal processes?

**R.** As I have discussed earlier, our curriculum development process lacks such crucial aspects as tryout and/or piloting of both the curriculum as well as the materials, and summative evaluation…one can imagine what happens to curricular reform that lacks these steps because they indicate the strengths of the curriculum that needs to be sustained and the challenges/ailments to be remedied, thereby increasing the likelihood of success of the reform implementation. Where these are absent, thus, we don't know whether the reform achieves/has achieved the primary target which it initially sought to address…the other challenge of the curriculum renewal processes is lack of budget and human resource which usually affects the process of training of teachers for curriculum implementation…for example, it is open secret that the teachers trained at central level (MoE) fail to disseminate the knowledge and experience they

gained at the ToT training to their respective schools…had adequate budget and human resource been allocated, the training could have been implemented at grassroots levels providing the teachers with the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills so as to implement the intended reform.

**TRANSCRIPTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH CURRICULUM EXPERT 4 (CE4)**

**Q1.** What were the contextual factors that drove the curriculum renewal process?

**R.** The previous curriculum was revised because it lacked relevance to (meet) students' needs and interests, it was less diversified, it put less emphasis on problem-solving and its content was overloaded…

**Q2.** Was the curricular reform process based on summative evaluation? Who conducted the studies? What were the findings?

**R.** Mostly, summative evaluation is not conducted specifically for curriculum (including its reform)…rather evaluation is limited to broader policy and strategy aspects like the Education Sector Development Programs which encompasses several components of the general education system including the curriculum…

**Q3.** What procedures and practices of needs assessment were followed, if any, prior to designing the curriculum? Who conducted it? Who were data sources of the need analysis? Is there a copy of the study?

**R.** Before designing the current curriculum, for example, situation analysis was conducted through desk research…it was conducted by a group of experts at MoE who were responsible for conducting the curriculum development…the data sources were teachers, school directors, and society members.

**Q4.** Who were the experts involved in the renewal process? How were they selected?

**R.** Formerly, the responsibility of developing the curriculum was given to Institute of Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) at the MoE …in my opinion, they are selected based on their experience.

**Q5.** What were the sources of the aims, goals and objectives of the EFL curriculum? What was the nature of the aims and objectives set?

**R.** The aims, goals and objectives are mainly derived from the findings of the needs analysis that was conducted during the initial stage of the curricular reform…they emphasize development of students' communicative language skills

**Q6.** What criteria and/or procedures were used for determining content of the EFL curriculum?

**R.** The contents are selected based on the Minimum Learning Competency documents. In other words, minimum learning competency criteria were initially set for each level against which students' performance is assessed and the contents are determined in such a way that they enable the students to achieve and/or build up their competencies as they progress through the unit…contents that are deemed interesting and enjoyable to the students as well as relevant to Ethiopian contexts are also chosen...

**Q7.** What procedure was involved in piloting the curriculum materials?

**R.** To be honest, the curriculum materials are not piloted so far. Once the syllabuses are developed and the textbooks as well as the teachers' guides are written, they will be distributed to the schools without conducting a trial process…

**Q8.** What kind of syllabus was selected? Why was this type of syllabus picked?

**R.** The current syllabus is mainly topic-based…this kind of syllabus was selected because it was believed that it would engage learners in the teaching-learning process and maintain their interest since it is organized around topics that are familiar to the students and that they most likely encounter (have encountered) in the other school subjects.

**Q9.** Who prepared the textbooks? How were they selected? Were they experienced?

**R.** The current secondary school English textbooks were written by foreign based company called Pearson…they were selected since they won the international bid announced by MoE for hiring companies that prepare the textbooks…I think that they are experienced textbook writers.

**Q10.** Were the developers aware of current theories of language learning?

**R.** I think so…

**Q11.** What were the recommended teaching methods? Are the instructional strategies applicable and helpful in achieving the objectives?

**R.** Learner-centered constructivist teaching method is recommended to be applied in the classrooms…I doubt if it is applicable because it requires various conditions to be met to fully implement it and we lack most of these favorable conditions…for instance, there are such challenges as scarce language resources and facilities, large class size, limited teachers' beliefs (towards) and practices of the methodology, limited students' language proficiency, etc. all of which contribute to achievement of the stated objectives…without meeting necessary conditions required for its application, it remains a mere wish to expect the teaching methods to achieve the objectives!

**Q12.** What assessment strategy was recommended to assess the students' achievement and/or progress?

**R.** Continuous assessment is recommended in this curriculum…in this assessment strategy, the goal is not only to track students' progress, but also to generate feedback on which competency area(s) a student needs additional support or remedial lesson…

**Q13.** Was tryout and experimentation of the curriculum conducted before its actual implementation? Where? What was the result/finding? Do you think the finding was incorporated into the final draft?

**R.** Not only are the materials but also the curriculum package as whole was not tried out and/or experimented before being disseminated to the schools for implementation…teachers and students sometimes complain about the curriculum and the materials during implementation; and these complaints could have been taken into account for taking measures had the curriculum and/or the materials been piloted…these feedbacks would contribute a lot to smooth implementation of the curriculum, but they are left in veins…

**Q14.** Was training organized for teachers regarding implementation of the new curriculum and/or the textbooks? If yes, for how long? Who gave the training? Was training given for administrators?

**R.** Yes the MoE organized training of trainers for teachers regarding the implementation of the new curriculum at central level and the responsibility of disseminating the training to the teachers at grassroots level is given to regional education bureaus…it lasted for about ten days…curriculum experts at MoE gave the training. Curriculum experts representing their respective regions also participated in the training along with the teachers.

**Q15.** What were the major challenges, if any, of the curriculum renewal processes?

**R.** From the reforms made so far, it is possible to observe that the curriculum is developed based on top-down approach with little involvement of public and professional entities. This, on the other hand, affects the curriculum development because it fails to respond to societal needs and lacks relevance when it comes to the implementation stage. In addition, there is lack of extensive studies on which to base curriculum reforms and this begs for question of effectiveness of the reformed curriculum since it is designed with little knowledge of on-the-ground facts that need to be accounted for before introducing change.