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WHERE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IS BEYOND MODERNITY: AN
EXPERIENCE FROM THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
TRADITIONAL ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICES, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is intended to assess Indigenous/Traditional Church Education Practices and their Implications on Modern Education. The research attempts to evaluate the unique features of indigenous/traditional Orthodox Church education in light of modern education, the teaching and learning methods in the traditional schools of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). Ethiopian Orthodox Church school's curriculum and its ways of provision, assessment, code of conduct, methodology and the livelihood of Ye'qolo Temari [followers of traditional school] in Ye'abinet Timhirt Bet [Orthodox church indigenous adult school]; and finally the contribution of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) to the development of Ye'qolo temari [adult education] and modern education.. In this research, qualitative research approach is firmly used, and both primary and secondary data sources are also utilized. The findings revealed that, native age old church schools played a significant role in the development of adult education; and have also a good implication on the improvement of modern education qualities in Ethiopia.

1. Introduction

Overview of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Its Traditional Education
Indigenous knowledge can be referred to with various names such as indigenous knowledge of knowing, traditional knowledge, rural knowledge as well as ethno science (Mapara, 2009, p.7). Indigenous knowledge is therefore generated by a particular society within a geographical area and transmitted from one generation to another in order to provide solutions to the existing problems of that time. Likewise, the indigenous knowledge is also known as traditional knowledge. It refers to the practical experiences originated from a given community and sustained for a long period of time. According to Gadgil (1993, p.13-14), traditionally, the church and the mosque were the institutions that provided education long before the introduction of modern schools into Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church developed and spread a system of learning in ancient Geez language and later on in Amharic.

The traditional Islamic education also was introduced in Ethiopia during the 7th century which, was attached to and promoted by the religious houses of Islam and had a parallel function in spreading the reading and writing of the Arabic language, the study of Islamic philosophy, law and obviously the teachings of the Qora'an [the holy book for Muslims] (MOE, 1994, p.19).

If we examine the question that, when Christianity was introduced in Ethiopia, a scholarly debate was concomitant with it; for instance, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims that Christianity was introduced to the church in the middle of the 1st century. However, according to the book published by the church while celebrating the Ethiopian Millennium, it was stated that the introduction of Christianity dates back to the first half of the first century (History EOC, 2000 p.15). On the other hand, Bahru Zewde (1998, 34) mentioned that the introduction of Christianity first took place in Ethiopia in the 4th century during the reign of the Aksumite Kingdom. He argues based on archeological and documentary evidence that can ascertain the coming of Christian religion to the ruling class. However, nothing is mentioned regarding the status of the religion during former periods (Bahru, 1998, p. 34).

In this regard, Lule Melaku (2008, p.42) shares the position of Bahru Zewdie (1998, p. 34) concerning the introduction of Christianity to the ruling class so it has begun as a state religion. However, unlike the latter, the former argues that, "Although Christianity became the official religion of the Aksumite kingdom of King Ezana in the 4th century, it had been known in Ethiopia since much earlier time" (Lule, 2008, p.42).

In his book called, "Ethiopia: A New Political History", he states that: "knowledge of the Christian faith must have reached Ethiopia very early on, as soon, in fact, as it began to spread through the Middle East" (Richard, 1962, p. 20).

Accordingly, there is a difference in the literature concerning the time of the introduction of Christianity. However, most of them agree that, in the

first half of the 4th century, Christianity was introduced to the leaders of the Aksum Kingdom and Ezana was the first Aksumite King to embrace Christianity.

The commercial links/connections with the Greco-Roman world, in which the Aksum kingdom played an active role, is/ can be considered as a leading factor / agent for the introduction of Christianity in the country (Bahru, 1998, p.34). Syrian boys, Aedisius and Frumenties, who were shipwreck victims, were captured, brought to court as slaves and put to work by Emperor Ella Amida. Over the years, their reliability, especially the Frumenties' wisdom as royal secretary earned them the sympathy (Marcus, 1994, p.17). After the death of Ella Amida, his widows asked those slaves to remain in the palace in the advisory position until her infant son, Ezana, was capable enough to take over the throne. Later on, Frumenties went to Egypt to St. Athanasius, who was the Bishop of Alexandria, and came back as the first archbishop of the country after consecrated by him (Tekeste, 2006, p.20).

The 5th century witnessed the spread of Christianity to the mass of the people in the country (Bahru, 1998, p.34). The main reason for this spread out was the arrival of several Christian monks (also known as the nine saints) from the Byzantine Empire and neighboring regions during the reign of king Alameda over the Aksumites (Tekeste, 2006, p.22).

Around the year 480 A.D., the nine saints arrived in Ethiopia and they were warmly accepted by the local government. They were also granted the privilege to live in a peaceful environment (Lule 2008, p.73).

The famous historian Harold G. Marcus (1994) refers to/ describes this comfortable welcoming of the nine monks as "Safe Heaven" (Marcus, 1994, p.8).

These nine monks came to Ethiopia after having a period of monastic training in Egypt. After arriving in Aksum, they also studied Ge'ez language in the Bete Kehinet [Church training rooms] as well as regarding the people and customs of the country for twelve years (Lule, 2008, p.74). After all the trainings, the church sent those monks to the countryside to teach the Gospel. During this time, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church enjoyed the translation of spiritual books, establishment of churches, and formation of strong temples like that of Debre Damo and other sacred places. The period that stretches from the 5th century up to the 13thc is considered as a golden age in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church history since it exhibits the founding of indigenous church schools and monasteries in Ethiopia (History of EOC, 2000, p.18).

Because of the revival in Ge'ez literature, the introduction of several spiritual documents, the construction of many beautiful monolithic churches and the translation of different literature into Ge'ez language were some of the major activities of the period (Bahru, 1998, p.55). Mainly the rise of few brilliant indigenous church scholars was also considered as a main phenomenon throughout these centuries, from the well-known traditional scholars like Atse Zerayakob, Aba Eyesus Moa and his famous student

Abune Tekle Haymanot played a great role to the revival of Geez (Lule, 1986, p.130-131).

Around the 16th century, the expansion of the Muslim sultanate to the highland of Ethiopia led by Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi, the Ethiopian nicknamed Gagn [literally the left handed] was the main political factor that negatively affected the education emitted by Christian churches (Greenfield, 1965, p.41). The 17th century introduced a new Christian denomination, which is Catholicism, to the existing Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. This introduction was well-organized and these Jesuit missionaries were trained in the Ethiopian language and culture in a school known as "the Ethiopian College" in the Vatican before their coming to Ethiopia (Tekeste, 2006, p.22).

Between the 17th century and the 19th century, despite the challenges from the church and its believers, the Ethiopian Orthodox Traditional Church schools enjoyed a high level of spiritual literature translation of spiritual documents and the flourishing of philosophical poetry called Qene [poetry] (History EOC, 2000, p.23).

Likewise, around 1850s with the coming of Emperor Tewodros II to power, EOC appointed native Ethiopian Orthodox scholars to be Patriarchate than of importing from Egypt of Alexandria. So the middle of the 20th century witnessed the independence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Indigenous Church from the Egyptian Coptic church with regard to the appointment of the patriarchate. This was a good milestone in order. However, the introduction of formal modern education at the beginning of the 20th century started to substitute the indigenous church adult education (in EOC traditional instruction the only attendants of school was boys) and suppress its progress in significant way (Lule, 2008, p. 42).

The more recent phenomena of modern (European) education could be considered as a break in the continuity of these traditional education systems. The introduction of modern education into Ethiopia mainly at 1908, on the onset, was not at all welcomed with enthusiasm by the clergy, scholars of native church schools as well as by the aristocracy. That was due to the fear and doubt that modern education could serve as a vehicle for the penetration of alien religion (Seyoum, 1996, p.11). However; Emperor Menilik wisely overcame the challenges and laid the foundation to expand modern education in the nation (Richard, 1962, p.20).

As a result, through time, the opposition of the church to modern education had remarkably diminished (Tekeste 1990, p.53).

Lastly, the indigenous church adult education had a lasting effect on the political social and cultural conditions which had, in turn, influenced the education system of the country until 1974. According to Adane (a liberal writer of Ethiopian History and narrations) (1993, p.42), the religious and secular lives in Ethiopia were inseparable; the church dominated all the day-to-day activities of the people in the country. And obviously this had an adverse effect on the growth and development of the education of the existing religious factions (Catholic, Protestant) (Woube, 2004, p.16).

Studies about modern education and schools indicates that, particularly its curriculum organization, pedagogical principles, teacher and student profiles have been insufficient compared to that of the Indigenous Orthodox Church adult education (Richard, 1962, p.20).

Yet, for Luel (1986, p.131), church education holds the distinction for having established the oldest surviving system of formal education on the age old 3000 years history of Ethiopia.

It is for these reasons that this study tried to examine and discuss some common educational practices and their implications for /on the teaching-learning process of modern education.

2. Material and Methodological Approach

Additionally to secondary sources of data, through techniques of purposive sampling, interviews, unstructured field observation and focused group discussion were used as tools of primary data collection. The approaches through which this study was / has been conducted were qualitative with both Ethnographic-case study and descriptive methods. For scholars, the basic purpose of ethnographic research is to determine the physical and social environment in which the individuals the studied groups of individuals live and work.

For instance, Best and Khan (1993:32) stated, in the context/course of their educational research, that ethnography has been used to study the culture of schools and of the people who visited them (of schools and its students). Likewise, Kumar (1996:7) argued that, “a descriptive method also attempts to describe systematically a situation, a phenomenon, and provide enough information about the living conditions of a community, or describes attitudes and issues”.

3. Discussion and Result of the Research Findings

The Curriculum of Ethiopian Orthodox Church Indigenous Adult Schools

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has its own designed curriculum, learning methodology and organized structures which was handed down from one generation to the other (History of EOC, 2000, p.55-58). But, in all forms of the instructional methodology, learning by heart or memorization commonly characterizes the provision of traditional church education. An adult learner needs is expected to ought to stay more than forty years in Ye'abinet timhrt bet [Orthodox Church adult school]to complete the church education within /typical of the curriculum of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (History of EOC, 2000, p.58).

In this section, the stages of the Ethiopian schooling system, the learning process throughout all these stages would be discussed. In this regard, the branch of education as per the curriculum of the Ethiopian Orthodox traditional Church would also be elaborated clearly.

The church had been the main provider of indigenous adult education for centuries and continues with the development of modern education in the country. Richard (1962, p.361) while discussing the “Education History of Ethiopia during the Italian fascist occupation (1936-1941)” in the *International Journal of African Studies*, he stated that “Traditional education in Ethiopia prior to the invasion had been in the hands of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, although European missionaries in the nineteenth and early twenties centuries had taken a number of young Ethiopians abroad for study (Richard 1962, p.361)”.

Kefyalew (1999, p.52) categorizes the Ethiopian orthodox indigenous church curriculum in to three major levels as for beginners (for infant or adolescent Christian disciple attendants similar with primary school educators like grade 1 to 6), the intermediate (high school stage) and for the intellectuals (college and University stage).

First Stage, for the Beginner (Similar with primary school educators like Grade 1 to 6)

The reading school was the beginning to pursue different branches of the traditional education at higher schools. Students in each branch of the education at the higher level must pass through the Nebab Bet [reading school] where the basics of the study were offered. Nebab Bet [reading class] was the first stage of the traditional education that focused on primary instruction (Kefyalew, 1999, p.52).

There were three stages in this division of the traditional education namely; Fidel (Alphabets), Instruction, Drill in the reading of various religious texts and reading of the Psalm of David. Fidel [alphabet] instruction is the first stage in the traditional education in which children learn the set of Ge’ez letters called Fidel. The students learn these letters, by pointing on the letters kept in order using a straw from left to right, by shouting it loudly and repeatedly so that the student does not forget the large number of characters in 7 (seven) orders (MOE, 1994, p33). As Hable (1970) and Kefyalew (1999) argued that, “this oral method of teaching in the first level of education is called Qutir method [which means learning by counting]” (Hable, 1970; Kefyalew, 1999). Concerning this issue, Richard Pankhrust (1962, p.242) also suggested that, the first stage of study consisted in the mastery of the alphabet or more properly, syllabus made up of 26 basic characters, each with seven forms and also the vowels being compound with the consonants that the learner can easily identifies each letters (Richard, 1962, p.242).

Concerning Qutir [numbers], there are four methods to teach reading texts which contain numerals/ equations. Ge'ez is a drilling method according to which the students start reading by simply putting letters together in a chanting form and read them as a word. When the teacher is assured that the student has mastered this stage; the stage of Wurd nebab [skim reading] follows. In this method, the student is expected to master the accents, the pauses and the stressed or unstressed pronunciation of the syllables. The final stage is known as Qum Nebab bat[scan reading]: in this stage the

student should be able to read without mistakes in front of their primates. In the four steps of the drilling method, the student spends months until he memorizes the characters, the words and the relatively long sentences in a text (Hable, 1970; Kefyalew, 1999).

The second stage of study, according to Richard Pankhurst (1962, p.242) is called, “the Apostle’s alphabet or Fidel Hawaria. This comprises the first chapter of the epistle of St. John in Ge’ez and it had to be learnt by heart. The study of writing would probably start at this stage. Whereas particularly in more modern times arithmetic would be added”.

Here above, as Pankhurst outlined, after the students are able to identify each character of the alphabet they will pass to the next level of the education: reading lessons from religious books such as the epistles of St (saint) Paul, the Gospel of St. John, praises of St. Tamara Mariam [the miracles and wonders of St. Mary], and Tamara Iyasus [the Miracles of Jesus; the Acts of the Apostles].

However, it is at this level that we may remark the very limitedness of this method of teaching in that it restrains the students’ scope of learning to a catechism which ignores the deeper meanings of the religious text and confines itself to drilling: which is far from bringing forth any innovation to the already-static religious teaching in Ethiopia. Simply, the children are expected to properly read these holy books in their entirety even if they may not fully understand the meanings of the books.

These books are used in the church services. The learning methods, memorization and chanting (mentioned above) are also used in this stage (Hable, 1970, p.59). When students become able/ are taught to read the texts, they will learn to memorize daily prayers in the educational program of yemata timihirt [which means evening lesson].

In support of this, Richard Pankhurst(1962, p. 242) describes that, “the third stage of study which is called as Gabata Hawria [loud reading], in which the students study and repeat the act of the Apostles read aloud and explained by their teachers. In the Yemata Timhirt[evening lesson], the students go to the house of the teacher to rehearse their oral lesson. The teacher or an advanced student cites and recites line by line that text that has to be memorized by the students. In the meantime, the pupils should repeat what has been recited until they are able to say it correctly. This practice is done for months until the teacher makes sure that the child has mastered the daily prayers by heart (Hable, 1970, p.52-55).

If the student has accomplished this stage, he will be allowed to read Psalms which is the last stage of Nebab bet [reading class]. During the stages of Wurd nebab[skim reading] and Qum Nebab[scan reading] discussed above, the child learns to read a psalm which is the most devotional book according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Reading the psalm is practiced for several months because it is a prerequisite to continue to the higher schooling levels. A test is not required to upgrade to the next level. Instead, the teacher assesses the students’ progress on a daily basis and decides whether the child has mastered the reading of the psalms. This upgrading

from one stage to the next one is celebrated in a highly festive ambiance among students and teachers alike. A marking/ distinctive feature of this rite of passage is that the student is then endowed with a higher social status as a member of the elite community (Hable, 1970, p.52-55).

The very last stage of the Nibab bet[reading class] study discussed/ discussed by Richard Pankhurst (1962,p.242), is Dawit [the reading of the Psalms of David] by the students and the explanation given by the teacher. Pankhurst then said that, this stage was considered an important achievement in the child's education and that this class would be inaugurated with a celebration organized by the parents in the form of a feast to which the teacher, confessor, relatives and neighbors are all invited. After the psalms have been read and learnt by heart the Qal Timhrt [oral lesson] would start (Richard, 1962, p.242).

The second sub-division in the church school system according to the book of the Church of Ethiopia, is Qidassie Bet [praying room]: it is the class joined by some learners: those who have completed the Nibab Bet [reading class]. A teacher who is specialized in Qidasie Bet or praying school of Qidase is assigned to instruct/ give lessons on Gibre Diquna[deacon]and Gibre Qisina : which means the duties and responsibilities of deacon and of Qes [priest]respectively (Hable, 1970; Kefyalew, 1999).

Second Stage, for the Intermediate (Secondary School Educators like Grade 6 to 12)

As Chaillot (2009, p.28) summarized it, after a student has finished and mastered reading the psalm, he can study in the higher education of the traditional schools. The higher school of the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has three branches, Zema Bet [Music school], Qene Bet [Poetry school] and Metshaf Bet [school for reading]. The music school [Zema Bet] has its own sub-divisions,... the study of the chant book [Degwa] which has five branches [Yohannes, Meraf, Tsoma degwa for Lent, Astemero and Fasiku]; hymns sung after communion [Zemmare] and prayers for the dead [Mawasit] ; the way of standing or, moving [aqwaqwam] for monthly and annual festivals accompanied by, sistra [prayer sticks] and drums executed by the choir while singing [mahelet] (Chaillot, 2009, p.28).

The liturgy [qedasse] and the prayers of the hours [se'atat] are studied separately (Chaillot, 2009, p.28).The Qene Bet [Poetry school] teaches students about the composition of poetry [Qene] sung during church ceremonials and testimonies. As Chaillot stated, in order to compose a Qene, the student must comment on passages of the Bible in a qene for the feast of the day; or on the lives of saints for the feast of saints; he may also introduce moral precepts and even contemporary events. The main aim is to give a double meaning to words and sentences, with symbolism and allusion, as in parables gold and wax [Semena Work] model is the most famous model of poetry in the traditional school. It involves a literature skill to find a double meaning of poems or verses (Kefyalew, 2009, p.128). For example, let us take a sentence which has gold and wax definition or

idiomatic expression. James is a twain tongue man. Here the wax is unobvious James tongue has two crests whereas the gold is James is a liar man.

The society expresses their feelings, sorrows, and complaints over government politics in this kind of proverbs that carry double meanings (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970). Qene Bets [poetry class/lessons] are prevalent in Gojjam (such as Washera, Tselalo, and Gonji), Gondar, and Wollo (Chaillot, 2009, p.72).

In describing the method of study or instruction in Qene Bet or school of poetry, Richard Pankhrust, (1962, p.243) quotes one of Sylvia Pankhrust's citations in which she says, "the class usually assembles in the late afternoon or early evening, when the subjects selected by the professor is studied and discussed until seven or eight p.m. Then the students disperse to meditate on the appointed theme (Richard, 1962, p.243)".

Early in the morning the poet choice to some solitary place where he may gain inspiration, perhaps some unfrequented spot within the church precinct, a quiet grove in the forest, a sheltered ledge on the hillside. Here he [church school student] will endeavor to express in verse the subject selected for the poem of the day. Towards the evening they return to their teacher, to sing to him their compositions and receive his criticisms and corrections. The professor will conclude the session by reciting the poem of his own composed in the space of a few minutes of silence on the part of his students (Richard, 1962, 243).

Third Stage, for the Intellectuals (Higher Education Program like College and University)

The last branch in the higher instruction delivery is Metshaf bet [Literature school] that many achievements are expected from learners to accomplish this stage. It is also called the school of Ye'nibabe na Yetriguame Bet [which is a school for books of the church reading and interpretation] (Hable, 1970, p.56). Concerning the school of literature (or Metsehaf Bet), Abera Jembere in his book, An Introduction to Legal History of Ethiopia (2012, p.35), wrote about the church scholars and their titles and the interpretation methods. He then said that: "Church scholars have taught the contents and interpretations of the Fetha Negest [canon law] and other legal texts throughout the ages and they continue to do so even now. Scholars who made their study of the Fetha Negest were given the honorary title of Liquee [which means one that is an authority to the subject]". He also elaborated the three ways of interpretations in which the first one is Yandemta Tirguame [interpretation by alternatives]: it has different possible meanings which are given successively by using the word 'or'. The second method of interpretation is known as Net'ela Tirguame [literal meaning or gives direct meaning] (Hable, 1970; Abera, 2012).

The third methods of interpretation according to Abera (2012) is Ye'mistir Tirguame [idiomatic interpretation], in this kind of interpretation one does not take into consideration the structure of the sentence, but the meaning it conveys. This school is the highest research institution which enables

students to read and interpret scriptures or books (it is similar with that of article and book review works of students at higher education post graduate levels) and it also enables students to know very well the doctrine of the religion and mysteries of the church together with church history (Abera, 2012, p.35).

This is not the only thing in the tertiary level, intellectuals get testimonial for their intellectual ability in some fields like Zema (hymns), Qene (church poetry) (Kefyalew, 1999, p.59).

According to the church of Ethiopia(EOC, 2000, p. 89-91), a student from the school of Nibab Bet[reading class]or Qidase Bet[praying class] who would like to join the higher schools usually leaves their parents and joins the wandering students who travel from parish to parish and from monastery to monastery. In the higher institution stages the main course of study are listed as follows:

Zema Bet ---The house of music or music class or school.

Qene Bet ---The house of poetry or poetry class, or school.

Metshaf Bet ---The house of the books or school of commentaries, the highest school of all (EOC, 2000, p. 89-91).

The journal of Ethiopian Ministry of Education No.2 (1994,p.33) also shared this idea by saying, "The churches indigenous adult education system has unique features. It is highly dependent on memorization which encourages perfection".

As stated in the journal, 'This memorization of the commentaries of the books demands many years of exercise which the adult student is ready to accept it to devoted his time, energy and money to rehearsal'.

The Graduate of Metshaf Bet [literatures school] enjoys high prestige as a scholar and can take a high post in the church hierarchy, such as head of the Gedam or Debr (monastery). This is perhaps one of the motives that encourage the student to spend more than half of his life at such schools. At this stage memorization is not felt as a burden by the student, because ever since his early days in, Nibab bet, he has developed his powers of memorization (EOC, 2000, p.101).

4. Unique Characters of Indigenous Church Adult Schools

There are characteristics which are unique to traditional/indigenous church adult schools. Like, the migration factor, the sponsorship factor, the duration of studying the curriculum, the teaching methodology, the responsibility to create successors and the culture of manuscript writing are some of the unique features which are discussed below (Lule, 2008, p.38). As it was already discussed, in the literature section that adult education is offered in an organized condition in the way that, it can be provided by government, non-governmental organizations and other voluntaries. The indigenous education providers organize the curriculum and the school setting in areas where the learners can be found, and which is comfortable

for most of them. This is not the case for the adult learners in Ye'abinet Timhrt Bet [church traditional adult schools] (Lule, 2008, p.41).

The migration factor is one of the unique characters of the traditional church school. To settle around their residential areas and complete their education is not a tradition for the learners of Ye'abinet Timhrt Bet [Traditional church school]. In most cases, the primary school level that is Nibab bet [reading grade] which comprises fidel [alphabet] for the reading of the psalm can be completed in every village where there is a church (Chalio, 2009, p.34).

At this level most of the participants are at an early age of their schooling journey. A learner who is also lucky enough to complete the higher education of poem, poetry and literature [zema, qine, and metshaf] near his village, and who is supported by his family can pursue his studies in a comparative comfort by living with his own family. But most of the learners who reach the age of fifteen have responsibility to find and decide where and what to learn by leave their home, friends and relatives and to travel a long distance in search for a center of learning of teachers in their field of interest (Lule, 2008, p.44).

The other unique character is the sponsorship factor. Even though students' engagement to the traditional church education has cultural and religious factors, the community and at large the society around these traditional schools, involve in supporting these learners. When they go away from home and family by traveling a long journey, without the consent of their families, by their own decision, they know that there is only free education (free of charge instruction and shelter but not cover their food supply) (Chalio, 2009,p.28).

Concerning their livelihood, they believe that the society is helpful when it comes to the need and demand of the students, because it is assumed that there is a religious and moral obligation to support these students. For this reason, begging (collecting of food items to daily consumptions through rotating in every households home in the village) became a traditionally accepted activity for students in Ye'abinet Timhrt bet[reading grade] especially in the rural areas (Chalio, 2009, p.28).

As Leul 2008, agreed that, begging is a proper and respectable activity. It is their consent and approval that it does not necessarily mean they are incapable to work and support themselves or does not mean that they are poor, but rather they believe that it is a blessing culture and a sacrifice activity as an attendant of religious education (Leul, 2008, p.67). Besides the accommodation covered by society (like contributing of food items to those learners), the learners are also responsible to build their Gojjo bet [hut] with wood, grass, and mud in which they are living a communal life being four or five together (like university students dorm placement of one room to six, seven and more students) (Chalio, 2009, p.29).

There is also another unique character which is the teaching methodology. The method of teaching is mainly providing oral lesson or [Ye'qal Timihrt] in a melodious sound (the word, which is performed by recitation and

memorization. In all schools, in school of Fidel, school of Zema, school of Qene or school of Metshaf Tirguame. Recitation and memorization are the dominant methods of teaching in traditional church schools (Richard, 1962, p.241).

After completing the Nibab bet and reading of the psalm in most cases the learners are motivated to join Qene bet where they start to compose different verses by themselves.

To perform these activities, they go far from their village or schools to solitary places to be isolated, to meditate for the theme of the day that is given by their teacher. At the end of the day, the learners go back to their village and began to compose in front of their teacher in turn what they studied during the day time (Lule, 2008, p.38).

In the meantime, they get criticized, corrected and commented. Meditation or thinking carefully about (word choice) is religious or spiritual philosophy and this is the students' daily activity especially in Qene Bet[poetry class](Lule, 2008, 23-25).

Concerning the duration of the traditional church education, it needs a very long time and experience to master the aspired education under highly qualified teachers.

To complete and master at least one of the various programs, and to give full service of the church duty, they spent number of years in attending the school.

Without mastering some of the specialized lessons one cannot be considered as scholar and cannot get church title that express respect. One can be specialized in one or more field of studies. This means that one should spend additional years to be certified on one or more fields of education and claim to be a scholar in that specific types of study. Concerning the duration of traditional education, it depends on the interest, commitment and effort of the learners (Lule, 2008, p.41).

To complete all fields of specialization in the traditional education system which is based on reading, chanting singing, poetry and literature [nibab bet, zema bet, qene bet &metshaf bet], and to be recognized and accredited by the concerned center of excellence, there is minimum fixed time decided to finish each program. In case of certification, there are additional years that a student is expected to spend in that specific center of excellence whether the learner has completed that program in the previous school or not. It might take about thirty eight years and above, which is more than the equivalent of the time that takes to complete a Ph.D which is the highest educational level in the conventional education. One can also spend more than fifty years to complete all the programs (Lule, 2008, p.73-74).

So, the duration of Ethiopian indigenous church adult education depends on the interest, commitment and effort of the learners (Luel, 2008, p.73).

It is known Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia, since that time, the church has remained the oldest teaching institution for religious and secular education alike ; literature, commentary, church songs, arithmetic, astronomy, and law (Richard, 1962, p.20).

As Lule (2008) stated that, “the responsibility to create their successors is the unique feature of these traditional indigenous adult schools. Teachers, who are specialized in one of the higher learning programs and get recognition from the concerned center of excellence, have religious and moral obligation to transmit their knowledge for their successors and for the next generation” (Lule, 2008, p.74).

For this reason, these teachers establish schools around churches which are traditionally called Wonber Mezergat [opening new church school]. There is no proper classroom setting, but the students sit under their teachers' feet to achieve their education goals. These schools are called Gubae Bet [Compressive learning class] which is established for each specialization (Challiot, 2009, p.18).

The church scholars spread their teachings from generation to generation by establishing the church school system by their initiative in their field of specialization to maintain the teachings of their first church fathers. Their successors also do the same thing as their teachers, and this is how education is transferred from the past for the last two thousand years (since Christianity was entered in to Ethiopian around 340 A.D) in the system of Ye'abinet Timhirt Bet [church traditional school] (Lule, 1986, p.136). The culture of manuscript writing is the other unique character of traditional church schools. By the time there were no writing machines and printing materials, it was the duty of the students of Ye'abinet Timhirt Bet [church traditional school] and church scholars to write books of their specialization and other religious and historical books. The students of the traditional church schools not only learn the knowledge of the church history and education for themselves, but also transmit it in one form or another for the next generation (Challiot, 2009, 67).

This is done through due procedures. Writing materials, which are Birana [a parchment made from animals skin], black and red ink from different kinds of plants, leaves and flowers and [Bie'r] or a pen as an instrument made from woody grass like plant with a hollow inside and it is scraped or sharpened for writing are prepared by the students taking long time and effort. The manuscripts are written by Geez which is among the four alphabets of the world, and indigenous and native alphabet of Ethiopia. Writing a Geez literature needs the proper use of punctuation and it has its own law and procedure. Abundant manuscripts that seek the attention of foreigners are written by the hands of church scholar in Geez (Challiot, 2009, p.21)

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Implications of the Cooperative Learning Practices to the Modern Education

In the present day modern schools, unequal contribution of group members in a group assignment is the common observable problem. Some students who do not contribute with equal effort with their colleagues ultimately get

the same marks as them. The cooperative learning method in the school directly involves the learner, who is expected to be an integral part of the learning process as a participant. Group discussion as a valuable education method thus provides opportunity for participation. Perhaps the small number in the groups enables all members to participate in the discussion. As Khan (1993, p.34) approves that; students may deliberately refuse to participate when groups are very large.

Kumar (1996, p.59) also explains that students have more chances to talk in pairs for small groups than in whole-class activities, and shy students are more likely to feel comfortable expressing ideas in more intimate settings. The school is likely to believe that there is much to be gained by arranging students to collaborate in pairs or small groups during they work assignments.

It implies that setting desirable group interaction environment provides a chance for students to develop better skills for education. Learning can easily be achieved more readily in groups of three to four members than in larger groups. Thus curriculum planners are expected to select learning experiences that help individuals to work in smaller groups. Better social values, sense of responsibility, group interests and actions develop when students are made to work in groups than individually. The teaching-learning process in the school starts with the regular assignment [the next lesson] posed by the priest to be worked mainly in groups. To accomplish the daily lesson, it is expected to study the topic individually before every one is engaged in the cooperative learning activity.

This indicates, first that the learner accepts/considers the regular assignment as his or his group's permanent task. Second it can be used to provide opportunities to the students to develop the habits of reading and to work independently and thereby to grow his sense of self-reliance and initiative. Every group member also knows he is accountable for accomplishing the learning activities (assignments) and. doing his share in the group discussion.

In line with this, Kumar (1996, p.62) stated that, cooperative learning methods are most likely to enhance learning outcomes if they combine group goal with individual accountability. Thus in modern schools, teachers are required to give great attention to provide group activities which will result in great responsibility among members of the groups. When students in the school are discussing in pairs or groups, the most advanced students move in the compound to provide any assistance and to assess the progress of the former individuals and groups. This would have positive implication to the modern education teacher that they should be active and involved in the classroom activities during group work, going around and making sure that all students are actively involved.

Implication of assessment and promotion techniques in the school

From the observation above, all the functions of the teacher's and cooperative learning, like recalling information from the past lesson through

oral question pair and group discussion behavior were observed in maximizing the learning activities.

But some teachers in modern schools miss this part of testing because students who were less likely to participate were not encouraged to participate in the classroom interaction.

Assessment conducted in the school to measure students' progress could, thus, have positive implication to modern education system. The informal observation of students' behavior could be a useful procedure for collecting assessment data in the secular education system. Assessment can be conducted through informal means of continuous assessment.

The informal observation method of continuous assessment can be used by teachers to teach well and to help learners to learn better. This might equally determine how well each learner has mastered the basic learning competence described in the syllabus.

The finding implies, if students in secular schools are given opportunities to evaluate their classmates tasks, they can give their own ideas, opinions' and attitudes. This can contribute to improve assessment practices of teachers. In supporting this idea, Kyrincov (1998, p.91) noticed that cooperative activities are very important in assessment method because they enable pupils to obtain greater insight in to the conduct of learning through observing the performance of their peers and sharing procedures and strategies.

A further interesting aspect of the school is its practice with regard to, promotion of students. The school shows that it is through continuous informal assessment that the teacher and his students gather and interpret specific pieces of information about students' learning. The learning outcome can be monitored and remedial intervention can be given when short comings are observed.

The assessment result tells them to improve, not simply giving them a mark. If he/she discovers from his assessment that a student does not understand the concept, he/she will use this information to modify his/her teaching through one to one based tutorial.

The modern classrooms teacher could get lesson to learn from this technique of assessment. Although this method is subjective, its use frequently requires more time and effort than the typical testing procedures; they provide the best means available for evaluating a variety of important behaviors. Self-reports made by the learners themselves about one's peer or oneself could be a valuable source of information in many area of learning and development in the modern system.

The assessment in the school is based on the content of the curriculum in which the emphasis is in evaluating content based knowledge instead of evaluating for labeling or grading purposes. Here learning is assumed to be personal and relative to the individual learner, with regard to what is to be learned as well as when it is learned.

This seems similar to what the Ministry of Education (MOE) (1994, p.129) called it Curriculum-Based Assessment. For MOE (1994) the interest of

curriculum-based assessment is to develop a means of testing with low-achieving learners through a measurement of the level of student in terms of the expected curricular outcomes of the school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, the following recommendations are made.

- The curriculum of the EOC which was transferred orally through different eras, by the apostolic succession, was not transparent and clear to understand for others except for the practitioners of Church men. As far as there are adult learners in the church school system, the curriculum development for traditional education should be well planned, organized and sequenced. Furthermore, to keep its sustainability, and to transfer it to the next generation, it is important if technical assistance is provided by the Ministry of Education.
- The church has to keep documented the indigenous knowledge inheritance of the existing curriculum which is developed in oral language Ge'ez with different means. This system of curriculum development does not only serve the adult education development but also contributes to the transfer of Ge'ez language from generation to generation. In this regard, a uniform and centralized curriculum is decisive not only for the development of adult education but also for the survival of the Ge'ez language.
- The learners of ye'abinet Timhrt Bet do not have sustainable income. Hence, a large number among them drop out from their education and return back to their homes. To resolve this problem, a centralized and nationwide system should be developed by the EOCH.
- As a result, when these churches become weakened the schools disappeared accordingly. The EOC and MOE should be responsible for supporting and administering all country wide Ye'abinet Timhrt Bet [traditional Church schools] in financial, advisory and technical ways.
- The Ethiopia Orthodox Church traditional educational policy (religious education) must be institutionally handled. Accordingly, it should incorporate Ye'abinet Timhirt Bets and other rural based religious institutes that deal with adult education in its organizational structure. Because all of those Ethiopian religious organizations have not a central chain of administer in an organized manner with similar policies, rather they taught their own designed church education syllabus and policies in fragment ways.
- The Ethiopian educational policy should give a proper place to indigenous knowledge transfer systems like of Ye'abinet Timhirt Bets [traditional Church schools]. Accordingly, the Ministry of education as a key player in the education system of the country has to provide technical support in order to make the curriculum coherent and up to date because, is an intangible asset, not only to EOC, but also, to the country and to the global academic community in general.

- Ye'abinet Timhrt Bet [traditional Church schools] is not only a spiritual but also an academic and philosophical asset of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Ethiopians and Orthodox Religion follower people of the world and. It faced challenges because of colonization and globalization to arrive at this time; furthermore, it should be preserved in such a way to be modernized without losing its spiritual value.

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