

**Child-centred Curriculum Leadership for the subject of
English in Ethiopian Primary Schools**

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ABSTRACT

According to Serbessa (2006) there is a tension between Western pedagogy, in particular child-centred learning, and traditional Ethiopian approaches to teaching. In this study, this tension is examined through the teaching methods used and the resources teachers have at their disposal. The teachers are herein viewed as curriculum leaders, contrasting with the preconception that managers are leaders of a curriculum (Hannay & Seller, 1991). By adopting the educator's perspective, leadership will be explored from the position of how teachers apply the English syllabus under a curriculum demanding child-centred learning, when teaching English in a state and private international school. Comparisons were made between schools, though mainly overall findings were collected as a phenomena-based inquiry through interviews conducted with 10 teachers, 5 from a state school and 5 from a private school. Richards' (2013) definitions of forward, backward and central design are considered in the context of the Ethiopian classroom from previous research and from interview responses. Also, the overall purpose of studying English was examined as an influencing factor on the way in which English is taught in primary school. This addresses the need for English academically and vocationally as well as its use as a medium of instruction in high school. Interviews revealed the various pressures on teachers from the perspectives of the purpose of English teaching and the expected methods of instruction against the available resources. The overall implications deal with how curriculum leaders within the school could implement strategies to deal with the various pressures associated with limited resources and the demands regarding the method of teaching as well as what the English language syllabus should provide.

Keywords: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, public school, private school, resources, interviews, curriculum design, English language.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this thesis is to examine what challenges curriculum leaders might face and how they manage these challenges when applying the English syllabus in the context of two schools in the capital city of Ethiopia.

The form of leadership I wish to examine is curriculum leadership, encompassing teaching methods and resources. Within the context of a school, at whatever level and in whatever country, curriculum leadership is not necessarily led by management as it requires a specialized knowledge, meaning classroom teachers will, whether consciously or unconsciously be leaders of the curriculum (Hannay & Seller, 1991, pp.340-341). English has been selected as the focal subject for this study because it is taught as a subject from Grade 1 (age 7) in the Ethiopian primary school curriculum and becomes the medium of instruction from the beginning of secondary school (age 15) in most regions of the country. Through interviews I will adopt the educator's perspective towards managing resources, pedagogy and the curriculum, when teaching English in a state and private school. Comparisons will be made based on the pedagogical philosophy and overall purpose of learning English as perceived by the interviewed staff members regarding their preferred resources and activities. In particular, I wish to find out, first, what teaching strategies and resources are promoted by the schools' curriculums, and second, examine the extent to which teachers' understand and apply them in their teaching through the analysis of teachers' experiences recorded in the interview. The research results are highly contingent on their situation and in no way can be considered representative of Ethiopia. The teachers interviewed will be working in Addis Ababa which has a completely different economy and culture to other regions. Both the data collected and the results will be qualitative, seeking issues to be highlighted in the two schools sampled.

There are many competing areas as to how the curriculum is implemented in Ethiopia. These range from resources, teachers understanding and the curriculum itself. The leadership position is from those designing the curriculum. Unfortunately, the implementation of the syllabus appears to be based on Western theory (see Serbessa, 2006, p.127) and demonstrates a lack of understanding as to how it should be implemented in the context of Ethiopia, where large class sizes, poorly paid and

unmotivated teachers, in some cases using a language not their own, make concepts such as “active learning” difficult to apply. This dissonance between theory and practice reveals a failure to appreciate what curriculum leadership involves.

The reforms and success of less-developed countries such as Ethiopia are usually measured by ‘global educational standards’ set in large part by economically advanced countries (Sahlberg, 2004, p.67). As curriculums are increasingly based on Western pedagogy they might conflict with the context. According to Serbessa (2006), there is a tension between Western pedagogy and traditional Ethiopian teaching styles. Serbessa describes Western pedagogy as modern when viewed from an Ethiopian perspective. Many of these techniques have only recently been imported into Ethiopia, though they have existed and evolved over centuries in Europe. In this study, I will examine how teachers understand and execute the curriculums they have been given, and the pressure to employ new Western teaching techniques in a setting with limited resources and conflicting learning goals.

The section *Language and Education in Ethiopia* will examine the general context of education in Ethiopia, with a brief look at the diverse linguistic situation and the significant role decentralisation has played in promoting this. Education in the UK assumes a largely monolingual context and contrasts with a federal system which in Ethiopia allows a much greater degree of freedom to the various regions to implement their own curriculums. English as a subject and as a language is therefore seen as having an ‘outsider role’, alien to the experience of the majority of the population. Other contextual issues addressed are large class sizes as they could significantly affect the way a curriculum is delivered.

Addis Ababa has a particularly symbiotic relationship with the private sector as regards the supply of education, hence the inclusion in this thesis of both the private and state sector as if they were one and the same. Since most private schools use the government curriculum I wish to examine their role in education.

In the next section leadership is explained mainly from the point of view of leading through the curriculum and the discrepancy between this and the way in which it is applied by teachers on the ground which leads on to the main part of the theoretical

framework. I have examined common issues in past research which directly affect the teaching of the class. These consisted of the purpose of teaching English, the teaching methods that exist in Ethiopia as well as those being pushed by the curriculum, resources and finally the way in which curriculums are planned. Since teacher training was also found to be a common issue in previous research I wished to concentrate both on the curriculum and how teachers interpreted it and for this reason teacher training was also included in my study.

In my role as an English curriculum coordinator at different primary schools in the Middle East I have personally experienced the challenges that can occur when Western pedagogy is applied in a setting which has different or limited resources and a different cultural heritage. I hope to further my understanding of English teaching in Addis Ababa as I will be implementing my own approach to the study of English in a primary school there in the future.

2 Language and Education in Ethiopia

In this chapter I look at the context of Ethiopia, to gain an understanding of the situation and develop a basis for my interview questions.

2.1 Linguistic Context of Ethiopia

Although Amharic is the official language, it is only spoken by 36.9% of the population and of that only 27% have Amharic as their mother tongue, most of whom live in Addis Ababa (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2007, pp.143-160). There are another 84 indigenous languages (Lewis, 2009), the most popular of which define the country's principal regions: Afan Oromo represents 34.5%, Tigrinya 6% and Somali 6%. English is the most widely spoken foreign language but only stands at 0.3% of the population (CSA, 2007, pp.143-160; see also p.19, fig. 1, Inhibitors – “Unused”). Nevertheless, this situation is changing as English is the major foreign language for publications, at government level, the press and the internet (Záhořík & Teshome, 2009, p.95). In these authors' opinion, the outlook for English in Ethiopia is positive (ibid., p. 99), hence my designation of it as an “Aspirational language” (fig. 1). Benson, Heugh, Bogale and Yohannes (2012) report on the success in implementing mother-tongue languages in schools, which, despite being a low income country, Ethiopia has managed to achieve within six to ten years, thanks to the political will behind it. This was achieved through decentralisation into regional bureaus which had previously been one centralised system (ibid. 2012, p33) where only English and Amharic were taught. Geographically there are only 9 federal states, based on ethnic territoriality and language, and there are 11 regional educational bureaus. These are as follows: Beneshangul Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Somali, Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region) and the two additional regional education bureaus are Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. These are in addition to geographical regions because they constitute a large urban population.

Ethiopia has an extremely diverse number of languages not just linguistically but also contextually. What is meant by a contextual language is the situation in which it is used. There are six definitions of these contextual language types (Záhořík & Teshome, 2009, pp.86-87) applicable throughout the world, all of which exist in Ethiopia and only some of which would be found in monolingual or largely monolingual cultures such as the UK. These consist of home language, community language, lingua franca, national language, official language and minority language. The first is the language of the home or *mother tongue*. They add that this is the language that children can speak “fluently” before entering school. (A caveat here would be the definition of “fluently”, though in an African context, especially in rural communities with a high degree of oral communication and in an environment where even young children are expected to assist in a variety of tasks, this term is valid.). There is then the *community language*, based on the mother tongue, but spoken also by those who have entered the community from outside and for whom this is a second language. This would apply to teachers from one region moving to a school in another. A *lingua franca* is one which enables communication between different ethnicities in the same or across regions. It may not correspond with any of the other languages spoken, as is the case in the SNNPR, for example, where Amharic as elsewhere in Ethiopia performs this function. Amharic is also a *national language* in that it is indigenous to the country but transcends other languages for purposes of government, education, and business. Another term for it would be the *official language*. There was a time when English enjoyed a parallel status with Amharic (see my page 5 below). *Minority languages* are those which are spoken by fairly small percentages of a country’s population.

The number of different languages varies from 75 (Záhořík & Teshome, 2009, p.81) to 90+ (Wagaw, 2001, p.1). The reason for this discrepancy may lie in what Záhořík sees as 9 highly endangered languages and 19 extinct or nearly extinct languages (2009, p.83 table.1). Those at risk are solely oral and therefore, as they decline, it is likely that their speakers will use other major languages instead (ibid., p.82). As far as English is concerned, the United Nations Statistical Division figures for 2010 suggest that the percentage of speakers of English as a first language (L1) is statistically insignificant at 0.002%, and only 0.195% of the total population have English as a second language (L2). (This last figure is disputed. Wagaw (2001, p.3) puts it at 0.32% and Heugh et al. (2011) quotes a similar figure, 0.3% from the 2007 Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency

data.) The 2010 figure is calculated by using the total number of L2 speakers of English as a proportion of the then total population. Wagaw (2001., p.1) states that Amharic has been the official language since 1270, only preceded by Ge'ez, which he describes as the language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the language of culture and church liturgy for those wishing to pursue a religious vocation.

Though Ethiopia has never been colonized, apart from two invasions by Italy, one in the late nineteenth century and quickly defeated and the second prior to and during World War 2 (1935-1941), it was nonetheless open to outside influences, enjoying a cultural revival during the 17th century as a result of exposure to both Western and Muslim influences. The West, especially Italy, France and Great Britain again sought influence after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which enlarged Ethiopia's strategic importance; but it was not until the restoration of Emperor Haile Selassie I to the throne in 1941, thanks to British and Ethiopian forces that English gained in importance in the country as almost on a par with Amharic as the language of a cultivated elite (Záhořík, 2009., p.95; Heugh et al., 2007, p.8). Haile Selassie imposed Amharic on schools in an attempt to modernise the state and this led to resentment among other ethnic groups, eventually leading to an uprising and his death in suspicious circumstances. The regime that followed, the Dergue, sought to capitalize on its popular support by giving equal status to all local languages. Their rule became increasingly dictatorial and they were eventually overthrown. However, the government that followed adopted a similar policy of promoting local languages. The federal constitution demands all Ethiopian languages receive equal state recognition (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1995, p.3). In line with the constitution the *Education and Training Policy* (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994, pp.23-24) required primary school children to learn in their mother tongues whilst in secondary and higher education English would be the medium of instruction. Eshetie (2010, p.4) criticises language policy in Ethiopia for being based on political stratagem and not involving Kembo-Sure's (2003, p.252) recommendations for good language policy. One of Kembo-Sure's (ibid.) recommendations includes considering the "economic value of each language", which could be interpreted as bringing economic benefit to the individual as well as the country. The three competing languages, namely the local, national (Amharic) and international (English) languages, present challenges, such as how to give equal recognition to each these languages, what the medium of instruction should be and whether the purposes of language learning are

being met. Some research (Heugh et al., 2007, p.51) indicates that parents fear a decline in English ability with the increased focus on local languages. The private sector has taken advantage of the perception that the English language is of greater “economic value” by offering a curriculum with a greater focus on English.

2.2 Private education

The OECD (2012, chap.2, p.56) recommends disposing of tracking which reinforces negative outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is no official system or recommendation for tracking in Ethiopia. However, the strength of the private sector has caused a greater divergence between the privileged class and those from a disadvantaged background.

This divergence is at its most conspicuous in Addis Ababa, which has, according to the Ministry of Education, 728 state primary schools and 334 private primaries (MoE, 2012). The significant fraction of private schools makes clear how dependent Addis Ababa is on the private sector. This has led to many government initiatives supporting private schools (UNESCO, 2006, p.2). Like many countries that have only recently implemented universal education, Ethiopia has found they have a sudden population boom leading to an increased demand on schools. The country has not been able to respond quickly enough to this due both to its rapidity and to constraints on funding. As mentioned earlier, teaching shortages also plague the state system due to low salaries and inflexibility in selecting which region one is allotted to work in. Teshome (2015), points out that Ethiopia would not be able to meet Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education (MoFED, 2010, p.11) were it not for the operation of private schools.

This powerful and influential private sector is nevertheless not yet able to provide enough school places to combine with the state sector to achieve this goal and the consequent number of teachers required to deliver it. Ethiopian teachers desire to work in a private school for the higher salary and being able to select Addis Ababa as their region of work. The pupils and parents in this region realise that education might be their only chance to study or work abroad and earn a salary which can sustain them. In short, parents see it as an investment worth paying for. Teshome (2015) expresses the

frustration parents feel over the ever increasing price of private schools which he describes as limitless.

Teshome (ibid.) divides the private sector into three types of school, each providing for different economic groups and charging fees accordingly. The first type of school described by Teshome (ibid.) serves the diplomatic community. The second type of school was described as a joint venture, schools charging annually around 32,000-58,000 birr fee per head. The final type of school featured in Teshome's article (ibid.) could be said to cater to middle-class parents with a fee of 9,700-28,660 birr per head. He cites Sandford, British International School and Lycee Guebre Mariam, all of which are international schools, as serving the most privileged. It is not just the discrepancy in fees but the yearly increment which is angering the parents, creating an ever narrower circle of elite who can afford the international schools. One key variable (see fig. 1) between the state and private sector is that private primary schools are more likely to use English as a medium of instruction or devote more periods to the subject. This is in response to the upward and downward pressures (see fig. 1) creating a demand for such schooling.

A UNICEF report states that English is taught from Grade 1 (2016, p.32). It cites one source (ibid., p.33: Ambatchew, 2010, p.204) as claiming that the political elite send their children to international English or French medium schools. (See also, fig. 1 *Upward Pressures*.) However, when English is introduced as the medium of instruction it varies in non-government primary schools and depends both on the school and the region in which it operates.

Table 1: Below are the most recent tuition fees (4/5/2017) gathered from the schools' own official websites.

| Name of school | Grade 1 fee per term | Status | Primary and secondary ed. | Curriculum | First established |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| British international school | 7850 Birr | NGO | Yes | Co-ed with UK curriculum | Not available |
| Sandford | 1050 \$ | NGO | Yes | Co-ed with UK Curriculum | 1949 |
| International community school | 7323 \$ | NGO | Yes | IB | 1964 |

Nwuke (2008, p.85) saw benefits in the private sector in that it promoted talent and knowledge. His main concern, however, was the lack of quality control as there was an inverse relationship between the increase in the number of private schools and their level of quality. This might be because there are a wider range of private schools catering for the lower middle class rather than any increase in the number patronised by the elite. For my research I will examine a lower middle class private school which has only a moderately larger budget compared with the state sector, allowing for less extreme disparity in resources and staff and therefore reducing the number of variables and making comparisons easier.

Though Ethiopia is dependent on the private sector and the government will often allow special dispensation, such as free land (ibid., p.89), to set up a school, it also puts pressure on the school to provide an Ethiopian education for its citizens rather than one suited to a foreign elite. Online information showed most of the elite schools had a co-ed system (see table 1) meaning they had integrated the Ethiopian regional curriculum into their international one. There is very little information online as regards the smaller private schools though they are likely to mainly offer the Ethiopian curriculum with some enhancements for English tuition as they are unable to afford the international curriculums on a lower budget. Despite the variability of private schools, where similarities in both curriculum and budget exist one can compare both state and private schools, noting what “enhancements” are used as well as any other significant differences.

The private school selected for my interview was one catering for middle-class families

and its fees were comparatively moderate. The reason a private school was chosen was not only for purposes of comparison but as mentioned above, they represent one third of the schooling (MoE, 2012) in the capital city and as such are depended upon to complement the state provision.

2.3 Educational leadership in the application of English as part of the Curriculum

The latest curriculum has demanded a greater focus on child-centred learning and English as a subject. The perception of English has changed with the realization that it is less a supplementary asset but more an essential skill (see fig. 1, *Downward Pressures*). For these changes to occur, leaders must pave the way by understanding how to actually apply new theories and focuses in the classroom. As both my reading and my research shows, what is happening on the ground differs from the curriculum proposals. The curriculum leader faced with this divergence would need to adopt what Jäppinen and Maunonen-Eskelinen (2012, p. 40) call *ambidexterity*, in other words both fitting into the given situation while at the same time looking to future possibilities.

Findings (MOE, 2002, cited in Teklemariam, 2006, p.55) suggest that there are failures in school management and administration. This might be through a failure to integrate teachers' viewpoints. Landau et al. (2014, p.1324) found there to be an over-abundance of agent-centred change endorsing the idea that change occurs in a rigid hierarchy from a single leader (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007, p.993) and their actions are solely responsible for a change being successful or unsuccessful. I wish to examine possible implications for curriculum leadership from the perspective of the teachers, rather than that of an appointed leader.

Ideal curriculum leadership is often interpreted by leaders in the school adapting and facilitating the implementation of a curriculum (Jackson, 2013). Previous literature (Jackson, 2013; Harrison & Killion, 2006; Hannay & Seller, 1991) maintains that curriculum leaders guide the curriculum in their school and they can have the role of classroom teacher, coordinator or head of department. Hannay and Seller (1991, pp.340-341), take issue with those views of leadership which adhere to the tradition that administrators and managers are responsible for implementing curriculum simply

because they hold a higher position. My research adopts this concept, regarding the teachers as the curriculum leaders who are largely responsible for implementing a curriculum. The research will be based on interviews with teachers and will indicate the issues confronting curriculum leaders, within schools and the implications for the curriculum as a whole, paying particular attention to the delivery of English.

As Landau et al. (2014, p.1322) point out, while every aspect of an organisation might change as regards structure and what is taught, the identity of the stakeholders should ideally remain. Through decentralisation, the structure in Ethiopia has changed and with the introduction of Western teaching methods challenging the traditional teaching style (Serbessa, 2006), one could argue that Ethiopia's identity is changing. Through these changes Landau et al. (2014, p.1322) remind us of the importance of retaining "stakeholders' endorsement". This (ibid., p.1323) acknowledges that different stakeholders often have different perspectives of change and, according to Landau et al., it is essential to reconcile these different views in order to legitimise the change. Teachers are an essential stakeholder in any change but winning their endorsement might be challenging. Teachers regard themselves as "autonomous professionals" (Newman, 1994, p.2) which is why their view is vital for effective leadership.

Profiles of schools investigated by the *Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools* (Newman, 1994) revealed the thinking behind leaders in the organisation. One school was classified by the centre as a success according to their criteria (ibid., pp.6-10). The head of this school (ibid., p.6), saw the administration as supporting teachers in introducing new ideas and techniques into the classroom. The same head believed teachers performed better when they had control over their teaching, which can be also expressed through the provision of new teaching tools, allowing the teacher to choose from a variety of teaching methods. In order to gain legitimacy one must allow stakeholders to reconstruct and evolve the change process (Mantere et al., 2013 cited in Landau et al. 2014, p.1324).

One of the proposed five attributes from Senge (1994), for a learning organisation was a shared vision. The idea of a clear vision is repeated throughout literature on educational leadership especially in an organisation going through change. Leithwood et al. (2006, p.6) see "building vision" not only as a criterion for successful school leadership but

also as an aspect of change management which can subsequently develop the personnel and even change an organisation as a whole. Senge (1994) explains in his book that shared visions encourage leaders to learn using concept-shifting and values alignment. In the context of Ethiopia, concepts and values are changing. (For the concept of how children are taught and how this dynamic works within a traditional educational system see the section on *Teaching Methodology*.) I wish to examine the vision in terms of what is the overall purpose of learning English to see if it suits the pedagogy, resources and curriculum design.

2.4 The Role of English in Ethiopian Curriculum Design

Teklemariam (2006) and Heugh et al. (2007) both examine the purpose of English for the Ethiopian context. Teklemariam (2006) looks at the relevance the curriculum has to pupils outside of school. Heugh et al. (2007) look at English as the medium of instruction in high schools. This affects the purpose of learning English in primary school as it might need to prepare them for the rigours of learning all the subjects in English.

Levin and Fullan (2008, p.117) recognise the importance of leaders having visions, as essential to achieving quality. Teklemariam (2006, p.45), begins his report by discussing what he considers to be the visions or goals of learning English in Ethiopia as a result of his findings. Teklemariam's (ibid., p.45) goals and profiles indicate the main purposes which can be summarised as the following:

- Preparing students to be “members of the global community.”
- To enable students to partake in college and university programs.
- Facilitate entry into business and industry
- English language is needed to understand and succeed in all the other subjects in the curriculum as they are taught in English

Solutions to these four visions are expounded upon. To help prepare students to be members of a global society implies that students require a wider range of media to engage with. Teklemariam advises (2006, p.48) the use of authentic texts in the form of “essays, reports, short stories, poetry, scripts, journals, letters, biographies, children's

stories, articles, reviews, explanations, instructions, notes, procedures, and advertisements” for meaningful learning. Facilitating entry into academic programs and employment, according to Teklemariam (ibid.), requires students to learn to write clearly and coherently and, in order to aid the understanding of the various subjects taught in English, a wide range of technical language needs to be taught.

2.5 English as a Medium of Instruction

As Teklemariam’s (2006) study demonstrates, the focus and priority of English has changed. Whilst it has been understood since the 1970s that knowledge of the English language increases the chance of getting a government position, job and education prospects have broadened in their demand for English. The prioritising of English as a language has led English to remain the medium of instruction in high school (Heugh et al.’s, 2007, p.50) despite the regional language policy of 1994 which gave pupils the right to learn in their own regional language. Heugh et al.’s (2007) research focuses on the conflict between regional, national and international language. With the introduction of regional languages as a medium of instruction there seems to be some confusion as to what the overall vision of language instruction is. Presumably regional languages were introduced to promote understanding of the various subjects in schools but Heugh et al. (2007) point out that there is a shift in some regions to the use of English as the language of instruction in secondary school and at the top end of some primaries, thereby countering any objective of making subject content comprehensible in favour of making English communication the sole purpose of the curriculum (ibid., p.124). This study (ibid., p.16) sought to observe and investigate how this transition occurred, the rationale behind it being that during primary school the mother tongue would be most prevalent in the first cycle (grade 1-4) and gradually move towards English as the method of instruction in the second cycle (Grade 5-8).

Heugh et al. (2007) recognise the downward pressure from higher education, especially at university level (see fig.1, *Downward Pressures – “Academic language”*), which emphasised the use of English to the detriment of academic achievement. The national exams at grade 10 and 12 are in English only, contradicting Ethiopia’s 1994 curriculum change which gave all students the right to be taught in their native local language. On the whole Heugh et al.’s (ibid.) main criticism centres on its being an “unrealistic

aspiration” to use English to deliver the curriculum (ibid., p.110) with teachers and pupils ill prepared to fulfil it. Heugh et al.’s 2007 study understandably focuses on Ethiopians having a clearer understanding of the curriculum were it taught in their native language, but this is an Africa-wide issue.

As Heugh et al. (ibid., p.20) mention, there is a political element to this. Many other African countries were former British colonies, inevitably leading to a familiarity with English, either viewed as the path to success in a post-colonial globalised world or to be rejected as the language of the oppressor. Either way, this familiarity is bound to ensure that English-language use in these countries is more developed than in Ethiopia, where the government is seeking to remedy this deficiency by moving towards the promotion of English in schools. There is solid reasoning for the Ethiopian government taking this approach. To have access to global business and academia English is essential without which a rapidly developing second class citizen is being born (see fig.1, *Downward Pressures – “Global language”*).

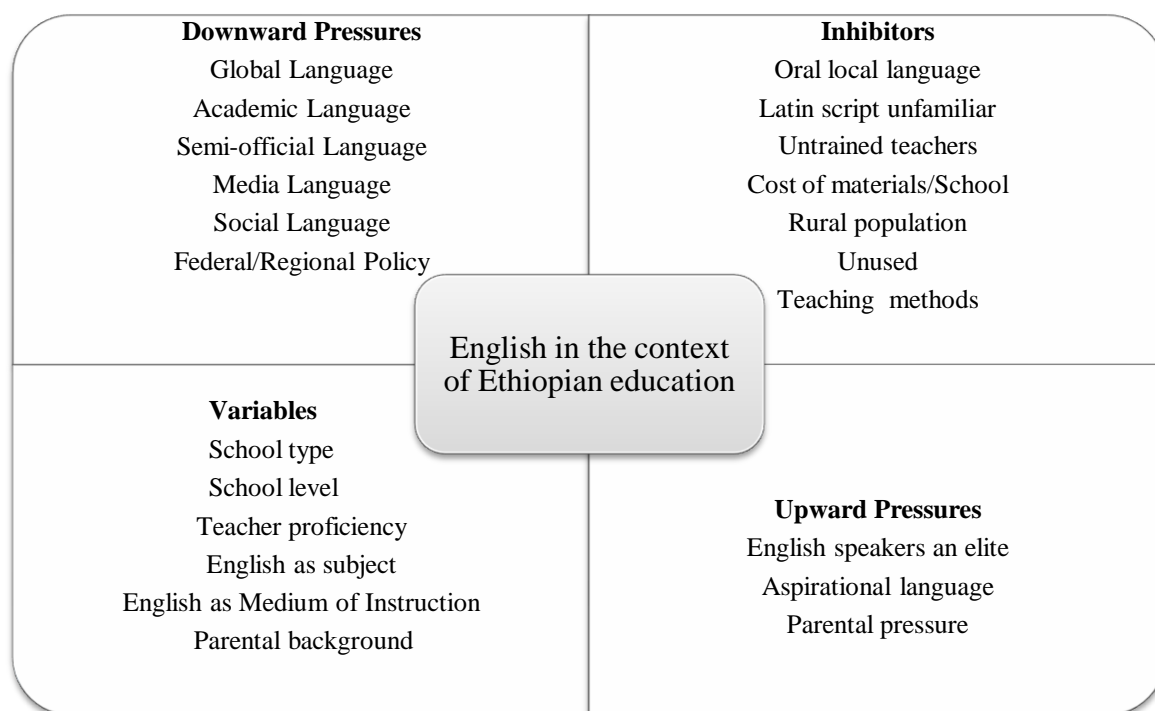
Even so, the National Language Workshop (Heugh, 2006 cited in Heugh et al., 2007, p.21) shows how negative educational policies are sometimes formed due to financial interests from program providers and publishers. Also cited is a graph (adapted from Thomas & Collier, 1997, Heugh et al., 2007, p.30) showing that English reading ability decreases more over time in those taking English-only instruction and whose first language is not English compared to those in dual medium. These results seem contradictory at first but the abovementioned graph was from a longitudinal study carried out in the US using 210,054 participants from several different school districts using the same group of students (1997, p.1). Furthermore, Thomas and Collier were carrying out their research in an English-speaking country. Those for whom English was a second language were in mainstream classes with native English speakers and where English was the MOI (Thomas & Collier, 1997, p.77). Though this scenario would not present itself in Ethiopia, Thomas and Collier do produce some relevant findings which might relate to aspects of my research. Several recommendations are made concerning the pupils’ ability, such as those with no English requiring at least 4 years of specialised teaching (1997, p.334). Teaching resources should be authentic and media rich (ibid., p.320) hinting also at the importance of cognitive learning (ibid., p.310).

A curriculum leader tasked with the best method of delivering English would need to take account of Heugh's finding that the longer a pupil is taught in their mother-tongue the higher their scores across the curriculum, even in English (2010, p.19). Her earlier report presents evidence from the 2004 student assessment results at Grade 8 showing that performance in English was highest in Harari and Somali regions which used mother-tongue instruction right up to the end of Grade 8 and lowest in Gambella region where English was MOI from Grade 5 onwards (Heugh et al., 2007, p.14).

The implications from Heugh et al.'s study are that teachers of English should be fluent and that teaching other subjects should be done in the language with which pupils are most familiar (2007, p.126). One solution presented was more flexible assessment in grades 10 and 12 (ibid., p.124) which as it stands demands a certain level of English to pass all the subjects. These exams are extremely important and exert pressure lower down the system (ibid., p.108). Teaching methods are an essential part of my research. Heugh et al. (ibid., p.36) wish for a move away from behaviourist teaching methods towards more cognitive methods. Cognitive learning is repeatedly mentioned as a cornerstone of the process of language learning.

There are many competing factors for what constitutes an English curriculum and these factors vary depending on the context they are taught in. Figure 1, below was constructed from previous research to provide an overview of these factors for the context of Ethiopia and to be compared with the responses given by teachers.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework demonstrating the various influences on teaching English collected from selected sources. For sources see appendix 1.



Downward Pressures are those which bear down on schools, making some states/regions (since Ethiopia is a federal country) feel that English should be introduced at as early a stage as possible by virtue of its being seen as important for trade and communication with other countries and for developing technical and vocational skills (in IT, for example). The many different types of language, explained in the *Linguistic Context in Ethiopia*, exert a downward pressure.

The *Variables* are those which affect the kind of English taught in school or whether it is taught at all (though the Ethiopian government has introduced it as a subject as early as Grade 1 Primary). For instance, the more skilled the teacher, the better they are able to teach English as a subject (Heugh, 2010; Heugh et al., 2007; Mackenzie, 2013; Majanen, 2008); the more literate the parents, the more inclined they are to recognize the value of education and the part English has to play in it (RTI, 2010; UNESCO, 2015). English as a medium of instruction was placed under *Variables* as it depends on whether it is introduced early (in upper primary or at the beginning of secondary school) as to the extent of the problems it causes: high dropout, repetition of early grades, poor performance in all subjects; or, later, at university level, but even there it can create difficulties, some sources suggesting that mother-tongue instruction at this level is more

likely to result in improved performance (Eshetie, 2010; Getachew, 2006; Heugh, 2010; Mackenzie, 2013).

Upward Pressures are those which stem from below, either from parents' perceptions or from the pupils themselves, who see English as a way of "getting on". English is becoming a language of the elite (Heugh, 2010; Majanen, 2008; Zàhořík, 2009, p.82) causing it to be an aspiration to achieve a certain level of English speaking (Eshetie, 2010; Heugh, 2010; Heugh, 2007; Mackenzie, 2013) with parents in particular putting pressure on the school to teach their children English (Heugh, 2010; Heugh, 2007).

Inhibitors are those intractable factors that make the teaching of English difficult if not impossible. If Amharic is widely used as a lingua franca for internal communication among speakers of other tongues (Zàhořík, 2009, p.82), the fidel script presents a further challenge to the reading and writing of any language using the Latin script (RTI, 2010; Wagaw, 2001; Zàhořík, 2009, p.82). The bulk of the population do not use English or come into contact with it once they have left school (Heugh, 2010; Heugh, 2007; Wagaw, 2001), hence "unused" inhibits the government's efforts to promote English. The lack of resources is frequently mentioned as an inhibitor to education in Ethiopia (Heugh, 2010; Heugh et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2015).

Figure 1 demonstrates the challenges in satisfying the pressures and how compromise needs to be reached. For the purposes of my research it will be interesting to see how curriculum leaders manage the challenge of inhibitors restricting the pressures put on them to deliver a certain type of English language education.

2.6 Teaching Methods

In order to understand language teaching in Ethiopia better, it needs to be placed in the wider context of the teaching methods used. Teaching methods, according to much of the research (Serbessa, 2006; Teklemariam, 2006; Asgedom et al., 2006), are viewed as an inhibitor in Ethiopia where largely traditional approaches to teaching are used.

The churches and madrassas were the first institutions to provide education in Ethiopia and as such the philosophy of religion became the essence of its schooling. The

religious origins of education in Ethiopia created a system of teacher-centred learning (Serbessa, 2006, p.131), in opposition to cognitive and constructivist theory. Teacher-centred theory as expressed by Dollard and Christensen (1996, p.3) describes a hierarchical structure with authority residing in the teacher. Asgedom et al. (2006) observed mostly didactical teaching with little discussion between teacher and pupil or even pupil-and-pupil interaction. This is representative of the authoritarian approach and the submission demanded by the religious institutions.

Ekpo et al. (2007 p.16-17) found that traditional classroom methods which rely on memorisation and drills were a part of the status quo. This is further confirmed in the textbook used with most of the reading tasks consisting of gaining information (Spor et al., 2007, p.1). Religious practice tends towards rote-learning repetition of formulaic language rather than the understanding and even examination of texts and thus conflicts with many of the modern methods of teaching.

Serbessa mentions the scarcity of research on education in Ethiopia (2006, p.127) and thus its reliance on the models from developed countries which might not suit the attitudes and expectations in a different context (2006, p.131). This is the challenge instituting a child-centred approach in Ethiopia. Serbessa explains that the authoritarian methods of teaching stem from education being traditionally delivered by the church which placed emphasis on obedience, rote-learning and passive acceptance with all knowledge acquired through these methods to be repeated to the next generation of learners (2006, pp.131-132). Europe departed from these methods in part due to the enlightenment's emphasis on critical reasoning and subsequently state education becoming increasingly secularised (Pépin, 2009, p.15). Unlike in Europe, religious sensitivities play a far greater role in Ethiopian education.

2.6.1 Learner-centred Teaching

Ethiopia has no history or culture of teacher and pupil acting in these roles. Further, this conflicts with the roles that children are expected to fulfil in rural areas where families see them as part of the workforce (UNESCO, 2015, p.9). The Ethiopian Ministry of Education has introduced child-centred learning into its curriculum and philosophy. In 2008 they published syllabuses for the teaching of English at lower and upper primary levels referring to “active learning and learner-centredness (MoE, 2008, 1-4, 5-8, p.v).

Pupils should be willing to “ ‘have a go’ ” and should respond “by doing” (ibid., p.vi). The only difference between the two levels was that the upper level should focus on reading and writing equally with listening and speaking, especially as English will be the medium of instruction at secondary level (MoE, 2008, pp.5-8: ix; and see also fig. 1, *Downward Pressures* – “Federal/Regional Policy”).

The draft 2010 document *Continuous Professional Development for Primary and Secondary Teachers, Leaders and Supervisors in Ethiopia* refers to the importance of teachers evaluating and reflecting upon their teaching methods (MoE, 2010, pp.6-7). Teachers should examine what active learning means in an Ethiopian environment, interpreting the concept as developing such skills in their pupils as problem-solving, reflecting, independent working and creativity among others (ibid., pp.65-67). The similarly titled updated June 2011 version in a section addressed to School Leaders and Supervisors states that good teaching is when there is a “wide variety of active teaching methods and strategies” adapted to the students ways of learning (MoE, 2011, Section p. 8). Apart from the reference to Ethiopia, both documents could have come from any equivalent Western Ministry.

Serbessa’s findings (2006, p.126) indicated that not only was this a poorly understood “buzzword” but that it stems from a Western context unfamiliar in Ethiopia. Most of the OECD countries (Wall et al., 2015, p.39) and international curriculums such as the Cambridge curriculum use child-centred learning, which they refer to as active learning, as an integral pedagogical approach (Winterbottom, 2015, p.1). It is essential for pupils to be taught using active learning under the Cambridge curriculum as the assessments test for understanding rather than knowledge (Winterbottom, 2015, p.3). Child-centred or active learning promotes critical and analytical thinking, which was noted to be lacking in the classes observed by Asgedom et al. (2006). Additionally some classes required the pupils to give true or false answers (ibid.,p.28) which is a reflection of the larger class size in which it is not possible to allow pupils to give protracted answers.

Child-centred learning could be traced back to the enlightenment. A key philosopher of the enlightenment, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, might be considered as providing the earliest example in his book *Emile* (1799), in which he described how he would tailor individual tuition based on the age, understanding and previous learning the child had

received. Rousseau (1979, p.98), saw essential learning for children as understanding their environment rather than memorising academic facts, which he denigrated as wholly unsuited to the child's ability to navigate its environment. Nolan and Kilderry (2010, p.115), also writing from a Western perspective and thus about a Western context, give a more modern definition of child-centred learning in their post-developmental pedagogy, described essentially as “engaging learners”, which consists of recognising the individual learning style of the pupils. Noddings (2005, p.58) and Nolan and Kilderry (2010, p.115) also use the concept of “empowering” the child through more pupil-led activities so that they follow a career path which interests them and is useful to their needs. Current pedagogical research encourages this approach and as such leads to more involvement in what they learn. Helen Hedges (2010, p.25) proposes that curriculums could be constructed on meeting the child, while Nolan and Kilderry (2010, p.115) say that the teacher should be “engaging learners”.

However, early learning researchers such as Nolan and Kilderry (2010) and Hedges (2010) point out that current teaching methods still favour teacher-led learning. Hedges believes the lack of research on child-led education is due to its being not being fully practised in the classroom. Samuelsson and Carlsson (2008) are cited by Singer as expressing the opinion that teachers are being too “teacherly”, thus preventing researchers from observing true child-centred learning (2013, p.173) and thereby contributing to the lack of research into the effectiveness of child-centred learning in Ethiopia. Nolan and Kilderry (2010), view all current education systems as entrenched in traditional teaching methods and a complete change in every aspect of current education is required for implementing true child-centred learning. Nolan and Kilderry actually view this as an issue of Western pedagogy, fearing this template has been copied to all school structures. They wish to dismantle the established structures and encourage child-centred learning, through “empowering” the child (2010, p.115), involving the teacher listening to the child's needs and viewing them as able to make decisions about the content of their learning. The prevailing assumption that Nolan and Kilderry have is that children are capable of leading learning. Many researchers perceive the teacher as being the main obstacle in allowing children to lead the learning but this assumes that the child wishes to make appropriate choices and can be morally responsible for educating themselves and the education of their peers.

Learner-centred teaching uses theoretical principles from cognitivism and constructivism. Cognitivism examines how people receive information, build a relation with the environment and transfer knowledge to an existing schema (Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p.50), echoing Rousseau's system of teaching geometry through the flying of a kite (1979, p.163). Learning should have learners as active participants in knowing and obtaining knowledge (Jonassen, 1991). What learners believe and the viewpoint they hold influences the way they learn (Winne, 1985, cited in Ertmer & Newby, 1993). Cook (1994) and Bruner (1996) found that when learners interact rather than passively receive new knowledge, their outcomes improve and they gain more meaningful information. Based on Piaget's (1973), theory of cognitive development, learning is built upon through the child's previous experience. Brooks and Brooks (1993, p.25) describe a constructivist classroom as guiding students into adopting self-testing, understanding, asking questions, and reflection. The constructivist classroom should help children to develop independence and guide them to develop their own schema (Gray, 1997).

Below is a table with some reoccurring themes from student-centred learning. The inclusion of this table was to establish clear definitions of what both pupil and teacher centred learning is, a clarification which was noticeably missing from Serbessa's (2006) study. As Serbessa himself mentions there is an absence of Ethiopian theorists and researchers writing about child-centred learning which means table 2 has relied on Western sources. Because of this, in my research I will compare responses given in interview and possibly challenge some concepts in table 2 rather than regard it as a fixed benchmark.

Table 2: Using the theories collected in the above information and adapting Rogers & Friebert's (1994, p.240) table, the following definitions of teacher and pupil-centred learning were created.

| Teacher-centred Learning | Pupil-centred learning |
|--|--|
| Pupils follow the teacher instructions | Pupils influence the direction of learning (Bain, 2004, pp.22-31) |
| Follow the curriculum based on tests or learning objectives. | Lesson plans designed around the pupil. (Hedges, 2010, p.25) |
| Students copy and memorize | Students carry out activities (Jonassen, 1991) |
| Children are forced to learn through extrinsic motivation | Children are self-motivated to learn (Driscoll, 2014, p.334) |

2.6.2 Meaningful Learning

Teklemariam (2006, p.47) favours meaningful learning as a teaching method to achieve more valuable learning outcomes. He saw a need to promote pleasure in using English for reading, writing and personal purposes. This emphasis on motivating the child to take responsibility is consistent with the aims of learner-centred teaching. The title of his research asks how one can make the curriculum “relevant”, implying meaningful learning. Vallori (2014, p.200) defines meaningful learning as making sure the learning is relevant to the learner’s environment and motivation. Though Teklemariam never uses the term ‘learner-centred teaching’, he frequently mentions methods appropriate to this theory, such as catering to “individual needs”, allowing “continuous assessment” and “meaningful” “activities” (2006, p.56). He categorises any teaching method which prevents a curriculum being relevant to the learner as teacher-centred learning (ibid., p.55). Teklemariam gives examples of both teachers and students commenting on the lack of activities and meaningful themes. This indicates that teachers and students are aware of modern teaching methods and are reflecting on them (ibid., p.56), having

accepted them as standard teaching practices. One of the reasons that meaningful learning has not been achieved despite its acceptance is the environment. Schools are poorly resourced and unsupported by the government (Serbessa, 2006). Teklemariam (2006, p.56) notes that crowded classrooms inhibit the ability to provide learner-centred teaching. Suggestions on teaching methods are given, though there is no exploration of how these would be implemented in a crowded class. Learning methods should distance themselves from the traditional method of lecturing in favour of fieldwork, group learning, role-playing, problem-solving, personal reflection, presentations and dialogue currently absent in the classroom (ibid., p.55).

Technology is mentioned as essential for every aspect of the four goals and profiles shown in bullet points in section 2.4 of this thesis. It is relevant for global communication, employment and academia which further emphasises the absence of such technology in Ethiopian schools. Technology not only aids problem-solving and critical thinking but is also essential for the mastery of I.T. (ibid. p.56). English language learning and information technology are subjects which need blending, given how intrinsically linked they are. Much of I.T. demands English, as the prevalence of Amharic script online is extremely limited. Flammia & Saunders (2007, p.1900) not only describe the dominance of English online but see it as creating an elite class in Africa, where English speakers have a distinct advantage in the job market over those speaking indigenous languages, who become vulnerable to exclusion. Flammia & Saunders (2007) used the Internet World Stats which in 2016 showed English language usage as compared with all other languages to be highest at just over a quarter of world users.

Findings (MoE, 2002 cited in Teklemariam, 2006, p.55) suggest that action research would assist in the understanding of many of the issues currently presented. Such research would provide relevant solutions, as the researchers themselves are likely to be familiar with modern teaching theory and could support those teachers found to be lacking in knowledge and professional competence. Teklemariam cited studies from Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, Oromiya and the Ethiopian Teachers' Association (MOE 2002 cited in Teklemariam, 2006, p.55), which found the courses and the teaching practice that teachers receive to be inadequate to meet the demands of a professional learning community. Like much of the other research in this

area, Teklemariam (2006, p.54) strongly believes that the quality of the teacher dictates the quality of the education. He cites “The Quality and Effectiveness of Teacher Education in Ethiopia: A Report of the Study Findings with Recommendations for Action” as demonstrating the shortcomings of teachers. These consist of a lack of subject knowledge and the continued use of traditional teaching methods.

2.6.3 Tensions Between Traditional and Modern Teaching Learning

Previous research indicates that Ethiopia largely follows the definitions in the table for teacher-centred learning. Serbessa examines whether the modern approaches mentioned above were being used in Ethiopia. Specifically Serbessa considers the use of child-centred learning in Ethiopia due to its being part of Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 1994 (Serbessa, 2006, p.126). Serbessa highlights the difficulty in defining child-centred learning. The title of the thesis refers to it as “modern teaching”, and he describes “child-centred learning” as the “best” way of teaching and, when observing classroom arrangements, he refers to active learning. The lack of clear definition poses a problem for teachers wishing to apply his principles. My research attempts to arrive at how teachers interpret this concept and through what activities and resources they apply it.

Serbessa begins by explaining the difficulty in measuring quality in education due to the number of contributing factors but gives examples of areas in which there is a consensus on providing a quality education. One of these is child-centred learning. One could criticize Serbessa for basing his research on the presumption that child-centred learning is the “best” method of teaching, given the limited research and lack of peer reviewed articles demonstrating it to be the superior teaching method (see Morgan et al., 2015, p.187). Serbessa cites Cook & Cook (1998), Farrell (1989), Fuller (1986) and Grisay & Mahlck (1991) to demonstrate that quality in education depends on the “teaching-learning process”. However, as previously mentioned, measuring the quality of a certain type of pedagogy presents challenges due to researchers measuring it according to their particular definitions of strengths and weaknesses depending on their biases. One strategy perused in this thesis was to compare learning methods with the overall purpose of the curriculum. Serbessa (2006, p.124) hints at the purpose of education being to satisfy the parents who in turn wish for “creative thinking” and “values” enabling their children to be successful in their lives. One must recognise that

parents are not the only stakeholders and so to describe the purpose of education in these vague terms would be both to ignore the claims of other stakeholders and to overlook the need to define more precisely the curriculum aims and the way in which these are to be assessed.

Because of the difficulty in defining quality in education Serbessa has chosen to opt for measuring the extent to which child-centred learning is applied. Serbessa (ibid., p.126) unintentionally sheds light on how the term child-centred learning can have a variety of meanings due to its positive wording and broad definition. There is a lack of clarification though we can glean his definitions of child-centred learning through the questions posed by his research. His definition largely places it in opposition to the traditional teacher-centred approach but also takes into account resources, training support, and the students' views (ibid.). One of the biggest obstacles for learner-centred teaching could be class size. As mentioned before, child-centred learning evolved from philosophies in Europe, where class sizes are smaller. The very nature of child-centred learning demands tailoring a curriculum to the child which would be a challenging task with larger class sizes. In Ethiopia, UNICEF found an average of 59 students to one teacher leading to insufficient resources and deficient pupil monitoring (UNICEF, 2010, p.2). The research by Asgedom et al. (2006) into the Amhara, SNNP and Oromia regions mentions a policy of 45-50 students with some classes exceeding this with up to 87 pupils. The large class sizes mean that some learners have difficulty hearing the teacher due to being at the back of the class. One way of ameliorating this is shown in Asgedom et al. (ibid.) where reference is made to group work being carried out with pupil-to-pupil assistance, thereby taking the pressure from the teacher and allowing them to focus on struggling groups. However, Asgedom et al. (ibid.) also describe classes with desks arranged in rows, which frustrates the formation of these pupil-to-pupil groups. Further, a method of teaching still influenced by religious models – not forgetting that the share of non-governmental primary schools is 18%, most of which are mainly rural Catholic schools (UNESCO, 2012, p.3) – acts against the emphasis in the new curriculum on child-centred-learning, as many current educators were themselves educated by the church and continue to follow the way in which they were educated (Asgedom et al, 2006).

According to Serbessa's quantitative data, pupils did not appear ready to adopt pupil-

centred learning as 95.7% saw teaching as the sole responsibility of teachers, and the majority felt they lacked experience of child-centred learning (2006, p133). The seating arrangements which used the set-up referred to above exacerbated this lack of active learning. What Serbessa neglected to mention was whether this was the only configuration possible given the large class size or if other class seating arrangements would fit in the classroom and be conducive to child-centred learning. In Garret's (2008) case study of three elementary teachers in American classrooms she observed two different ways to arrange desks making them conducive to child-centred learning. The first was in groups (ibid., p.39) the second in clusters (ibid., p.40). Both these positions require additional space, especially with the emphasis on free movement that the positions cater for (ibid., pp.38-39).

Another issue brought up by Serbessa (ibid.) and unlikely to be resolved due to lack of funds, was the constraint on resources. This pertains to more advanced resources such as computers, projectors and interactive whiteboards. However, textbooks and other print material was observed to be present in the classroom by Asgedom et al. (2006) and Serbessa (2006) though in some classes they were in insufficient number. Commenting on textbook provision, Heugh (2010) points out that Ethiopia's decentralised education system enables local publishing and printing industries to provide most pupils with textbooks which, though lacking in illustrations (an aspect I refer to in section 2.6 *Educational Resources*), are nonetheless functional, easily replaced if lost or damaged, and cost much less and are more widespread than in South Africa, a much wealthier country (Heugh, 2010, p.18) This highlights one possible area for advancing child-centred learning which involves reworking curricular materials which were found not to support independent and reflective learning (Asgedom et al, ibid. pp.133-134). This is an area of development already achieved to some extent through this decentralisation which demanded the curriculum and its resources be reformed by taking into account the regional languages (Benson et al., 2012).

Despite the limitations caused by lack of resources and large class sizes, half the teachers in Serbessa's quantitative research were confident that they could employ active learning (2006, p.136) as long as other constraints (e.g. cost, distance of home from school) were absent. Those teachers not able to employ active learning indicated a lack of knowledge and confidence (ibid.). Serbessa (2006, pp.137-139) concludes,

nevertheless, that this confidence is ill-founded, showing instead that teachers are unaware of what child-centred learning constitutes.

Broadly there seems to be support for child-centred learning with 87.5% of teachers realising its importance, seeing placing students in a passive role as counter-productive. However, there was great concern that topics would not be covered in depth and that pupils would not have as much access to the teacher and their knowledge (ibid., pp.135-136). The pupils themselves seem to refute the idea that teachers support child-centred learning. 72.5% of the students believed that teachers did not show enough enthusiasm for this method of teaching (ibid., p.137). This might be a reflection abovementioned of the concerns raised by the teachers. There was a fear of the risk that learner-centred teaching might cause some students not to participate and without the strong presence of a teacher “higher-order thinking” might not occur (ibid. p.136). There was also a worry that there would be a loss of control.

Serbessa’s concluding comments reveal the difference in purpose between mine and his research. His research seeks to expose the lack of child-centred learning. It does, however, unwittingly reveal that in many instances Ethiopia does not have the capacity to support this approach. My research seeks not to assume all child-centred learning is automatically appropriate in the Ethiopian context but instead seeks to discover those aspects which could be applied in the Ethiopian context. Serbessa (ibid., pp.129-130), recommends disposing of chalk-and-talk and replacing it with open-ended instruction. This might not only prove impossible because of the limited resources available to the teacher but also because the origins of education, being steeped in the pedagogy of religious institutions. Ekpo et al. (2007, p16-17) saw memorisation and drills to be mitigated through providing alternative reading materials that stimulate the children’s interest in reading. This is a more viable option though Asgedom et al. (2006, Chap 5) found that the schools they observed in the SNNP region did not have enough textbooks.

Motivation is a key element in child-centred learning as it allows the child to empower themselves to learn. According to Weiner (1990, p.616) motivation is rather work-related than a play-related concept. Driscoll (2014, p.315) believed it is important to help learners to set their own goals and help them to develop self-regulatory skills.

Teachers can use unexpected approaches in learning and even humour to encourage this (Driscoll, 2014, p.334). Teachers should let students choose presentation topics and tests (Bain, 2004, pp.22-31). While “building on young learners’ instinct for play and fun” is part of the syllabus for grades 1-4 in Ethiopia (MoE, 2008a, p.V), apart from partner activities there were no activities given in the textbook or the lesson plans, making it the teacher’s responsibility to provide ones that would engage the pupils.

2.7 Educational Resources

Resources in Ethiopian schools or the limiting factor thereof are mentioned in nearly all research whether it be related to teacher expertise, quality of learning or teaching methodology (see fig.1, *Inhibitors – Cost of materials/school*). For this reason, in this section I have chosen to examine resources which do not rely on technology and in terms of other resources take up a small part of the school budget, these being textbooks, pictures and storybooks.

2.7.1 The Benefits of Narrative in Education

As mentioned before, storybooks are lacking in classrooms. This section seeks to demonstrate the importance of story-telling through various mediums and its under utilisation in the Ethiopian context.

“Children cannot distinguish between what is allegory and what isn’t, and opinions formed at that age are usually difficult to eradicate or change; it is therefore of the utmost importance that the first stories they hear shall aim at producing the right moral effect.”

(Plato, *The Republic*, book II, Part 3, tr. H D P Lee, Penguin Classics, 1955, p.116)

“...let such Lessons for Reading be chosen as contain some useful Instruction, whereby the Understandings or Morals of the Youth, may at the same Time be improv’d.”

(Franklin, *Autobiography and Other Writings*)

Though Plato is advocating a form of censorship, both he and Benjamin Franklin realise the effectiveness of educating children through stories (cited in Bennet, 1986, p.24). The American Institute research (Bennet, 1986, p.25) found children with low ability and motivation could still engage in the context of a story which confirms Robert Coles’ assertion that every being has the capacity to understand story (1989, p.30). Polkinghorne identified narrative as a tool for making sense of the world (1995). Polkinghorne used Jerome Bruner’s *Acts of Meaning* (see Gardner, 2001, p.90-96), to

explain that our minds cannot effectively absorb individual events or sentences unless they are placed in “larger structures”. This supports claims by the cognitive scientist, Andy Clark (1993, p.IX), that narrative and memory are indistinguishable.

There is a rich history of stories and a prevalence of storytelling in Ethiopian culture. Hale described the purpose of stories in sub-Saharan Africa, as imparting advice along with their entertainment (2007, p.18), usually in the form of fables. There is some evidence that Aesop’s Fables have their origins in Ethiopia with even Aesop’s name having some resemblance to the country’s name. The key similarities between traditional Ethiopian tales and Aesop’s fables are the animals used as characters, representing their personalities with the story culminating in the teaching of some kind of lesson to be learned (Lobban, 2002, p12) which has the purpose of teaching a certain moral. Examples of stories as a tool for educating can be frequently found in the books sponsored by the Ministry of Education (HaHu Books, 2011). The English for Ethiopia textbooks make use of characters introducing and engaging in topics such as Aids (Spor et al., 2007, p93).

Despite story-telling and drama being seen as a priority in the learning and instruction of children as advocated in *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies* for Ethiopia, Asgedom et al. (2006) find no reference to story books. Equally vital to language instruction but equally absent were visual aids.

2.7.2 Visual Aids in Education

Educationalists of the Enlightenment, such as John Locke and William Petty, realised the importance of making learning pleasurable through illustrated books (Kinnell, 1995, p22.) The first examples of illustrated children’s books in Britain were influenced by Aesop’s fables, using animal characters and largely consisting of fables (Papworth, 2011a, p33). Cole was one of the first publishers and he realised that the children’s enjoyment of these books was greatly enhanced by the illustrations and asked for specialist artists to make particular designs an essential complement to the story (Hunt, 1995, p88-89). These were spread throughout the English-speaking African colonies and surrounding countries. Ethiopia was one such country that followed a similar approach in combining text and illustrations in its first children’s books. HaHu Books (2011) mentions that the first published books were tales and fables in both prose and

verse which came with illustrations. The Ministry of Education started publishing or sponsoring such books in 1959 educating children in “traditional, ethical and cultural values.”. Though Ethiopia was never colonised during and after the Second World War, due to the support Britain gave Ethiopia, English was introduced as the second language (Papworth, 2011a, p.35). In 1970s Oxford University Press published illustrated reading books in English for Ethiopian schools which continue to be published to this day. Their success can be attributed to their content and their medium. These illustrated reading books used Ethiopian contexts and stories such as *Adventure in Addis Ababa* and *The Treasure of Lebna Dengel* (Papworth, 2011a, p41). The use of illustrations to communicate a story had been popularised, largely through Christian stories, an example of which lies in the British Museum, depicting the story of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba (Kastenbaum & co., 2014) in the style of a cartoon strip. The popular use of illustrations and cartoon sequences could be due to low literacy rates in Ethiopia (Shenkut, 2005, p.IV) with a visual representation explaining events without the need to be literate. Illustrations clarifying text has a long history in children’s books.

2.7.3 Current Textbooks and Other Resources

Asgedom et al. (2006, Chap. 5) and Tulu’s (2015, p.67) research reveal a heavy reliance on textbooks, but, though this was the case in most of the regions, Asgedom et al. (2006, Chap.5) observed that the school in the SNNP region did not have enough textbooks so they were rarely used. In both rural and urban areas textbooks are used for reference and reading in class. The English for Ethiopia curriculum is produced for the state education system in Ethiopia. The content of the English for Ethiopia textbooks (Spor et al., 2007, p.2-3) reveals how many of the topics are closely related to Ethiopia, particularly in the content for the higher grades. Grade 6 has topics such as AIDS, drought, farming, the people of Ethiopia, African countries and harmful traditional practices, all of which topics are of course absent in the international curriculums. This is not as evident in the materials available for grade 4 (age 10) as the topics represented are more general but some topics are still specific to Ethiopia as in *What Is Your Uncle’s Job?, Look Out! A Lion Is Coming* (Spor et al. 2011, pIII) but even general topics are often presented in the context of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian textbooks combine skills for reading, writing and grammar and follow characters through the book, introducing topics and tasks through possible real-life events and places. Where these texts are part of English as a subject, the teacher can ease comprehension by using

mother-tongue explanations where pupils have difficulty. If, however, they form another aspect of English as MOI, they are unlikely to promote the pupils' reading, writing and grammatical ability.

A teacher's reliance on textbooks (Ben-Peretz, 1990, p.xiii) has been seen to obstruct the ability to provide child-centred learning. Sample pages from the textbook would seem to confirm this through a series of rigidly structured tasks contained therein. The textbook demands one follow a given order and make it impossible to skip parts of the book (Spor et al. 2007), instead leading to a linear progression. This has resulted in a degree of artificiality in that the text is determined by both topic and the task level, suggestive of what Richards (2013, p.8) describes as forward design (see fig. 2). Asgedom et al. (2006) observed that many teachers combined classes of children of different ages based on the stage in the textbook the pupils had reached. Current textbooks have a sequence of lessons which progressively get more advanced but rarely do they have a natural narrative progression, instead being compartmentalized by the lesson objective. This highlights the conflict between designing a curriculum with clear lesson objectives and the use of authentic materials.

Reppen (2010, p4) refers to "authentic" materials. This means texts taken from original stories, poems and other real life sources. These are distinctly missing from the English for Ethiopia series which creates texts for the purpose of the learning objective. The weakness of such non-authentic texts is that they are written for the express purpose of learning and thus can present unnatural and unrealistic language. In Tulu's analysis of the Grade 12 English for Ethiopia programme he identifies students having difficulties in writing because they were unable to write intelligible paragraphs due to a lack of cohesion, coherence, organisation and logical flow of ideas. Tulu sees the reason for this as lying in the textbook itself which lacked cohesive devices. Tulu continues to show that the tasks involving "conjunctions like coordinating conjunctions, result words, contrasting words, references and exemplifying words" (2015, p.61-62) merely demanded a single correct answer and did not promote an understanding of the English language. Inability to employ cohesive and coherent paragraphs could also result from a lack of exposure to complete and authentic texts, which is further confirmed by the American Institutes for Research findings which found a "lack of quality English reading materials available" (2012, p82). This highlights the conflict between designing

a curriculum with clear lesson objectives and the use of authentic materials. Authentic texts seem to favour cognitive abilities but artificial texts allow for a clearer curriculum design.

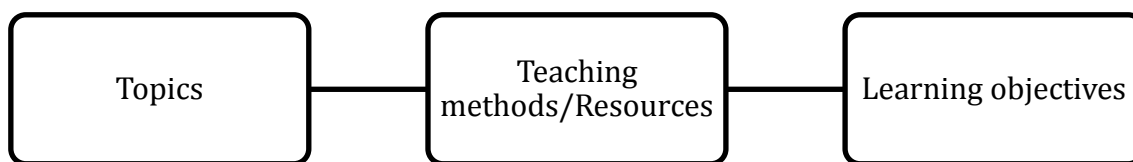
2.7.4 Other Resources

The research from the American Institute for Research found teachers' guides to be a determining factor in the effectiveness of education in the different regions of Ethiopia (2012, p71). Universal Learning Solutions describes the reason for this being the low English proficiency of teachers and their needing clear guidance (2015, p21). The other resource that Asgedom et al. (2006) frequently mention from their observations was the blackboard. It was noted that teaching aids were rarely used and some schools had no wall displays. Asgedom et al. (ibid.) described that one of the few teachers seen to be using teaching aids had constructed the aids themselves. According to Asgedom et al. (ibid.) some schools in the rural areas did not even have electricity, making interactive whiteboards materials, power-point presentations and anything else using a projector unusable, further emphasising the primacy of the textbook among the limited resources available to the teacher.

2.8 Curriculum and Planning

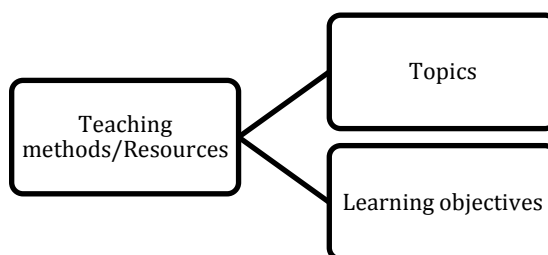
Resources, especially when limited, can be a deciding factor in the curriculum design. However, there are other influences such as teaching methods and the contents of the syllabus given to teachers. Richards (2013, p.8) gives three different approaches to language curriculum design: Forward, central and backward design. Using Richards' design approaches (ibid), I have changed the terms "content" to "topics", "process" to "teaching methods/resources" and "outcome" to "learning objectives" to be more specific to my research.

Figure 2. *Forward design:*



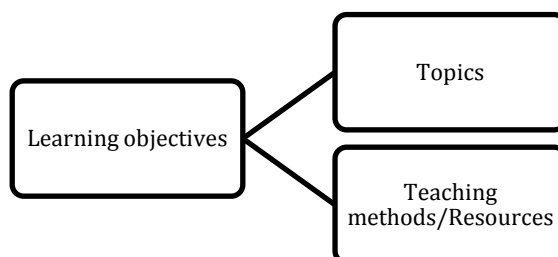
This design process starts with certain topics which need to be touched upon and where the learning objectives do not begin with individual skills but rather a general theme such as Aesop’s fables. This will lead to the teacher searching for resources or using a teaching method to suit the topic, such as group work to perform a story. Finally, the skills are determined such as script writing.

Figure 3. *Central design:*



Central design makes the activity or tasks the focus (ibid., p.17). Based on the previous research in the situation of Ethiopia the types of activity are realised through the teaching method and the available resources. If a teacher decides to adopt a learner-centred method of teaching, this might result in topics that the students show an interest in or the learning objective featuring expressions such as ‘understand how’ rather than ‘know’ (see Ertmer & Newby, 1993, p.50). Brown (2001, p.56) sees this approach as beneficial to language learning as it prevents too much focus on individual language forms but allows for a more natural holistic understanding of language.

Figure 4. *Backward design:*



In backward design the curriculum seeks standardization and as such this design is usually adopted by national curriculums (see Richards, 2013, p.25). It starts with the skills that it desires pupils to learn, usually based on the overall purpose of learning

English and then leaves teachers to decide on the topics or teaching methods and resources which best achieve those learning objectives. If the purpose for learning English was considered to be to prepare pupils for English medium instruction, then an individual learning objective might involve learning technical words (Heugh et al., 2007, pp.6-7) for a certain subject, such as “to know the different parts of a plant”, demonstrated in the New Star and Cambridge science books, respectively (Feasey et al., 2000, p.6; Board & Cross, 2014, p.14). Subsequently the teacher could choose if they should have the topic of creating a garden, if this is better performed in groups, as a teaching method and whether there are the available resources to grow plants.

Based on the previous research mentioned in earlier sections, observing classrooms, textbooks and the curriculum, all three divergent methods of curriculum design approaches can be found to be occurring in Ethiopian classrooms despite the same syllabus being used. From the English for Ethiopia textbooks (Spor et al. 2007, contents’ page) we can clearly see a forward design from the topic-based starting point to produce exercises (Richards, 2013 p9). The teachers themselves might often resort to a central design due to their limited resources and the demand this puts on it being the starting point for deciding what to teach. The national curriculum is likely to use backward design, basing its design around the learning objectives. Backward design is popular amongst national curriculums using learning objectives as a basis, dividing work into units and finally measuring performance based on test results (ibid., pp.21-22).

However, the design methods described by Richards do not always manifest themselves as distinctly as they are described. In the Ethiopian primary schools there are no standardised tests, but tests, according to Serbessa (2006, p.136), are regarded as a central part of learning, having an importance in the mind of both child and teacher leading to the suspicion that child-centred learning is incompatible with the requirement to pass tests, where memorising facts and giving the correct answer are valued. It is hard to classify this as either central or backward design. It would seem to indicate that it veers more in the direction of central design as in this case the teacher designs the test and there is no standardisation. The exams, criticised by Heugh et al. (2007, p.124), in grade 11 and 12, involve standardised testing. Richards (2013, p.25) defines this kind of standardisation and inflexibility as backward design. This conflicts with not only the

concept of decentralization but the type of teaching pupils have been exposed to previously in the subject of English. Heugh et al. (2007, p.20) demand greater flexibility in these exams, allowing students to improve their subject knowledge and even their English.

The English for Ethiopia textbooks use word lists, grammar syllabuses, texts designed to represent certain linguistic skills and discourse analysis which is associated with this kind of approach (Richards, 2013, p.10). Wiggins and McTighe explain that, in forward design, first a topic is decided upon for which resources are then chosen (2005, p.15). Wiggins and McTighe (2005, p.6) explain that these topics are usually grounded in local issues as is the case with English for Ethiopia (Spor et al., 2007, contents page). Where the curriculum departs from a forward design is in the lack of authentic texts found in the English for Ethiopia (ibid.). The lack of authentic texts in forward design can be considered a weakness, given that the methodology of forward design would prioritise them. As Richards explains, most modern curriculums that use forward design rely on authentic texts as it informs the design, particularly when real topics are addressed (Richards, 2013, p10).

Richards (2013, p14) found that teachers mostly adopted a central design, as their main concern is deciding on what learning activities will take place in class. One part of the central design proposes that pupils and teachers should only use the resources that are brought to or already in the class (ibid., p.18). As Asgedom et al. observed (2006, p.29) physical conditions and availability of resources vary greatly from school to school, meaning teachers lacking in these materials cannot keep to the forward design of the national curriculum and need to create their own, using a central design achieved through using the blackboard and interaction between groups (ibid., p27). According to Asgedom et al.'s observations (ibid., p.28), it was found that some use of the forward designed curriculum left their pupils confused or uninterested. In this case the forward style of the curriculum was reinforced in the teaching style where the focus was on whether the pupils gave correct or incorrect answers to the teacher's questions with little opportunity for pupils to express themselves. However, other teachers who used a more central design in their planning abandoned using the textbook's rigid forward design and used instead student-made or real-life resources which proved more effective in engaging the students (ibid., p.25). This was evident in the way they taught. This might

be because, though the curriculum was forward-designed, the teachers applied a central design in their teaching methods (ibid.). Central design is described by Leung (2012 cited in Richards, 2013, p.15) as 'learner-focused and learning-oriented perspective'. This implies child-centred learning is a part of the central learning design.

For my research I hope to discern the type of planning design behind the yearly curriculum and the design of individual lesson plans created by the teacher to see if they are in accord and plan a design method which will suit the context. The definitions found in figures 2-4., describing forward, central and backward design will be used to determine what planning design is being used by the teachers.

2.9 Previous Research

Previous research dealing with quality of education in Ethiopia has used repetition and dropout rates as indicators of school performance but whilst this quantitative data might demonstrate differences between schools and regions (Wils & Ingram, 2011; FHI, 2008, FHI, 2014), Serbessa sees them as unable to explain the reasons behind the results (2006, p.127). In his research, questionnaires and observation were used to collect data from 6 urban and 6 rural schools (ibid.). These were used to produce both quantitative and qualitative data. This enabled Serbessa to back quantitative results with the reasons behind them. Serbessa used a similar research framework to that of Johnson (1998) by using 'insider perspectives' to assess the quality of the education provided, thereby negating the variables affecting the final output. Within this research Serbessa found a 'growth model' (Rowe & Hill, 1996) which approaches educational progress from the educator's perspective. We can understand the growth model through Rowe's progress mapping (2006, p.3-5). It identifies the difficulty of measuring quality of education and the need to take a more general approach, consisting of students taking ownership and communicating with parents and other interested stakeholders. Typically a child's development is measured against standardized tests. Rowe (2006) takes a reverse approach, letting the child and other stakeholders create the diagnostic tools by which they are measured. Similar approaches to research, referenced by Serbessa, included Dalin's book (1994) 'How schools improve'. This also used qualitative studies in Ethiopia in a wider sense than simply basing observations on student outcomes. These concepts are vital to my research in which I also wish to make a shift from quantitative

methods of measuring outcomes to tackle quality from the point of view of the educator implementing the strategy. Dalin notes (2010, p.3) that history is littered with grandiose plans imposed by governments which never materialise due to little follow up support. Serbessa (2006, p.126) believes child-centred learning in Ethiopia is an example of this, as he describes it as a buzzword (see 2.5.1 “Learner-Centred Teaching” above). This is further confirmed in Serbessa’s research (ibid., p.126) which shows that child-centred learning is more an aspiration than a reality.

3 INTERVIEW DEVELOPMENT

Teklemariam's research focused on grades 9 and 10 and its relevance to real life (2006, p.45), which, whilst not directly related to the age group my research will concentrate on, nonetheless affects the transition from upper primary to those secondary schools where all the subjects are taught in English. Additionally my research wishes to examine the overall purpose of learning English in Ethiopia. Teklemariam's research used a triangulation method consisting of semi-structured interviews, reviewing documents, informal method, focus group discussion, with documentation and interviews making up the bulk of the data collection (ibid., p.46). I also hope to focus on interviews and documentation for my data collection. Additionally I intend to use a similar method of data analysis which involved grouping answers using keywords and creating a summary by clustering respondents (ibid., pp.46-47). My research is congruent with Serbessa in wishing to find "new ways to stimulate and motivate the creative abilities" but seeks to discover these skills from the perspective of the teacher rather than assuming that the use of the blanket term of "child-centred learning" achieves on the ground what it promises in theory. Where I depart from Serbessa is to place less emphasis on the style of delivery, which he found to be traditional (ibid. p. 130), in favour of seeing what materials were actually used and how they related to subject delivery.

3.1 Research questions

As chapter two demonstrate, there are many barriers to the introduction of modern teaching practices, in particular child-centred learning. This is why teachers' experiences in using child-centred methods in teaching English in Addis Ababa private and state schools was chosen as the purpose of my study. Private schools were included as they make up a significant proportion of schools in the capital city. This would also give an insight into schools which are more independent or have better access to resources than the state schools. In general the research questions can be summed up as:

- What are the main purposes for learning English in Ethiopia?

This will be done from the perspective of primary school teachers but may involve influences from secondary school and higher education (see fig. 1, *Downward Pressures*).

- What teaching methods are used to apply the English syllabus?
- What resources are being used to apply the English syllabus?

As examined in the theoretical concept, five main areas came to the fore. These are the five areas I for which I have collected data and examine in detail.

- What is the purpose of teaching English?
- What teaching methods are employed?
- How are lessons planned?
- What resources are favoured amongst teachers?
- What stories are used in English classes?

The questions asked to interviewees can be found in appendix 2.

3.2 The Selected Schools and Interview Participants

Heugh et al. (2007, p.15) used focus groups where a general theme might determine the respondents' contributions. My research does not use focus groups as I am more interested in the independent thoughts of the teachers. My data collection will come solely from the teachers in primary school which, whilst it might be limiting (see limitations), allows me to explore teachers' perceptions exclusively from a primary school perspective. Heugh et al.'s (ibid. pp.15-16) research used semi-structured interviews, focus groups and classroom observations with part of the study using documents. The data was collected from a wide range of participants involved, from the women's bureau representatives, education officials, PTA members and deans to student teachers and the pupils themselves in both primary and secondary school. All these participants would discuss language policy. The results indicate that a very narrow field of language policy was examined to get an in-depth view on the challenges of English instruction in high school. My research proposes to do the opposite in which a narrow group (English primary school teachers) would be individually interviewed to find broadly what their experiences are in teaching English as part of the curriculum.

Two primary schools were chosen, one private and one state school. These schools were chosen because they represented typical schools in Addis Ababa and provided easy

access. Teachers of English from each were interviewed, five from the state school and five from the private school. Both schools were in close proximity to one another and it was thought they might be more easily comparable. They were both in the area of Jemu in Addis Ababa. The small private school had rented out a two-storey building which meant that it was a non-purpose-built school. The state school was purpose-built and much larger.

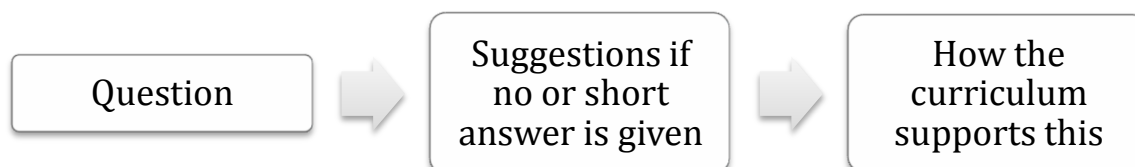
To assist me with my investigation my wife, who is Ethiopian and an Amharic-speaker, acted as both interviewer and translator. She went to each of the schools and spoke to the school head, presenting the permission letter and explaining the content of the thesis. We thought that, if she carried out the interviews, teachers would feel less pressured into claiming in their responses that they used Western methods. In addition, she would be seen as neutral, independent of either the state or the private sector, and therefore the teachers could be more open in their responses than if they thought their continued employment depended on giving the “right” answer. The teachers were given the choice between English and Amharic as to the language in which they would prefer to be interviewed. All the teachers opted to conduct the interviews in Amharic. She explained the subject matter of the thesis to them and asked them to sign the permission slip which was also signed and stamped by the management of the school. She conducted the interviews on the basis of the design outlined below. Recordings were made to a phone device. Transcribing used both transcribing first to Amharic for more complex translations before then translating to English, whereas simple conversations were translated straight to English from the Amharic recording (see Tonkyn, 2017 for English language transcriptions).

3.3 Interview Design

Creswell (2009, p.4), explains that the qualitative data collection requires a constructivist approach. This means that the cultural context needs to be understood before designing questions and making assumptions. As Creswell (2007, p.16, 19, 56) points out, to gain the sort of depth demanded in qualitative research the questions need to be open-ended which has been applied to each of the questions in the interview. A semi-structured interview was conducted based on the research and theories examined in chapter 2 and consisted of six questions (see appendix). First, one of these initial six

questions would be put to the interviewee, then a further probing question was asked in case one-word answers were given without further explanation (see *follow-up questions* in Kvale, 2011b, p.12). The initial questions were asked without follow-up questions to try to avoid influencing the responses. Finally, it was asked how the program design supported the delivery.

Figure 5. Interview structure



Previous research in this area prepared one for obfuscating responses and so the questions were adapted to elicit clearer ideas on how the curriculum was interpreted. My design was intended to go beyond just asking them if they used child-centred learning in order to find out what resources and activities were used in their classes. As in van Manen's (1990, p.53) view on experiences and perception, I wish not to take pedagogy for granted with preconceived notions on what constitutes correct pedagogy.

3.4 Data Analysis

I used all three of van Manen's methods for discovering themes in data analysis (van Manen, 1990, p.93) and adapted them for my own purposes. These three approaches can be summed up as detailing, selecting and formulating. Van Manen's (1990) methods of research deal with lived experiences, which reflect on events, requiring natural responses. My research differs, dealing more with situational knowledge (see Kvale, 2011c, p.9), therefore different methods were needed for my data collection and only a very literal interpretation of isolating themes was used in the organising of my data. The detailed approach will be used to pick out and summarize all vital information to display the results in a more accessible manner (see Moustakas, 1994, p. 90 & Wertz, 2005, p. 172). Highlighting of certain information from the results will appear in the discussion. Individual outliers will be examined for revealing new or different information (Wilmot, 2005, p.10) as well as themes and patterns (see Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1278). Wertz (2005, p.173) values the collecting of general themes to finally produce a holistic understanding of the organisations. A holistic approach will be used to look for overall directions the English program should take, based on common

themes that the majority of respondents give or responses verified by previous research. Wertz (*ibid.*, p.172) describes this shifting from part to the whole as producing a better understanding of the embedded structure.

What and whom are integral questions (Babbie, 2011, p.73). The whom is represented by either the private or state school rather than the individual interviewee and the what are the themes of teaching methods and resources. The importance of the whom depends on the what. If the what (the teaching methods and resources) shows that state and private schools (the whom) differ, this particular aspect of the latter will become vital to the analysis. In the cases where no differences are found between the two, the performance of the teachers in delivering the program with the resources at their disposal becomes the issue in question.

Data rarely can easily be divided into categories (Lester, 1999, p.2), even with the questions guiding the direction of the interview. This difficulty could be regarded as evidence that the interviews were impartially collected but present the analysis with some challenges. Only verbal analysis would be used to simplify the process of categorising (see Gass & Mackey, 2000).

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Barbour (2008, p.6) alludes to quantitative research representing the “macro”. This approach is used to represent common issues which might present flaws when applied in the Ethiopian context. Given the wide variance of schooling in Ethiopia as a result of decentralization and the separation of schools into state and private (non-government) sectors, a “macro” approach would fail to represent each school, urban or non-urban and even each region adequately. Quantitative research such as Asgedom et al.’s (2006) focuses on four regions, two of which have the highest poverty rates and three of which have the lowest school attendance in Ethiopia (Oxford Poverty and Human Development), producing data with more exaggerated results for common issues. Few researchers are interested in solely examining schools in the capital city, which has the lowest poverty rates and the highest school attendance in Ethiopia. Private schools are also underrepresented in Ethiopian research as their results are unlikely to demonstrate extreme shortcomings in education and represent a minority in the overall schooling

population. My research takes a qualitative approach starting with the “micro” with a clear understanding that the findings refer specifically to the schools from which the data was collected. The findings can be used to explain how the “macro” exists (Barbour, 2008, p.6) as well as presenting issues not commonly seen in other schools.

Though Hsieh and Shannon’s (2005, p.1278) search for patterns and themes as a form of data analysis will be applied to some extent in this data analysis, it is worth considering that this is a form of empirical analysis (See Mayring, 2000, p.2) so it is essential that the reader regards this research as essentially only applicable in the context of the schools presented. However, it can serve to highlight potential issues in other schools. This is also why it was important to examine individual interviewee’s comments even if they did not correlate with the views of others.

Many researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp.4-8; Creswell, 2007, p.20; Morrow, 2007, pp.216-217) touch on complete objectivity being unachievable due to the involvement of human subjectivity in qualitative research. According to Lester (1999, p.1), reliability in qualitative research increases with a deeper understanding of the subjective experience. While a general understanding of the context has been established, I was wary of introducing too much interpretation into the interviewees’ responses. Though Babbie & Mouton (2001, p.33) and Patton (2002, p.5) recommend face-to-face interviews for recording facial expressions, I am no expert in interpreting facial expressions or behaviour and I felt that, were I to introduce my own interpretation of the interviews, there would be the likelihood of distorting a summary of the main points emerging from them. Additionally, the purpose of the interviews was not to gauge enthusiasm for a particular method of delivery or gain subconscious cues as to what the interviewees felt or believed. Thus the process was reduced to verbal analysis, through reduction, segmentation and coding (see Gass and Mackey, 2000).

Though Lincoln and Guba (2013, p.108) recommend member checks and this has been incorporated into validity criteria (Lather, 1991, p.66) there have been criticisms of this method. For these reasons, not carrying out member checks was a deliberate choice. Elo et al. (2014, p.6) describe member checks as an unverified method for enhancing validity. Morse et al. (2002, pp.6-7) even warn that member checks can be a threat to the validity of research, arguing that it may appear to the participants that their initial

response was wrong and that they need to change their answers to what they consider might be a “correct” response. Teachers may wish to represent their teaching in a certain way, especially as deviation from the state curriculum would be seen as unprofessional. For example, participants would wish to be represented as conducting child-centred instruction as it is part of the government preferred method of delivery. I will be interpreting their teaching activities which might “go beyond the interviewees' self-understanding,” (Kvale, 2011e, p.7). Any deviations from the curriculum will be indicated.

Kvale (1994, p.155) cites one common criticism of using interviewers for data collection being that leading questions are asked. First, this was mitigated through open-ended questions which Kvale also suggests as a possible solution (ibid.) and secondly, what might be considered leading questions were only asked if no response was given and noted as such in the results, e.g., “The respondent only replied with encouragement.”. Thirdly, the use of an external interviewer avoided, as far as possible, the likelihood of responses being influenced by the interviewer.

While not as extensive as an external audit in creating objectivity, by my wife’s being responsible for conducting the interviews and her being from Addis Ababa and thus having a better cultural and linguistic understanding of the city, I was able to distance myself both in terms of expectations and in the interpretation of the respondents’ replies. Her thesis research concerns the procedure for opening a school, therefore differing enough from my own research to allow for greater objectivity, without my being able to influence the interviews with leading questions consciously or unconsciously. As mentioned before (Lester, 1999, p.2), findings from interviews rarely tidily fit into the categories created for the data analysis and there might be a desire to lead interviewees in this direction. In addition, findings from previous research or personal opinions also play a part in the interviewer’s communication. Again, this has been avoided through the use of an external interviewer.

3.6 Ethical Solutions

As emphasised above, all interviewees were interviewed by an Ethiopian from Addis Ababa and so could be given the option of their language of preference. All

interviewees and the schools were informed that their interviews would be used as part of thesis for the University of Jyvaskyla and signed permissions were collected from both the schools and interviewees (see appendix 3. for sample). This would inform the “interview situation” (Kvale, 2011d, p.3), avoiding misunderstanding, though self-understanding might be put under pressure, particularly in respect of the conflict between desired pedagogy and actual teaching practices. Kvale’s (ibid.) concern over how critically a participant can be questioned extends to the data analysis. It was important to me not to take a critical view of methods of pedagogy or even resources being applied by the interviewee but rather to accept that the activities used by the interviewee were necessary in their given context and to find out how the theory can be adjusted to suit their teaching rather than the teaching be changed to suit the theory. Previous research (Serbessa, 2006) has already examined the lack of modern teaching practices in the classroom but Kvale (2011d, p.3) advocates “improvement of the human situation investigated”. I hope my research can directly benefit leaders struggling with similar conflicts.

Care was taken to keep confidential the names of all those involved in the interview process, both of those giving permission and those actually taking part in the interview. The schools have been generally described, avoiding any precise description which would reveal their identity.

4 RESULTS

In this section I have used two methods for isolating themes adapted from van Manen (1990, p.93) to clarify results, referred to earlier as detailing and selecting. I have presented the results first in a condensed form and then grouped them thematically to provide the reader with a clearer overview. The original translated transcripts can be accessed from the link in the references.

4.1 Condensed Results

The purpose of this section is to use ‘detailing’, which involves reading every sentence written and describing what it reveals about the phenomenon (ibid.). Then applying what Kvale (2011a, p.7) termed “meaning condensation” to make the results more accessible to both the reader and myself during the analysis process. Kvale (ibid.) describes the process of meaning condensation as compressing, occasionally rephrasing to gather the main sense of each respondent.

Table 3. Condensed results gathered from interview transcripts (Tonkyn, 2017). The following table is set out in the order of the questions asked. The table has been split so that the applicable question can readily be viewed. The randomised numbers correspond to the respondents: 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 (private school); 1, 5, 6, 9, 10 (government school). This preserves anonymity and prevents individuals being identified by the order in which they were interviewed, though the numbers correspond to the same interviewee in each case. The grey highlight represents the responses of the government school teachers.

| 1. What curriculum do you use? |
|--|
| <p>2. Follows the curriculum but additional resources mean a departure from a curriculum which does not take into account availability of computers.</p> <p>3. Only the state curriculum.</p> <p>4. State curriculum.</p> <p>7. Despite being a private school, the curriculum follows the government plan. Attempts are made to cover the textbook they have, the yearly, monthly and weekly plans, which are then approved by the head office.</p> <p>8. Use both the state and own school curriculum. Teachers make yearly plans based on state curriculum, also daily plans are made and plans are based on the resources available.</p> |
| <p>1. It seems there are three curriculums planned, that of the teacher, school and the government and a compromise among these curriculums, which the management reviews.</p> <p>5. Plan based on state curriculum, checked by the head office but once the year started, teachers have a bit more freedom to design their own weekly plans.</p> <p>6. Yearly and weekly planning is based on the state curriculum.</p> <p>9. State curriculum.</p> <p>10. State curriculum and permanent teachers make a plan.</p> |

2 What is the overall purpose of teaching English at your school?

2. International communication and for secondary school as all the subjects are in English.
3. Communicate internationally and a huge advantage on the job market, even in Ethiopia, at companies and educational institutions.
4. Some places in Ethiopia do not communicate in Amharic but English is a language Ethiopians can use to communicate inter-regionally and also internationally.
7. Gave the example of needing English to read medicine prescriptions. Also mentioned helping getting a job.
8. English is an international language. We cannot predict the direction the child's life will take but we can be sure English will open many opportunities.

1. Made a reference to pupils needing to be prepared for high school, where they will be taught all their subjects in English. However, this is more a concern for the upper primary. Additionally the ability to communicate internationally with different media was given. Finding a job will be easier both in Ethiopia and outside with English language skills.
5. Most of the subjects are taught in English, making English essential to learn. The overall purpose is to get a job internationally and communicate internationally.
6. Wanted to clarify if the learning or teaching were being discussed. The main purpose was given as teaching to communicate internationally. Mentioned that they as the teacher also learned new words through communication. With some encouragement, mentioned the advantage of studying from grade 1 in preparation for high school, when all the subjects would be taught in English. When asked how the curriculum supports this, the interviewee answered that they were checked up on to make sure the curriculum was being followed.
9. To prepare for secondary school and to help communicate internationally.
10. To prepare them for secondary school when they learn everything in English and then later if they are part of an international organisation.

3 What types of teaching techniques are being used at your school?

2. Single answer, no elaboration on child-centred learning. Gives an introduction to the topic and then allows pupils to respond and ask questions. Asks them questions to test their knowledge and those that do not respond correctly are placed in a group for further tuition. Pupils do copy from the board; justified through the teaching of writing.

3. There has been a change from teacher-led to student-led learning.

4. Memorising is done as an oral mental starter to the class but also students must recall past lessons. If this is not achieved the teacher cannot move on to the next topic and then the lesson will need to be revised again. Student-centred learning through different resources.

7. Used child-centred learning which they recognised the benefits of and found the teacher guide helpful. All teachers have different ways of using critical thinking. Children aren't asked to copy too much from the board but are asked to memorise by rote which is seen as a daily activity.

8. Child-centred learning, based on what the pupils know. Asks questions to assess what they know.

1. Student-centred because they had reduced the amount they wrote on the board, stories are read and uses activities to help memorise tasks.

5. Child-centred-learning was mentioned as being used as it is part of the state curriculum but was not elaborated upon. Critical thinking was said to be used but no examples were given. Children sometimes copied from the board. Wasn't really able to explain how the curriculum supported child-centred learning apart from providing books and some tools.

6. One-word answers were given agreeing that child-centred learning and critical thinking were used but no explanation how. Contradictions to this assertion were demonstrated in copying from the blackboard and the use of memorising for answering questions.

9. Child-centred learning though they do copy from the blackboard and writing is learned through memorization.

10. Child-centred learning, critical thinking, but also copying from the blackboard and learning by rote. Simply answered in the affirmative with no elaboration.

4 What kind of resources have you found to work in classroom?

2. Uses different media to teach such as computers (these extra resources seem appreciated and complement the state curriculum), images and has the advantage of teaching both English and one other subject, allowing for more varied techniques and integrated the two subjects. Pointed out the lack of flashcards and power point, though used pictures and, of course, the blackboard.

3. Copying from the board or using worksheets, pictures and books. This teacher mostly used books.

4. Blackboard, worksheets, tests, quizzes are given by the teacher.

7. The school supplied pictures. Found it hard to choose a favourite tool but suggested the teacher guide suggesting as it allowed a break from writing all the time. Uses textbook with supporting materials. Used worksheets but not power point.

8. Sometimes used power point but not all the time useful, worksheets are prepared quarterly. Seemed to have a lot of visual displays and flashcards. Also mentioned books.

1. The teacher realised that a projector especially for power point and whiteboard presentation would be useful but had only the book, chalk and blackboard to work with and they occasionally prepared worksheets.

5. No flashcards and pictures, books (which they relied upon), the board and worksheets were often prepared which were their only resources. Felt that writing on the board wasted time and saw the advantage of a projector connected to a computer and would prepare resources in advance. Explained that they have been using the same limited resources for many years but the school has been supportive.

6. Just blackboard and books.

9. Blackboard was the most important tool but also worksheets, books and pictures were first mentioned in response but the curriculum does not support the resource situation.

10. Blackboard was the most useful tool, chalk, pictures, worksheets but no flashcards. There is no power point but did not know if the curriculum supported this.

5 How do you prefer to plan your classes?

2. Planned lessons based on homework, previous teaching and the understanding of the child.
3. Using the weekly and yearly plans, the teacher creates individual plans. This is used to prepare worksheets, class activity and work and homework.
4. Exams are based on lesson plans. A yearly plan is created well in advance, from which weekly and individual plans are made.
7. A plan is made at the start of the year which decides everything from when tests are given to how to teach, and what kind of resources to use. Tests are based around this but continuous assessment is also used.
8. The yearly plan, which includes tests, is used to plan. Sometimes prepared for more extensive tests with small tests. Tests were prepared in relation to what resources they have.

1. The teacher plans their individual lessons through the book and teacher's guide. Pupils designated as group leaders were given tasks to disseminate among their group and to some extent the pupils dictate the direction of learning.
5. The plans aren't based on tests and individual plans are based on the learning objective but more on the child and what they have learned. Struggled to explain how the curriculum supported this.
6. Based not around tests but on the learning objective and on the curriculum in relation to what they have been learning.
9. Follows the school plan but mainly plans around the resources.
10. Plans around the learning objective.

6. Do you use stories in class and if so what stories do you like to use?

2. Uses jokes to engage the children.
3. Not good at telling stories so simply carries out the tasks.
4. Uses more jokes based on the country stories.
7. Uses stories from their own life experience, particularly for those not concentrating as they felt they were once in the same position.
8. Teaches different courses and whilst in Amharic stories are told, not in English.

1. History which was supported by the curriculum and the teacher's own life experiences were used to teach the subject.
5. Used history or famous people (fact-based stories) more often related to their culture. Some cultural sensitivity needs to be exercised in regards to region, religion and language.
6. Used stories drawing on history and drama a lot to which pupils respond enthusiastically. Used both traditional and international stories.
9. Tries to tell international and national stories to make the class more interesting.
10. Uses traditional stories but not often.

4.2 Grouping of results

Selecting means highlighting statements (van Manen, 1990, p.93) but additionally these statements were summarized and grouped where possible. This required searching the transcripts for articulation of content related to the topics examined in figures 1-5 and table 2. Whereas the previous results represent both the what and whom (see Babbie, 2011, p.73; Kvale, 2011c, p.9) the following display of results will concentrate more on the what through grouping related responses in a similar manner to that described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1278). However, as this is a phenomenological investigation, all information pertaining to the following six themes was reported, regardless of its frequency (see Wilmot, 2005, p10).

4.2.1 The Curriculum

All schools used the government curriculum but those working in state schools mentioned more rigorous checks from management to make sure the state curriculum was being followed. One interviewee mentioned that the state curriculum did not cater for additional resources the school might have such as computers whilst one interviewee from a private school said they took into account resources when planning. One state school interviewee explained that permanent teachers were responsible for the plan. The role of management was to evaluate the plans created by teachers against the national curriculum.

4.2.2 Purpose of the English Syllabus

All schools mentioned having more opportunity in the job market with English language skills with some mentioning that even within Ethiopia this would be an advantage. International communication was also mentioned by every single interviewee with one interviewee even expressing that it would aid communication within Ethiopia due to there being many different languages and Amharic not being spoken by everyone. Two state school teachers mentioned a need to prepare students for high school where all the subjects, other than Amharic, are taught in English.

4.2.3 Teaching Methods

All the interviewees affirmed they used child-centred learning, with some mentioning it was part of the national curriculum, but with little or no explanation how. Only one

teacher (from a state school) mentioned that they had reduced the amount they wrote on the board and focused on learning activities. Another private school teacher mentioned offering a chance for pupils to respond and the grouping of those who needed more help. Those that did elaborate on their teaching methods indicated that memorising and copying were a part of their teaching. None of the teachers could explain how the curriculum supported child-centred learning and one teacher specifically commented that this was a difficult question because, apart from provision of books and resources, no other support was given.

4.2.4 Resources

One private school teacher (who was also the I.T. teacher) found the additional use of computers useful. All the teachers mentioned the blackboard, indicating its centrality in lessons. Most of those interviewed mentioned the use of books and from this we can infer a reference to textbooks. Pictures or posters were mentioned but only one of the teachers from the private school said they used flashcards. A government school teacher wished that his school had a projector as this would make preparing for the class easier.

4.2.5 Lesson planning

Two of the teachers from private schools explained that their individual lesson plans were based on the yearly plan, made at the start of the year. Two state school teachers expressly stated that lessons were not planned around tests and one private school teacher said that lessons were based on exams. Two teachers, one from a state school and one from a private school, planned their lesson objectives around the children's understanding. One example of this, from a state school teacher, was that, though the teacher took their objectives and tasks from the textbook and guide, they put these tasks in the hands of group leaders and the activity would be controlled by the children themselves. The other example was the private school teacher who used previous lessons as the basis for future lesson planning.

4.2.6 Story telling

Whether the teacher used stories seemed very much dependent on the teacher. The teachers who did have the confidence to tell stories told fact-based stories from history, though one teacher made up their own stories based on their own life experiences. The historical stories used were traditional ones, though two mentioned international stories

and one explained the need to be culturally sensitive due to regional, linguistic and religious differences.

5 RESULTS ANALYSIS

Following Kvale's (2011a, p.20) recommended procedure for analysis, the focus had been planned prior to the interviews. This part will seek to implement what Kvale (2011a, p.20) terms "meaning categorization and meaning interpretation.". Drawing on results, previous literature and theoretical frameworks, conclusions and explanations were made about the results.

5.1 Purpose of the English Syllabus

All the responses given by the interviewees confirmed that the main purpose of learning English, as also summarised in Teklemariam's research (2006, p.45), was, namely, to prepare students for higher education or a vocation. English is clearly recognised as a subject that can provide job opportunities. One interviewee even mentioned that, though we cannot be certain what direction the student's life will take, we can be confident that English will open opportunities otherwise denied them. In Africa two classes are being created in the area of employment, the elite with English language ability and those speaking local languages (Flammia & Sanders, 2007, p.1900). In addition, if students prefer to take an academic direction, English is a necessity.

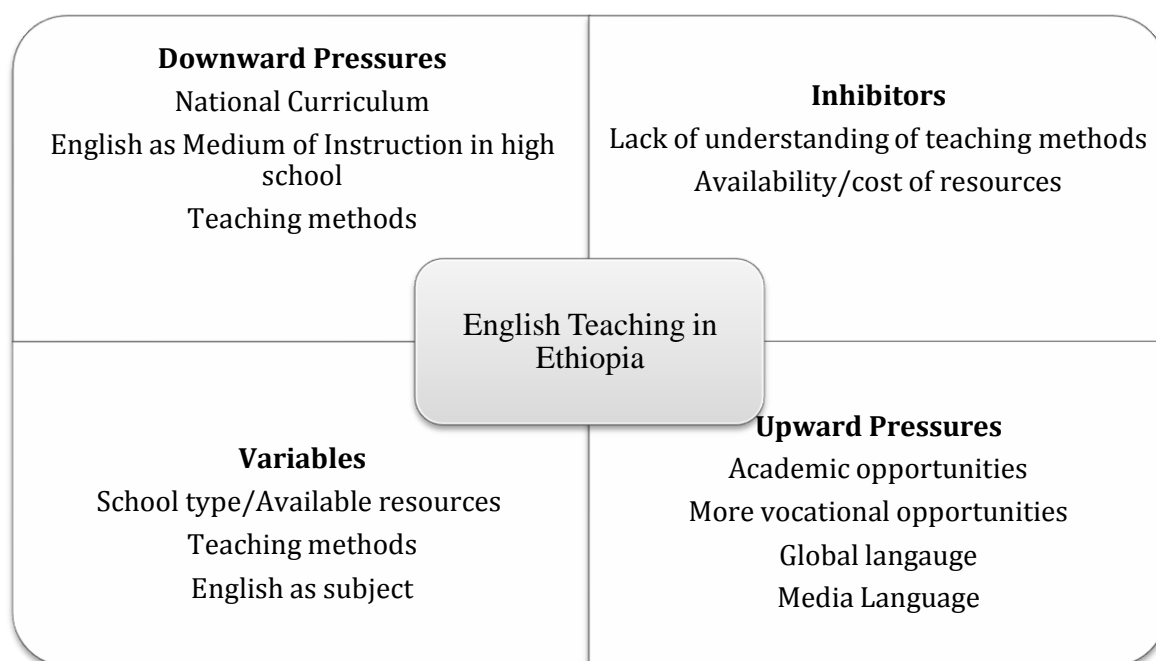
Teklemariam's (2006) recommending the use of technology to achieve the aims of teaching English only occurred in one instance and that was in the case of the English teacher who also taught I.T., enabling him to integrate technology into his English lessons. This was at a private school which had better resources and none of the other teachers mentioned the use of technology in the classroom apart from one who wished they had a projector in their class.

One might argue that the state schools were too focused on preparing children for high school rather than learning the language itself. This would agree with Heugh et al.'s research (2007, p.124), which concluded that too much pressure was being exerted from higher education and sought to mitigate these pressures in its recommendations. The majority of research and articles about Africa suggests English should not be the medium of instruction, both for learning and political reasons (Heugh et al., 2007; Sonaiya, 2004). However, the results from the interviews demonstrate that this could conflict with the purpose of learning English. Increased chances in academia and

vocationally demand English as a means of communication, a lingua franca, and as enabling access to a global economy.

Additionally, one teacher mentioned that, though Amharic is the national language, some people do not speak it well or at all in areas where the regional language predominates. English does not have the negative connotations of a colonial past as it does in many other African countries (Sonaiya, 2004, p.136) and actually is a relatively neutral language in Ethiopia in which Amharic is considered by some as the language of regional oppressors.

Figure 6. The various influences on teaching English as given by the interviewees.



There are two main reasons for figure 1 differing from figure 6. First, figure 1 is based on a review of existing research on the teaching of English in Ethiopia covering the whole country and placing English in the context of a mainly rural population for whom the language lacks relevance; whereas figure 6 relates to two schools in Addis Ababa, the capital city and seat of government. Secondly, figure 6 concentrates on the teachers' perspective and therefore does not include certain features of figure 1 while emphasising others - for example, the *Downward Pressures* are all to do with government policy with specific reference to the curriculum. Further, "Global language" and "Media language" have moved to *Upward Pressures*, reflecting both the influence

of the urban environment and the views, mediated through the teachers, of parents and pupils. In such a setting “Parental pressure” (fig. 1) has become more narrowly defined as “Academic opportunities” and “More vocational opportunities” (fig. 6).

As regards *Inhibitors*, figure 6 shows that the teachers lacked the necessary expertise to apply the new teaching methods mentioned in the curriculum advice rather than that they were locked into a traditional style of teaching. One figure 1 inhibitor that one might have expected to feature in figure 6 was “Latin script unfamiliar”, since Amharic, which uses the fidel, is the medium of instruction in primary schools in Addis Ababa. The Latin script might cause difficulties for pupils learning English, but this would mainly be the case at upper primary where reading and writing occupy equal prominence with listening and speaking.

The difference between figures 1 and 6 as regards *Variables* shows the teachers’ more narrow concerns and the region in which the schools are situated, despite some of the elements being similar. Some regions use a local language as the medium of instruction right up to the end of secondary, whereas others change to English as the medium of instruction as early as upper primary.

As mentioned above, figure 6 was adapted to represent only the responses that interviewees gave. This enables a comparison with those given in the theoretical framework (see Interview Development). *Downward Pressures* represented unavoidable pressures from the state on the teaching of English at primary level. All the teachers said they followed the national curriculum, which determined both the content and approaches used. As regards the latter, one teacher stated that child-centred teaching was part of the national curriculum. However, teaching methods varied between teachers according to their understanding of the subject and access to resources. Teachers were aware of the need to prepare students for high school where the medium of instruction for all subjects is English, apart from the subject of Amharic.

Inhibitors were demonstrated in the lack of understanding that some teachers appeared to have about child-centred learning, thereby countering the aims of the curriculum. Though interviewees reported a desire to implement child-centred learning, they gave contradictory accounts of its application, suggesting a confused idea of what it meant in

practice. The availability or cost of resources was seen as an inhibitor by the participant who wished for a projector but also this respondent felt that other resources, apart from the black board, books and worksheets, were lacking in all state schools.

Variables were found between private and state schools as well as some teaching methods among teachers. The school type can also be associated with the available resources as it appeared that the private school had more resources available in the form of flash cards and computers.

Though parents were not mentioned at all during the interviews, various other *Upward Pressures* were focused on, all the teachers citing the vocational and academic opportunities as the main reasons for learning English. Equally important was the importance of English as a national, global and media language. These were placed in the upward pressure box as interviewees gave weak or no examples of how the curriculum supported this, so this was seen as one of upward aspiration, more than proceeding from government pressure.

5.2 Teaching Methods

Though all the teachers answered that they employed child-centred learning, there was a lack of elaboration on how they applied it, with some interviewees giving teaching activities which seemed diametrically opposed to it, such as memorising and copying. Serbessa (2006) and Barrow & Lue (2006) also noted a marked difference between the importance given to child-centred/active learning and how they actually taught their classes. Barrow & Lue's (2006, p.6) interviews with teachers, note the importance staff gave to active learning, but surveys showed teachers also valued reciting as much as active participation. In Serbessa's (2006, p.136) results, teachers were confident in their ability to employ child-centred learning despite evidence of significant challenges due to large class sizes and unsuitable resources. My results were identical in some respects to those of Serbessa (2006), in that, though all staff expressed a commitment to child-centred learning, most of them did not elaborate and contradicted themselves by admitting to the use of memorising in class. This was the case in both the state and private school. Reasons behind this could be that teachers either did not know what activities were in opposition to child-centred learning or that the resources at their

disposal did not support other methods of teaching. This certainly confirms Serbessa's (2006, p.126) belief that child-centred learning is merely a buzzword, and, as interviewees' responses on resources demonstrate, the MoE have included it in the primary school curriculum without providing the means to support it, further exacerbated by teacher training not adequately addressing the concept and application of child-centred learning.

Some divergent results were found in comparison to Serbessa's (2006) research. Serbessa's (2006, pp.135-137) quantitative data found an emphasis on facts and information. However, this emphasis was in respect of test design. My survey does confirm the use of memorising but the teachers' responses to questions regarding planning suggest that they are not solely concerned with "teaching to the test". All teachers answered that their planning did not revolve around tests with the only mention of tests used in the curriculum from three private school teachers who said tests were incorporated into the yearly curriculum and one state school teacher who mentioned that they prepared for tests with mini-tests, planned around the available resources, showing assessment through understanding rather than the mere recital of facts. Given the importance both pupils and teachers gave to tests in Serbessa's research (2006, p.136), references to the same remained noticeably few from interviewees' responses. In addition to the course design there seemed to be a greater understanding of what child-centred learning could be than Serbessa's research revealed, such as the use of critical thinking, problem-solving and activities. One might argue that the interviewee who described splitting the class into groups and nominating leaders in each group was an example of what Nolan and Kilderry (2010, p.115) aimed at when wishing to empower the child to dictate the direction of learning.

5.3 Resources

Results for teaching methods and resources seemed intrinsically linked as the one teacher mentioned that they were dependent on the limitations of the books and other resources provided. Child-centred learning as insisted upon by the government in the national curriculum required more and different resources. The same teacher mentioned that resources had not changed in the past few years. This would suggest that the

textbooks need revision with activities added to support child-centred learning if the government is serious about the change in teaching method.

A teacher's reliance on textbooks (Ben-Peretz, 1990, p.xiii) has been seen to obstruct constructivism. Brooks and Brooks (1993, p.6), suggest this to be by virtue of teachers feeling pressured into following the book and thereby directly imparting the information therein without any deviation (ibid., p.7). To some extent this is confirmed by the interviewees using memorisation and copying in their teaching activities. We can infer that the issue is not necessarily the textbooks themselves but the layout, promoting copying and memorisation as opposed to discussion and analysis. A solution here would be to make the textbooks more conducive to activities other than copying and memorisation. Such revision would be perfectly feasible, especially when one considers the far greater task presented to the compilers when textbooks in other subjects were changed to offer regional languages when education was shifted from a national to a regional system.

The other issue was limited resources in general with a blackboard and textbook being the resources relied upon. One teacher realised how much easier a projector would make their teaching, explaining that they could then prepare their lessons beforehand rather than writing it all down during the class. One should mention here that the one teacher from a private school who did have access to a projector did not find it useful all the time. Possible reasons for this are lack of internet, needing a computer and power supply (Ethiopia suffers power outages on occasion). This particular participant also expressed a deeper understanding of child-centred learning which might be restricted through the use of a projector in that there is a danger of the projector being merely another form of "chalk-and-talk" and equally an obstacle to active learning. Smith et al. (2012, pp.52-54) identify the logistical obstacles and solutions such as the need for greater teacher training and sufficient, quality textbooks to improve literacy. Given the value placed on the teacher guide by one interviewee and especially how they remarked on its enabling aspects of child-centred learning, curriculum support could be given by providing more such teacher guides containing activities for those classrooms with few resources but still based on the curriculum. The activities in the book should also take into account how the blackboard is used. Much of teaching methodology for child-centred learning is in the context of a Western classroom where many different images

and information can be instantly presented. As mentioned above, the textbook needs to be rethought to offer more child-centred activities in line with the national curriculum.

Serbessa's (ibid., pp.129-130) recommendation to dispose of "chalk-and-talk" seems unlikely to be implemented, given interviewees' dependency on the blackboard, even more so in the government school with their limited resources. Limited resources seemed a consistent factor, though the private school was slightly better resourced. One of the heads in Asgedom et al.'s (2006, p.13) interviews believed that this was the main barrier to child-centred learning. Despite this, the teachers in this study managed to work towards a child-centred classroom, arranging activities, disciplining themselves to write less on the board, avoiding planning around tests, and forming groups with a group leader. According to 'Class Enquirers' (Croll, 1996; Pollard et al, 1994) there is nothing wrong with a system of whole-class teaching rather than teachers concentrating on individuals. This system of teaching can, according to Croll (1996), produce more gains in learning and interaction than the teacher as an "individual monitor". In this sense, therefore, Ethiopian teachers are coming up with their own effective child-centred strategies.

Given the number of theories and the evidence supporting the use of stories in education, it is surprising to discover that narrative is not commonly taken advantage of as a teaching tool in the curriculum. Whether the teacher used stories seemed very much dependent on the individual. The teachers who did have the confidence to tell stories told fact-based stories from history, though one teacher made up their own stories based on their own life experiences. Given the benefits of storytelling (see *Benefits of Narrative in Education*) it can be recommended that story books are provided or chosen by teachers according to their region as certain cultural sensitivities need to be served. The historical stories, told by interviewees, were from traditional sources though two mentioned international stories.

There is a wealth of authentic texts for early primary-school-aged children which can be given to teachers not confident enough to tell stories in class. Papworth (2011b, p.59-63) divided African tales, particularly in the context of Ethiopia, into three, non-mutually exclusive groups, consisting of animal tales, explanation tales and proverbs. Kipling's *Just So Stories* and Aesop's *Fables* were used as source material for topics as

they follow a similar format to many of the traditional tales from Ethiopia. The use of animals as characters helps with the development of an ethical perspective while remaining neutral in terms of region and religion. In addition, the animals can be represented easily using images.

The private school appeared to have more resources available not only as regards computers but also flashcards. The state school teachers relied on pictures, implying that these were pictures that the teacher themselves had gathered rather than the standard flashcards purchased by schools. Renaud et al. (2007, p.16), recommend this gathering of images to support a poorly resourced classroom in which the intention is to implement child-centred learning. As explained by Renaud et al. (ibid.), magazine images or drawn images can, at little or no cost, promote discussions and address the interests of the learners.

5.4 The Curriculum and Lesson Planning

All the interviewees said they followed the government curriculum but the private school would enlarge upon it due to their having additional resources not catered for in the national curriculum. This presents not only resources but also the curriculum itself as a limiting factor to the teaching method. Given the large number of private schools in Addis Ababa, it might be worth considering a supplementary curriculum which took account of more resources. The only concern here would be that a two-tier curriculum would result, the state, in effect, giving an advantage to private schools over its own sector. Additionally, more regional flexibility could be implemented given the lack of resources in other regions (Asgedom. et al., 2006) compared to the schools in Addis Ababa.

Two private and one state school interviewee said their plans were reviewed by management, presumably to check that they were still complying with the national curriculum. This demonstrates the hierarchical system criticised by Hannay and Seller (1991, pp.340-341) in which administrators and managers approve curriculums. As Hannay and Seller point out, it is doubtful that management has the same in-depth understanding of the curriculum as the teachers. Though taking “collective responsibility” (Newman, 1994, p.1) is needed for a professional learning community

and management should be aware of certain core characteristics of the curriculum, such as child-centred learning, maybe more trust should be put in the teachers, particularly if they are committed to the school and have more experience of the curriculum. As one state school interviewee explained, only permanent teachers make a plan, suggesting that curriculum planners need to have a certain level of commitment and understanding. This trust still does not extend far enough as all teachers of English in a school should be involved in the design process.

A few teachers mentioned the use of humour, seen as a useful motivation tool by Driscoll (2014, p.334). Driscoll describes these methods of motivation as unconventional, which could be an alternative to an overly detailed template when implementing child-centred learning. The use of humour could have been made possible through the autonomy granted to the teacher and the absence of individual lesson plans. Individual lesson planning was not mentioned by interviewees, though yearly and weekly planning was mentioned in all the interviews, where planning time frames were evident. Only one interviewee referred to monthly or mid-term planning. This poses the question as to how teachers translate yearly plans into weekly ones. The lack of individual plans could be seen as restricting the ability to differentiate among pupils or even to provide individualised child-centred learning. On the other hand, this freedom might enhance the teacher's ability to adapt teaching to the level of the class as a whole,

One teacher's methods (see teacher 1's response to question 5) could be seen as child-led in that group leaders in the class were given tasks and to some extent the pupils dictated the direction of learning. This could also be a practical choice given the larger class sizes in Ethiopian schools. Renaud et al. (2007, p.14), writing on strategies for child-centred learning in large classes, examine extensively the different ways in which this can be effectively implemented. The strategies put forward by Renaud et al. (ibid., pp.14-15) show it is possible to use a child-centred approach in a large class with low resources and my study shows that some of the interviewees are already implementing strategies such as using images and group work to achieve this.

The private school teacher who used previous lessons to inform future lesson planning was an example of a method frequently observed by Asgedom et al. (2006). This could be interpreted as demonstrating some child-centred learning through continuous

assessment to influence future lessons based on the children's reaction to previous classes.

The other indication of child-centred learning came from an interviewee who based their planning on the child's understanding, a delivery method which Richards (2013, p.15) described as central design. One teacher said they designed their lesson around the resources they had at their disposal, suggesting again the use of central design forcing a departure from the forward design. The other two teachers did what would seem the opposite, planning their lessons based only on the yearly plan, which would be construed as backward design, given its standardisation at a level outside the individual school and teacher (Richards, 2013, p.25).

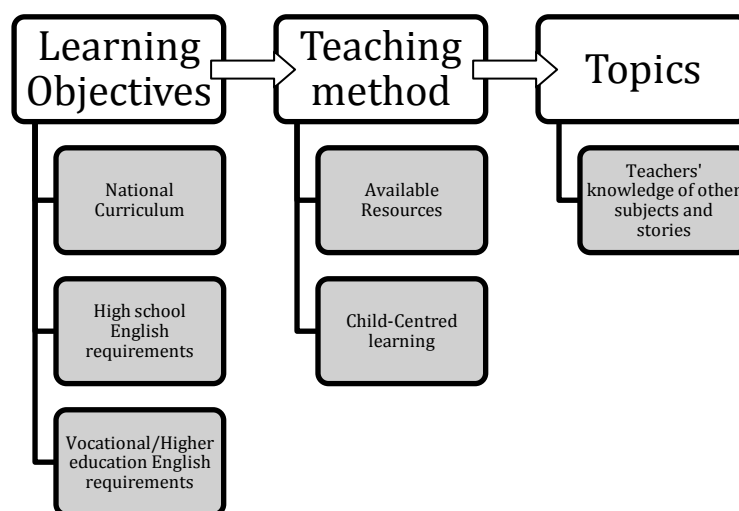
All the teachers did not indicate that planning was based on tests, though three of the private school teachers did mention them as part of the yearly curriculum plan and one state school teacher said that they prepared for them with mini tests, recognising that they are relevant in terms of results both as a measure of the pupils' achievement and of the school itself but, even so, the tests themselves were planned around the available resources. This differs from Serbessa's (2006, p.136) research which found lesson planning centred on preparing for tests, consequently forcing teachers to aim at the acquisition of a collection of facts rather than skills and thus requiring pupils to learn through memorisation rather than understanding. Serbessa's research is, however, over a decade old, making it likely that teachers have shifted to a more child-centred approach in their assessment.

It seemed there were a wide range of methods employed by the teachers to plan their classes. Four of the five state school teachers mentioned the strong influence of the yearly plan but one included homework and the child's understanding as an influential factor. From the private school the answers were more varied. One used a teacher's guide as well as groups in the class to decide the learning which is a highly child-centred approach. Three teachers used the learning objective. Richards (2013, p.21), cites Tyler (1949, p.45), to describe backward design in terms of learning objectives. Tyler represents the effect of learning objectives as dictating the activities, method of instruction and the expected changes in the student. Another private school teacher used a central design approach (see fig. 4 and Richards, 2013, p.17) by starting with the

available resources. This might only be possible in a private school where more resources were available, also indicating a lack of planning for other resources in the national curriculum. A topic-based teaching approach or central planning was inferred by one of the teachers, who also taught I.T.. Combining subjects aided the English teaching and would prepare students for high school. This should be broadened to other subjects and teachers should be granted the freedom to mix their subjects with English more freely. Brown (2001, p.57) recommends a topic-based approach, seeing it as in opposition to rote learning.

As Richards (2013, p.28) points out, no design process is better than that appropriate to the actual circumstances of the teachers and learners. An amalgamation of all the interviews revealed a design somewhat like Richards’s backward design process infused with central design, with influences demonstrating what the limiting factors were in each part of the design process.

Figure 7. Using collected data and using Richards’s adapted curriculum designs (Figures 2-4)



The interviewees mostly concerned themselves with planning, using the national curriculum and the learning objectives therein. There was also a noticeable pressure from the job market, higher education and the demands of English medium instruction in high school. The interviewees mentioned the teaching techniques that were used which seemed influenced by child-centred learning and what resources they had at

hand. Teachers seemed to shy away from topic based teaching with no mention of basing their lessons on themes or topics therefore it is likely topics are created in the last stage of the interviewees' curriculum approach.

5.5 Implications for Curriculum Leaders

The following are suggestions for actions a curriculum leader could take operating at one of these schools, based on the responses made by teachers and the analysis of them. They were carefully constructed so as not to consume school funding, given their monetary constraints.

- Topic-based teaching approach, incorporating other subjects into English.
- Greater trust in the teacher's competence in delivering the curriculum.
- Flexible understanding of what constitutes child-centred learning.
- Retain the blackboard as part of the resources available.
- A fully-fledged child-centred learning application cannot be expected in the Ethiopian context.
- Sharing of activity ideas to create the school's own teacher's guide.
- Encourage teachers to collect/make their own resources, using old magazines, newspapers.
- Provide image folders where pictures and images can be collected to build up a large image database.
- Collecting of printed worksheets to create the school's own textbook.
- Provision of story books.

The future demands of English in high school and beyond made clear that English needs to be taught in different subjects making a topic-based approach for some English classes a constructive way of doing this.

The different design approaches showed a conflict between available resources, children's understanding and the learning objective, suggesting adherence to backward design might impede child-centred learning. Teachers needed to get their planning approved by management, implying a need for greater trust in teachers. Planning should

be done to assist the teachers rather than to satisfy managers, allowing teachers more freedom to engage with and respond to the situational needs of the classroom.

The qualitative interview data revealed that the conclusion from previous research that child-centred learning is not being used is an oversimplification. Child-centred learning is made up of many different facets and the teachers are attempting in many instances to apply child-centred learning in their own way with the limited resources available. Given some of the strategies presented from this sample of interviewees, sharing of ideas and resources could greatly benefit the teaching. When one interviewee mentioned they made worksheets for each term, I wondered if it were possible to construct a type of textbook from these worksheets, providing teachers with a source of ideas. This suggestion along with the provision of extra books might be more of a challenge as they might require some extra funding and as such would be more easily implemented by the private school with its more generous budget.

5.6 Limitations and Further Research Implications

The Ethiopian government (Teklemariam, 2006, p.55) has called for a paradigm shift extending even to a societal change. Though this might be necessary, the government has failed to realise their own responsibility as participants in the change. One could criticise the *Implications for Curriculum Leaders* as only single-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, pp. 6-7), meaning curriculum leaders operating within the school are left fixing situations using only the present frame of reference in an attempt to achieve a change in teaching methodology. However, there is already extensive previous research demanding a complete paradigm shift all the way up to a national level. Nearly all the research in education in Ethiopia demanded that teachers of English receive more training and should be better qualified (Heugh et al. 2007). My interviews showed that, though given the option, none of the participants spoke in English. Of course, this could be due to the fact that the interviewer was Ethiopian but they were offered the chance to carry out the interview in English and knew it would be for an English language research paper and yet they still declined. Based on this, Heugh et al.'s (2007, p.126) recommendation that all teachers of English should be near native-speaker level would seem to be impossible. My research merely looked at the two schools within their current frame of reference to find solutions. It was aimed at curriculum leaders within

schools and while it did also demonstrate that teachers needed better/more training and that additional resources were required, with reworking of textbooks, the schools themselves are unlikely to be able to afford these recommendation and these changes need to be committed to on a regional if not a national level.

Though the purpose of this assignment was not to provide solutions to educational problems on a national level, a wider acknowledgement of the stakeholders involved would have improved my research. The main stakeholders involved in this educational reform are management, such as the headmaster, coordinators, the teachers, the parents and the children. This study only collected data from the teachers and as such the different perspectives or narratives required by Landau et al. (2014, p.1322) to achieve legitimacy are unaccounted for. It would have provided a broader viewpoint for educational leaders had students, parents and other leaders been included. Judging by the differences between the theoretical framework for purposes of teaching English in school and the final results, certain stakeholders were neither present nor even mentioned in the data collection. This was particularly the case for the parents who, as indicated by the theoretical framework, play a significant role in how effectively a curriculum is received in both their understanding of it and their views on the purpose of learning English (see fig.1, *Upward Pressures*).

My interviews could have been enhanced through clearer questioning (see Kvale, 2011c, p.3). The participants had difficulty understanding some of the questions. When answering the question “How does the curriculum support this?” interviewees answered simply “Yes.”. The question could have been posed differently, for example, “What does your curriculum say about the use of resources and what challenges does this pose for you?”, which would allow further investigative questions (see Kvale, 2011b, p.6). This further investigative questioning could have been applied to a greater extent in the interview. As I was not conducting the interviews, the structure of the interview had to be more strictly adhered to. Though the interviews were semi-structured with encouragement given after the initial questions, it was all planned prior to the interview with little deviation from the script. In retrospect, after examining the transcripts, clarification (see Kvale, 2011b, p.9) might have aided understanding and required less speculation in the discussion part. In defence of the approach adopted, given the reluctance of the interviewees to reply in English, my presence would have interrupted

the conversational flow. I should therefore have sacrificed spontaneity in the interests of subtlety.

Criticism of the absence of learner-centred teaching seems to come largely from academic perspectives. One might argue that the MoE should not have included it in their curriculum if they were not ready to implement it. However, its inclusion in the national curriculum has revealed it to be a concept that teachers are beginning to understand and work around with the limited resources available. As a result, both leaders and researchers should not expect complete application of child-centred learning. There is a clear divide between researchers and Ethiopian teachers, highlighted in my interviews by the difference in understanding of what child-centred learning is. Serbessa's comment that most educational research comes from the West makes this concept unfamiliar in the Ethiopian classroom if interpreted from a Western perspective. A solution to this would be action research as the researcher would be forced to develop greater empathy and understanding to admit that new, inconspicuous methods are used to counter the lack of resources or large class sizes and that this is a stage on a journey towards the objective of child-centred learning. In other words, one cannot expect fully-fledged child-centred strategies in the Ethiopian context. The MoE (2002 cited in Teklemariam, 2006, p.55), also indicated that action research would assist in resolving many of the issues currently presented by interviewees. Action researchers would experience the different pressures of teaching English and delivering a child-centred curriculum, giving the researchers an understanding of why the curriculum is delivered in this way.

The study for my thesis became much wider than I expected. Though I attempted to narrow the categories, it still resulted in a wide number of topics resulting in considerable breadth but could be considered not to deliver the required depth. Western teaching techniques versus traditional Ethiopian teaching styles, the purpose of learning English, English as a medium of instruction as well as curriculum leadership are all areas which could possibly be investigated individually in further research.

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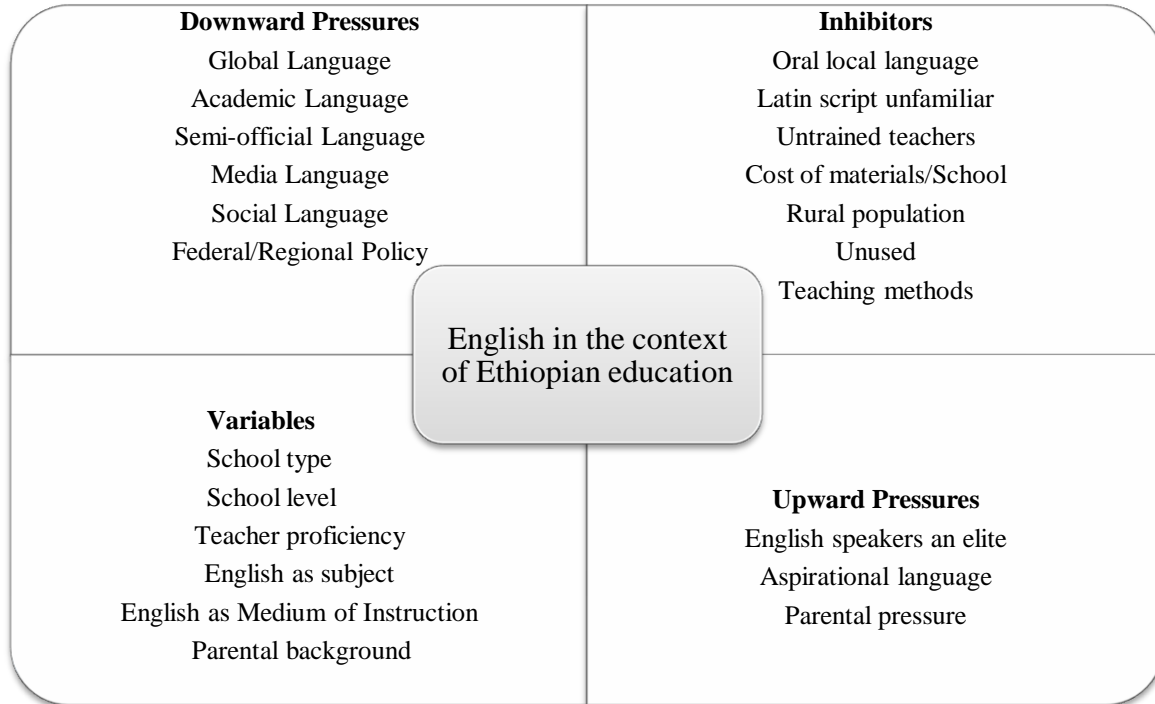
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7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1. Pressures on English in Education



Downward Pressures

Global language

Eshetie, 2010, p.10; Heugh, 2010, p.11; Majanen, 2008, p.4, Seidelhofer, 2004, p.210; Wagaw, 2001, p.4, 9

Academic language

Wagaw, 2001, p.4; Zàhořík, 2009, p.95

Semi-official language

Eshetie, 2010, p.8; Zàhořík, 2009, p.99

Media language

Eshetie, 2010, pp.7-8; Zàhořík, 2009, p.95

Social language

Eshetie, 2010, p.9

Federal/Regional Policy

Eshetie, 2010, pp.6-7, MoE, 2002, item 3.5.5; Heugh, 2010, p.3; Wagaw, 2001, p.9

Variables

School type

Heugh et al., 2007, p.76; Heugh, 2010, p.12; UNESCO, 2012, pp.2-3

School level

Heugh et al., 2007, p.6

Teacher proficiency

Heugh et al., 2007, p.24; Heugh, 2010, pp.15-16, 20; Mackenzie, 2013, p.9; Majanen, 2008, pp.11-12, Seidhofer, 1999, pp.236-237, Llurda, 2004, p.318

English as subject

Heugh et al., 2007, p.85; Mackenzie, 2013, p.10, Harris, 2011; Majanen, 2008, p.71

English as Medium of Instruction

Eshetie, 2010, p.10; Getachew, 2006, pp.54, 56-57; Heugh et al., 2007, pp.6, 85, 127-128

Parental background

American Institutes for Research, 2010, p.16, 18, table – 48; UNESCO, 2015, p.4

Inhibitors

Oral local language

Záhořík, 2009, p.82

Latin script unfamiliar

American Institutes for Research, 2010, p.49; Wagaw, 2001, p.4

Untrained teachers

Eshetie, 2010, p.12; Heugh et al., 2007, p.69, 98

Cost of materials/school

Heugh et al., 2007, p.59; Heugh, 2010, p.12, 22; UNESCO, 2012, p.2; UNESCO, 2015, p.9

Rural population

Ethiopian Population, 2/04/2017; Mackenzie, 2013, p.2, 5; UNESCO, 2015, p.9

Unused

Getachew, 2006, pp.56-57; Heugh et al., 2007, pp.28, 98, 127-128; Wagaw, 2001, p.3

Teaching methods

Serbessa, 2006; Teklemariam, 2006; Asgedom et al., 2006

Upward Pressures

English speakers an elite

Heugh et al., 2007, p.52; Majanen, 2008, p.11; Záhořík, 2009, pp.91-92

Aspirational language

Eshetie, 2010, p.9; Heugh et al., 2007, p.53; Heugh, 2010, p.20; Mackenzie, 2013, p.10

Parental pressure

Heugh et al., 2007, p.69, 74, 76; Heugh, 2010, p.12, 13, 22

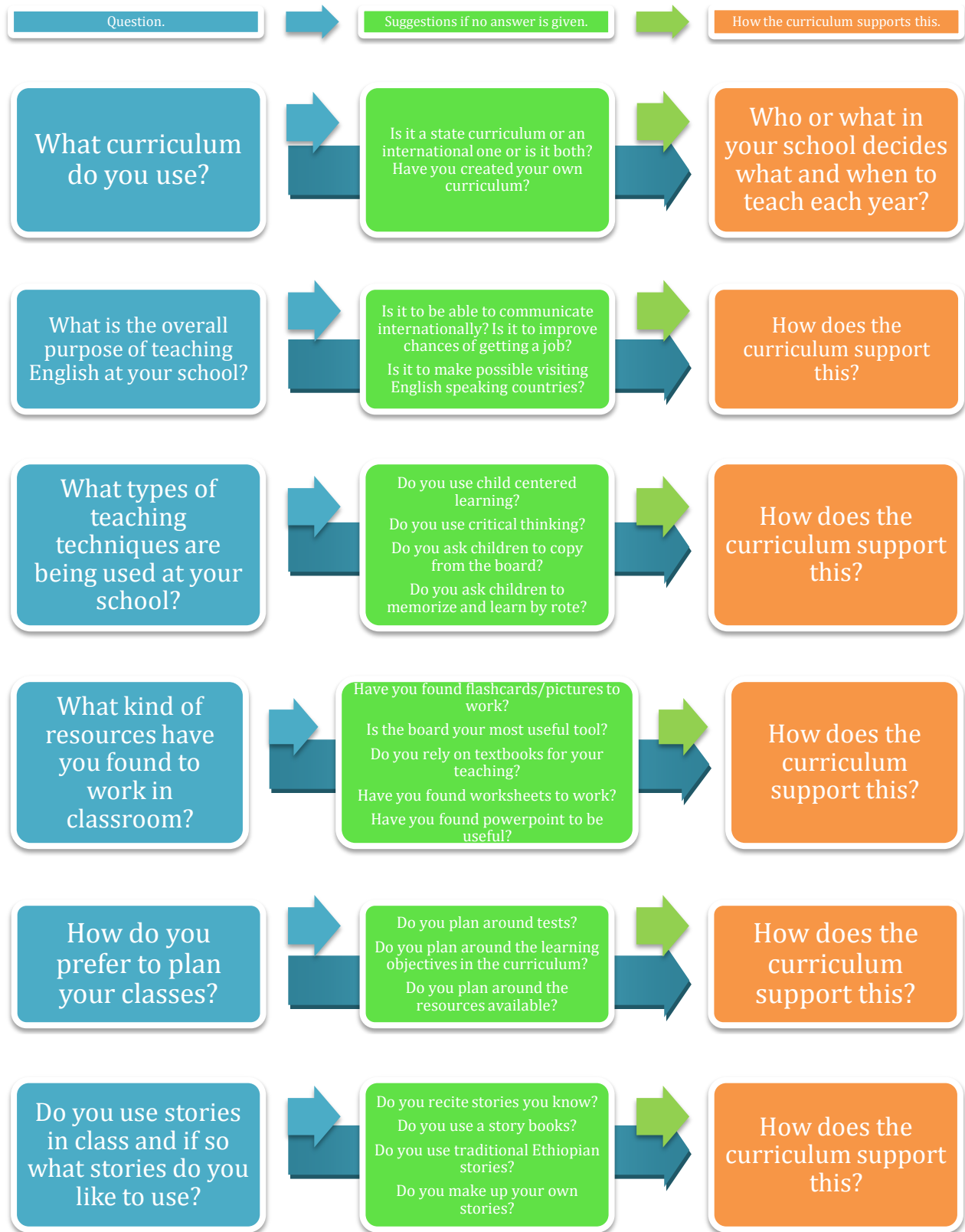
Seidhofer, B, 2004, pp.209-239

Seidhofer, B, 1999, pp.233-245

³Llurda, E, 2004, pp.314-323

⁴Harris, P. G., 2011

7.2 Appendix 2. Interview Questions:



7.3 Appendix 3. Permission Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Paul Tonkyn, a Master's degree student in Education at University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Currently, I am conducting research about English curriculums and their resources in Ethiopian schools. The purpose for this research is to collect data for my Master's thesis. My research requires me to conduct the individual interviews with English teachers and leaders.

An interview will last around 20 minutes. I will consult you beforehand if you allow me to take the notes and record the interview. Your answers are used only for research purposes and your name will be kept private.

I kindly ask that you give your permission to use the interview in my research by signing the form below.

Your participation is highly appreciated. Thank you so much for your participation!

Sincerely,

Paul Tonkyn
Teachertonkyn@gmail.com
Department of Education
University of Jyväskylä

I have been informed of the purpose and content of the research and the use of its research materials. I can withdraw from the research or refuse to participate in the study any time. I give my consent that my interview will be audio recorded and that the interview the data will be used in confidence so that my identity will be known only to the researcher.

Signature: _____ Name: _____

Date: _____ School/place: _____