Secondary School Teacher Deployment in Ethiopia:
Challenges and Policy Options for Redressing the Imbalances

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As per policy, a secondary school teacher in Ethiopia should hold at least a first degree. In practice however, the supply is too limited that most of the teachers at this level are diploma holders. To make matters worse, the available degree holder teachers are not evenly distributed over the regions. The urban regions like Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Harari enjoy a relatively higher number of graduate teachers while the remote regions bear the brunt of the problem.

Introduction

Education has long been defined as a vital instrument for development. It is seen as “.....a means to the sacred end of economic growth” (Hutchins, 1970:6). Education is also one of the basic human rights. Hence, any nation committed to economic growth and fair treatment of its citizens has to organize and provide an efficient educational system.

The strength of any educational system, however, largely depends on the quality and commitment of its teachers. The teacher is the most important resource in an education system in any society (Oliveria and Farell, 1993:7). The teacher also plays a major role in the delivery of quality education. Educational quality has been shown to be largely a function of teacher quality (Avalos and Hadad, 1979:156; Fuller, 1986:18). Emphasizing the same point, Platt (1970:34) comments:

...second only to the student, the teacher is the heart of the educational process and the main determinant of the quality and effectiveness of its results.

Teachers play a decisive role in the fulfillment of educational goals. Whatever curriculum change is introduced and whatever reforms are made, all will be of little or no avail without qualified and committed teachers. Miles (1975:167) states:

...good curricula, creative instructional materials, efficient organization and management, modern facilities and equipment __ all of these contribute to the effectiveness of education, but all depend for their full realization upon the skill, the wisdom and the commitment of teachers.

Indeed teachers are the most important elements in the realization of educational goals. Because of this, every educational system should strive to attract qualified people to the profession and to provide them with the best possible working conditions and material incentives that will satisfy their needs.

In Ethiopia, in the past decade and half, significant efforts have been made to expand the access to primary and secondary education. However, the greater push given to increasing enrolment seems to have offset the efforts made to improve the quality of

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education that it has been found essential in ESPP III to give greater emphasis to quality enhancement (MOE, 2005b:57), which makes qualification of teachers a focal point, particularly at the secondary level.

Effective schooling at all levels depends on a highly qualified and motivated teaching force. The tasks of teachers are today more complex and demanding than in the past. They have to respond to the wishes of the community regarding educational outcomes, the social need for wider access to education, and pressures for more democratic participation within the schools (OECD, 1985:46). In order to ensure that teachers are properly equipped professionally to meet the new tasks and challenges posed in the classroom, countries define the minimum qualification required of teachers for the different levels of the system.

In Ethiopia, as per policy, a secondary school teacher should at least have a first degree. The system has however been plagued with shortage of qualified teachers for this level and most of the serving teachers are diploma holders. Besides, the available degree holder teachers are not evenly distributed over the regions which can create quality difference in the provision of education.

Whereas the sources of secondary school teachers are faculties/Colleges of Education in the country’s universities, the graduates are centrally deployed to the various regions by the Ministry of Education based on estimated need and quota. Irrespective of this procedure, however, the proportion of qualified teachers is not the same for all regions. The study to be reported in this article was undertaken to examine secondary school teacher deployment in Ethiopia and the reasons for the disparities among the regions.

Teacher Deployment and Teacher Attrition: A Look into the Literature

Many writers often consider the problem of teachers as a problem of teacher numbers only. However, while it is a well known fact that many countries encounter challenges of teacher supply, teacher deployment also poses equally serious challenges.

Teacher deployment takes one of two main systems; deployment by central authority or deployment by a ‘market system’ (Lewin, 2000:300). Both of these approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages. As Penrose (1998), reports deployment by central authority has the advantage of distance from local pressures on employment and placement and can be made fair and transparent more easily. It also enables fair and balanced distribution of available staff to the different parts of a country. On the other hand, centralized deployment requires detailed information on the staff needs of each school which is hard to come by at central level. Centralized deployment may thus tend to suffer from congested decision making and inattention to the individual needs of education staff and the schools (Gottleman-Duret and Hogan, 1998; Rust and Daline, 1990). Another problem with centralized deployment is that teachers may circumvent Ministry of Education’s posting and fail to report to their assigned place for various reasons (Hedges, 2002).

In deployment by ‘Market System’, schools advertise their vacancies and teachers apply for posts in specific schools. In effect, teachers deploy themselves by searching for jobs. This system decentralizes the teacher hiring process to a local level and in terms of teacher deployment it brings both benefits and risks. The benefits include quick and flexible response to local needs; teachers will locate themselves to areas and schools of their preference; better administrative efficiency and less attrition of teachers (Hallak, 1990). Conversely, this approach is exposed to undue influence from local
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authorities and might result in biased decisions of employment and placement. Besides, ensuring country wide equity, justice and efficiency in teacher deployment becomes difficult since the teachers would apply to schools in the areas of their choice (Gottleman-Duret and Hogan, 1998). As a result, some schools will have many applicants to choose the ‘best’ from among them, while others may be left with no applicants at all.

The reason why teachers reject posts in a centralized deployment and the justifications for areas of preference in a market deployment are more or less similar. One such factor is that teachers express a strong preference for urban postings. Teachers prefer urban postings for a number of reasons. Among these are better health services (Towse et al., 2002), higher opportunities for professional advancement and further education (Hedges, 2000), quality of accommodation (Akyeampong and Stephens 2002) and better classroom facilities, the school resources and access to leisure activities (Towse et al., 2002).

With regard to gender, Gottleman-Duret and Hogan (1998) report that female teachers may be even less willing to accept a rural posting than their male counterparts. Rural areas may be unsafe for young women (Rust and Dalin, 1990). Rural posting for unmarried women may also minimize marriage prospects (Hedges, 2000).

Another factor teachers take into account in the preference of place of assignment is the language and ethnic groups of the area. Teachers may be reluctant to locate in an area where the language spoken is different from their own. Brodie et al. (2002) argue that a teacher may be isolated professionally and socially when deployed in an area where he/she is not fluent in the language spoken locally. Moreover, teachers perceive extra benefits (economic as well as social) from the proximity of their relatives when they are deployed within their own community/region (Black et al., 1993). Generally thus, teachers tend to prefer to be deployed in urban schools and in areas to which they are familiar.

Teachers however, leave their posts after deployment and move either to other profession or to other schools in better settings for various reasons. The former is known as teacher attrition and refers to those teachers who have left the teaching profession voluntarily in a certain period of time (Barro, 1992:150). Teacher attrition is not only a widely spread problem in many countries but is highly researched area.

The factors that compel teachers to leave the teaching profession include low social status accorded to the profession (Rust and Dalin,1990:164); low salaries and in adequate economic incentives (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1992); lack of career prospects in comparison with other professions (Thompson, 1995:67); poor working conditions such as crowded classrooms; lack of teaching materials, the professional and social isolation of rural areas (Oliviera and Farrel, 1993:11) and administrative inadequacies that lead to poor moral of teachers.

Most of the reasons that compel teachers to leave the profession also apply for the movement of teachers from school to school. The major factors in this regard however pertain to school environment related factors (extrinsic factors) such as community apathy, problems of social integration, administrative inadequacies and poor working conditions. The community in which the school is found plays an important role in sustaining a teacher’s stay in a given school. Among these are the social status of teaching in the community; the level of receptivity; the teachers’ ability to relate to the local culture; the availability of social amenities such as safe and affordable housing;
health and educational facilities for self and family and entertainment opportunities (Tatto, 1997:159).

Administrative inadequacies differ with local areas particularly in a decentralized system. Irregular payment of salaries; authoritarian management of schools and education offices; lack of organizational support; escalated criticism of teachers etc. aggravate teacher turn over at a school level (Craig et al., 1998; Tattoo, 1997).

In Ethiopia, teacher attrition has been an age old problem (Darge, 2002). An exodus of teachers to other professions is as old as the educational system itself. Wrinkle (cited in Akilu, 1967) reported a turnover rate of 67% as early as 1953. The major problem at that time was at the primary level since the teachers at the secondary level were expatriates. Recent studies have indicated the seriousness of the problem in the system in general (Getachew, 1999, Manna and Tesfaye, 2000; Befekadu, 2001). The reasons for leaving the profession included low salary, low social status of the profession, unfavorable working conditions in the school, difficulties of rural life, isolation factor and the absence of further educational opportunity (Akilu, 1967; MOE, 1986; Ayalew, 1991). Thus, the push out factors are the same as in other countries.

The movement of teachers from school to school (region to region) on their own will is however a recent phenomenon. Before, the introduction of decentralization teachers were moved from school to school by a transfer system based on years of service (Ayalew, 1991). Employment opportunity within the profession was also minimal since there were no private schools. The decentralization has abolished the transfer system. On the other hand the establishment of private secondary schools and colleges has opened wide employment opportunity for teachers to abandon the region of their deployment (Befekadu, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of Education employs a central deployment system to assign secondary school teachers to the different regions of the country. The available statistics however indicate that the proportion of qualified secondary school teachers varies from region to region to a large extent. This paper addresses the following basic questions that underpin the issues:

1. What differences exist among the regions in the proportion of qualified secondary school teachers?
2. Which regions are with low proportion of qualified teachers?
3. If the MOE proportionally distributes the graduates why is the disparity created?
4. What policy options can be designed to redress deployment imbalances?

Method

In this study both secondary and primary data are used. The secondary data was collected from the MOE statistical year books and used to see trends of availability of qualified teachers and identify the regions with low proportion of qualified teachers.

After the regions with low proportion of qualified teachers were identified, eight private schools and colleges in Addis Ababa were contacted to look for teachers who were assigned to these regions but did not report or left the region after some time between 2001/02 and 2004/05. One hundred thirty five (135) such teachers were found in these institutions.
A questionnaire consisting of 15 items was distributed to these individuals of which 132 (97.8%) were properly filled and returned. The data were tabulated and analyzed using percentages and mean ranks.

**Findings**

*Availability and Distribution of Qualified Teachers*

The Ethiopian educational system had relied on expatriate teachers to a great extent, especially at the secondary level. Apart from the American, Swedish and British volunteers who served in the system, there were many contract teachers mainly Indians, for the country lacked the funds to employ from the West. In 1970/71 academic year, for example, 2.8% of the primary, 14% of the junior secondary and 56% of the senior secondary school teachers were expatriates (Lovegrove, 1973:22). Most of the volunteer teachers left the country in the early 1970s because of the termination of the programs. Starting from the mid 1970s however, there was an exodus of the contract teachers to the OPEC and other mineral-rich countries not only because of the better pay they were offered, which the Ethiopian economy could not possibly provide, but also because of the unsafe political conditions that prevailed in the country then.

The shortage that was created by the exodus of the expatriate teachers was further aggravated by the Development through cooperation campaign (despite its manifold merits) of 1975-76, which created gaps in the flow of teachers since Addis Ababa University (the main source of secondary school teachers at the time) and all teacher training institutes were closed down for 2 years. Moreover, the assignment of teachers to different posts to man the newly nationalized firms took a substantial number of the teaching force. Besides, a significant number were either killed, detained or exiled. The combined effect of these factors contributed to the creation of a serious shortage of qualified teachers’ at all three levels.

Table 1 compares the number of qualified teachers before and after the 1974 revolution. At the primary and junior secondary levels, the percentage of qualified teachers has decreased by 56.6 and 40.45 % respectively. At the senior secondary level the percentage of qualified teachers went down from 73.2% in 1967/68 to only 19.9% in 1979/80, in just a little more than a decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Number of Qualified Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Qualified Teachers</th>
<th>Decrease in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1967/68)</td>
<td>(1979/80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>8950</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>9371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Secondary</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Secondary</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>10288</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>10570</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
The problem was further complicated by the emergency measures taken by the ministry of Education to meet the immediate needs. In its endeavor to combat the problem the Ministry;
- moved up large numbers of teachers from the primary level to the junior and senior and from the junior to the senior secondary schools. In this process the primary schools have lost 2797 of their teachers (2107 to the Junior and 690 to the senior) while the junior secondary schools were deprived of 1177 of the same up to 1979/80 alone;
- opened wide employment opportunities to university students to supplement the shortages at both the junior and senior secondary levels. In 1979/80, 1963 such teachers were serving at both levels;
- reverted to mass employment of the secondary school graduates to cope with the shortage especially at the primary level, which was partly created by the upward mobility of the trained teachers.

At least three complications were inherent in that arrangement. To start with, by opening a wide employment opportunity, the Ministry encouraged the attrition rate at the university-drainage on its sources of future teachers. Secondly, the moving up of primary and junior secondary school teachers had a double negative effect: the upward transfer focused on best teachers at both levels. By so doing the two levels (primary and junior secondary) lost their best qualified and experienced teachers. On the other hand, in view of the specialized subject offered at the junior and senior secondary level and the medium of instruction being English, it is hard to believe that the transferees lived up to standard. In other words, the transfer was an exchange of the system’s best service in the lower levels to a bare minimum in the higher ones. Generally, the quality of teachers rock bottomed in that era and breaking the circle has not become an easy task ever since particularly at the middle (second cycle primary) and secondary levels.

The problem at the primary level was overcome through increased number of teacher training institutes and extensive three summer in-service training programs. Moreover the establishment of private teacher institutions after 1991 has enabled the regions to recruit teachers from the market (Ayalew, 2006). Hence, the situation has improved and more than 96% of the first cycle teachers at present are certified (MOE, 2005a).

At the second cycle of the primary and secondary school however, lack of sufficient number of qualified teachers has remained an acute and persistent problem. Table 2 presents the percentage of qualified secondary school teachers for five consecutive years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total no. of Secondary School Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Qualified Sec. School Teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>14029</td>
<td>5121</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>14091</td>
<td>4749</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>14030</td>
<td>5472</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>15068</td>
<td>6705</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>17641</td>
<td>7163</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that, although the situation is better than what it was in the 1980s the system is plagued with shortage of qualified teachers. Only about 41 percent possess the requisite qualification for the level. The vast majority (more than 59%) are teachers with diploma primarily prepared to serve at the second cycle primary but pushed up to fill in the gaps at the secondary level.

To make matters worse, the available qualified teachers are not evenly distributed over the regions. Table 3 depicts the percentage of qualified teachers by region in 2004/05.

Table 3: Percentage of Qualified Teachers by Region in 2004/05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Secondary Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Qualified Teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addis Ababa</td>
<td>2474</td>
<td>2031</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afar</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amhara</td>
<td>3626</td>
<td>1462</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benishangul-Gumuz</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dire Dawa</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambella</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harari</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromia</td>
<td>6185</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNNPR</td>
<td>2775</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigray</td>
<td>1453</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>17641</td>
<td>7163</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As Table 3 shows a wide variation exists between the regions in the availability of qualified teachers. The proportion of qualified teachers ranges from only 21.7% in Tigray region to 82.5% in Dire Dawa. The regions with a percentage of qualified teachers well above the national average are Dire Dawa, Addis Ababa, Afar and Harari in that order. Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Harari are urban areas with relatively better living conditions. It would thus not be surprising if teachers’ preference to reside in these areas is high. Afar on the other hand is a peripheral region with a hot climatic condition which may not make it attractive for teachers to stay long. The relatively higher proportion of qualified teachers thus seems to contradict the trend. The only plausible explanation could be the high post graduate studies opportunity available for teachers with full sponsorship after two years of service. New graduate teachers prefer the region so that they can return to school as early as possible.2

The regions with the lowest proportion of qualified teachers are Tigray, Benishangul-gumuz, Somali and Gambella. With the exception of Tigray, these regions are with unfavorable climatic conditions and relatively poor infrastructure. The brunt of the problem is thus borne by the remote rural secondary schools.

As Table 4 shows a high proportion of the teachers allotted to these regions do not report at all.

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2 Interview with Ato Mussie Yayehirad and Ato Wossen G/Hiwot, head of Planning & Programming and Education Expert respectively in Afar Regional Education Bureau.
The data in Table 4 is admittedly defective in that it is incomplete. It however shows the trend of reporting of newly graduates to the regions they are assigned. The number of teachers who did not report (failed to accept Ministry’s deployment) ranged from 25.3% in Tigray to 84.6% in Somali region, which could be taken as a very high proportion.

**Reasons for Rejecting Ministry’s Posting**

The Ministry of Education allots the number of teachers by subject area for each region and the newly graduate teachers are assigned by drawing lots. Preference of teachers is not taken into account except in cases where the graduate teacher has rendered some years of service before enrolling as a degree student. Others have to follow the lots and they could end up being assigned in a region which they are not familiar at all. The 132 respondents who filled in the questionnaire were asked regarding their knowledge of the region to which they were assigned. Their responses are summarized by Table 5.
Table 5 reveals a number of important findings. The vast majority of the teachers were assigned outside their own region (89.4%) and to a region where they do not speak the local language (90.0%). About three-fourth of the respondents (74.2%) also indicated that they have never been to the respective region of their assignment before they were assigned. Thus non-familiarity to a region may be considered as a push out factor. This is in agreement with the literature that indicates that teachers would be reluctant to locate in an area outside their own ethnic or linguistic group. This is further strengthened by the response of the teachers who were assigned in regions other than their own. From the 118 teachers assigned in regions other than they were born in, 74 (62.7%) indicated that they would have accepted the assignment had they been located in their own regions.

The respondents were asked to rate nine possible reasons for their rejection of the assignment on a five point Likert-type scale which extends from strongly disagree(1) to strongly agree(5). The rating scores were computed to mean value and rank as presented in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Response Rating Score</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor living condition</td>
<td>42 31 30 18 1</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low chances for further education</td>
<td>35 38 42 13 4</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of accommodation</td>
<td>32 30 25 23 2</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Risk of disease</td>
<td>60 51 12 9 -</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of transfer opportunities</td>
<td>76 53 3 - -</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Security Problems</td>
<td>68 45 9 8 2</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alienation from ones community</td>
<td>44 32 26 16 14</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Low economic and financial benefits</td>
<td>79 51 2 - -</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Language (communication Problem)</td>
<td>26 27 16 34 29</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that all of the set reasons were rated as factors that lead to non-acceptance of the assignment. The mean values range from a maximum of 4.58 to a minimum of 2.90 while the over all average mean was 3.83. Since the mean values rating scores for all the set reasons were greater than the acceptable mean value of 2.5, it can be concluded that all the reasons have an impact on a teacher’s decision to accept/reject his/her placement.

The level of impact of the reasons however shows variations. As depicted in Table 6, the most significant factors in rank order 1 to 4 were low economic and financial benefits, lack of transfer opportunities, security problems and risk of disease.

Low economic and financial benefit is a well known push out factor from the teaching profession. What makes the present finding unique is that the respondents are still in the teaching profession although working for private institutions. The respondents were asked about their present income which is summarized by Table 7.
Table 7: Respondents’ Present Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you compare your present salary to the salary you would have earned had you gone to the region of your assignment?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Equal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The present is less</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The present is greater</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If your present salary is greater by what percent is it greater</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) 25% or less</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 26-50%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) 51-79%</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) 76-100%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) more than 100%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the respondents indicated that they get better salaries than what they would have earned had they gone to the region of their assignment. For the vast majority (83%) of the respondents the salary they get now is greater by at least 51% than the salary offered by the regions. In addition to basic salary, which as shown is higher than the salary provided by the regions, more than 80% of the teachers indicated that they generate additional income by teaching in the evening classes and working part time in other institutions. Such opportunities are rare in the regions.

The second outstanding factor for not accepting the assignment is the lack of transfer opportunity. Transfer from region to region was a legitimate right of teachers in the past. At that time teachers assigned to remote areas were optimistic that they would be transferred to the area of their choice after some years of service. In fact teachers who served in hardship areas used to get priorities (Befekadu, 2001). As a consequence of the decentralization of the educational system, the Ministry of Education has relinquished its responsibility of transferring teachers from region to region. Transfer is now left to the regions, and inter-regional transfer is almost non-existent nowadays. Thus, beginning teachers tend to shirk obligations of reporting when they are assigned to peripheral regions.

Security problems stand out as a third major factor for defaulting assignments. Inter-ethnic conflicts, insurgencies by armed forces and border conflicts make certain areas unsafe for civil servants. Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali regions have been among the areas of high such incidences which discourages teachers from locating themselves in those areas.

With the exception of Tigray, the three regions (Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali) are also low lands with hot and unfavorable climate for highlanders with high probability of malaria and similar other diseases. Besides, the infrastructure in general and the health facilities in particular are relatively poor. The teachers thus perceive a higher risk of disease in working in these areas.

Generally, while all the nine reasons were confirmed to have an impact on the teachers’ decision of accepting/rejecting the assignment, the major factors are low economic and financial benefits, lack of transfer opportunities, security problems and risk of disease.
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Policy Options for Redressing Imbalances

The Ethiopian Constitution, the education and training policy, the ESDP and similar other documents stipulate special assistance to the relatively deprived regions in order to redress the imbalances in all developmental activities in general and in education in particular. Despite this however, as is shown by this study, the brunt of the problem of shortage of qualified secondary school teachers is mostly borne by the less developed regions (i.e. Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and Somali). Allowing the problem to continue as it is will further widen the existing disparities in educational provision. Looking for plausible solutions is thus essential.

The long term solution to the problem rests in increasing the supply of qualified secondary teachers. If the supply exceeds the demand, the schools in all the regions can recruit teachers from the market and dependence on central deployment will cease to function. Cognizant of this, the Ministry of Education has decided that in most of the higher education institutions of the country “…a third of the students will be enrolled in teacher education programs to produce qualified teachers for secondary schools and TVET institutions”(MOE,2005b:39).

The fact that the problem is recognized and policy guideline is set it is a major step forward. However, with the current high student-teacher ratio, ever increasing enrolment, high transition to the secondary schools and expansion of the system in general satisfying the need for qualified secondary school teachers cannot be a reality of a very near future. Until then, some mechanisms of fairly distributing the available qualified secondary school teachers should be sought for. The following could be entertained as stop gap measures:

Consider Different Salary Scale

The salary of teachers in Ethiopia in general does not fair either with the requirements of the job or with that of their colleagues in other organizations. Besides, the basic salary is the same irrespective of the place a teacher is assigned. Moreover this study has shown that the teachers who have opted to forgo their assigned regions and got employed in private educational institutions in Addis Ababa earn higher salaries on top of their additional income from extension classes and part time teaching. Reconsidering the national salary scale of teachers and substituting it with a given minimal range would give the less desired regions some degree of latitude to use salary as a positive balance to attract teachers.

Rethinking Transfer Policies

Transferring teachers from region to region has its own problems. On one hand it will leave the remote regions with fresh and inexperienced teachers. On the other hand urban regions would be staffed with experienced teachers and relatively higher salaries which could entail budgetary constraints. A solution that could strike a balance between these two problems should thus be looked for. The best approach seems to develop a scheme where a given percentage of the teachers to be deployed in the urban regions (i.e. A.A, Dire Dawa, and Harari) should come through transfer from the remote regions with subsidies from federal government to cover for the salaries.
Special Provisions for Teachers in Remote Regions

Teachers working in the remote regions face a number of difficulties. Among other things, they will have to learn to live without transportation facilities, electric light, clean water, medical care and even decent housing. In order to make the remote regions more attractive to the graduate teachers, special provisions should be made for teachers deployed in these areas. These might include provision of

- Hardship allowances
- Free medical care for those working in areas hazardous to health,
- especially in remote lowland areas
- Life insurance in insecure places, such as in conflict areas
- Houses which teachers can rent with minimal cost and
- Priority for post graduate studies etc.

It is clear that substantial financial resources will be required to realize these suggestions. It is also understandable that in Ethiopia such investments pose difficult tradeoffs in the current financial and economic climate. The scarcity of resources in the face of large needs will not grant the education sector all that it needs. Yet, the nation has to make a choice and commit itself in terms of allocation of resources if the goals set are to be met.

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