

Plasma television teachers – When a different reality takes over African education

***Brook Lemma, Faculty of Education,
Alemaya University, Ethiopia***

I have been a National Tutor for a Masters course for Ethiopian teacher educators during the last two years. This course followed a Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) approach that implies contextual analysis of education. Therefore, in the spirit of CPI, I carried out the following analysis not because of external demands but out of pure educational interest.

Based on a document of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (GFDRE 1994) document that discusses the education and training policy of Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa, has formulated two other documents that deal with the implementation strategy of this policy. These are referred to as the Education Sector Development Programs I and II (MoE, 1999 and 2002, respectively). During the implementation process another document authored by the Ministry of Education appeared with the title Teachers' Education Systems Overhaul (TESO) (MoE 1995¹) that became pivotal in the development of high school and university curricula at the Ministry, thus transforming the education system of the country into a completely and unprecedented new method of education delivery. This latter document calls for a complete student-centered method of education in all Ethiopian government schools and universities. As a result, there have been changes in curricula at all levels.

¹ This is according to the Ethiopian calendar; it is equivalent to the period between September 2002 to August 2003.

High school education has been split into two years of general education in two streams, namely, science and social science, which are offered in Grades 9 and 10. Before joining higher education institutes, students in Grades 11 and 12 are streamed into preparatory and vocational classes (also known as technical and vocational education and training activities, TVET). Students in the science and social science courses will be prepared to join the academic streams of the universities, while those in the TVET course will join the work force of the country.

Students in Grades 9 and 10 and those of the preparatory streams are offered lessons entirely through a new approach that is carried out through the use of plasma televisions (TVs). The students receive uniform lessons at the same time throughout the country via satellite transmissions. These transmissions come directly from the Republic of South Africa, or are prepared in the Republic of South Africa and transported on CDs to a central station in Addis Ababa, namely, the Ethiopian Educational Media Agency, from where they are transmitted via satellite connections. The lessons transmitted² include the natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics), mathematics, English and civics. It was at such a turning point in the Ethiopian education system that I visited a local Senior Secondary School on two occasions, specifically, on 29 December 2004 and 05 January 2005.

Visiting the plasma television school

By the time I visited the school, the TV lessons have been running for about four months. Below I give the accounts of my observations, after briefly describing the setting of the school.

This Senior Secondary School is located in the eastern part of the country some 510 km away from the capital city, Addis Ababa. The total area of the school is 4,000 m². In the 2004/05 academic year (September – August) the school had a total of 2,104 students (392 females and 1,712 males) in the academic stream with a total of 32 teachers (3 females and 29 males). This gives us a student-teacher ratio of 1 to 66. The vocational

² The social sciences (history, geography, pedagogy, etc.) are not offered in plasma TV lessons.

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student population is only 89 with 18 females and 71 males. They have 13 teachers (2 females and 11 males) with a student-teacher ratio of 1:7.

Twenty-two equal-sized rooms, each of which were originally designed for 35 students, are allocated for the academic stream. Each of these classrooms is fitted with a plasma TV. When this is compared to the student population of 2,104, it gives us an average of 95 students per class per day. I say “per day” because students are not attending a whole-day program; instead there are morning and afternoon shifts every day, meaning there are 45 students per class per shift. There are two laboratories of equal size, one of which serves for physics and the other for both biology and chemistry practicals. These laboratories were originally designed for 30 students. Today students do not use them as a result of the plasma TV lessons, which consume the time needed for laboratory work. In addition, neither the space nor the materials in the laboratories (including consumables) are sufficient.

Aside from the formal classes there are no materials for extra-curricular activities, except for small basketball and volleyball fields. The football field has been used for building classrooms. There is what is referred to as a mini-media center (consisting of a radio, a tape recorder and a loudspeaker) where students can do a variety of things, such as listen to music, radio or news, hear literature developed by students, and exchange information between students and the school administration. Between the classes there is a small plot of land that is used for gathering and singing the regional anthem in the regional language (Oromifa). Each morning (for the morning shift) students must gather at 7:45 a.m. to sing the anthem and go to their classes exactly at 8:00 a.m. The morning session ends at 12:10 p.m.. Any student coming later than 8:00 a.m. is not allowed into the compound and hence is penalized by missing the day’s lessons. Such latecomers are usually seen hanging around by the gate trying to negotiate their way in with the gatekeeper. Some somehow succeed, while others stay around to go home later with the other students after the end of the day’s lessons. This is usually done so that their parents know about their being late for classes.

The school is organized with the principal or director as head, an assistant director, various committees and a unit leader who organizes student gatherings, the beginning of classes and general school regulations. The school has a student union that meets regularly with the school

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administration each month. Only academically well-off students are eligible for election. This is done by taking the top 20 students of a class as candidates and electing representatives from them. The principal told me that students of good academic performance are found to make quite important comments and suggestions. One problem with such representation is that girls' representation among the first 20 students is very low, and hence they are under-represented in the student union. In the future some mechanisms should be developed to include more girls in the union.

The staff union works very closely with the school administration and the student union. There is also a special joint committee composed of teachers and parents, namely the Parents' and Teachers' Association (PTA). It is composed of 5 parents (preferably 3 males and 2 females) and two teachers (one from each sex, invariably). This committee meets every week on Thursdays and looks at general student-teacher affairs and complaints, and most of all decides on disciplinary matters between teachers and students. The principal says that the school administration is simply an implementing agency of the decisions of the committee, which he feels has lifted a lot of the burden from the administration office in terms of the amount of disputes that are presented to the committee.

The afternoon shift begins at 12:30 p.m. and continues up to 05:45 p.m. Students in this shift do not begin their day with the singing of the anthem, but perform it after the end of the classes in the evening just to save time for the TV lessons.

Observations of plasma lessons

Day I: 29 December 2004

I arrived at the school at about 7:40 a.m. Students had already gathered in the small plot between the classrooms preparing to sing the regional anthem. Many latecomers were standing outside of the gate while I was allowed to pass through as guest of the school. I looked for the biology teacher, as I am a biologist by training, to get some highlights about what was going to happen in the day's biology lesson. I asked him:

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“What time does the television lesson start?”

“At 8:05” he answered.

“Do you know what it is going to be about?”

“No. Because for the last two days we did not have satellite connection and I am not sure if the lesson starts from where it stopped or if it would just go ahead with the day’s new lesson skipping the two lessons we missed.”

He meant that on 27th and 28th of December 2004 (Monday and Tuesday) there was no satellite connection, and he had to do something out of the curriculum to keep the students busy. In fact, he was not sure if there would be a satellite connection on this day, either. So we had to wait with excitement as to what was going to happen. I was not sure about which lesson he was prepared to discuss with his students.

Along with about 50 students in Grade 11, the teacher and I waited for the lesson to start. In the 5 minutes between 8:00 and 8:05 the teacher was expected to introduce what the day’s lesson was going to be about. He could not do that because he was not sure where the lesson would start, as described above. At exactly at 8:05 a.m. the lesson started with a new topic on “Blood groups: Multiple alleles”.

The teacher sat down as I did and listened. The students took out their books to write down some notes. A white lady instructor was on the TV with a perfect English accent. As the lesson started, four latecomers came in, having succeeded to negotiate their way in with the gatekeeper. Among them there was one handicapped male student who could not walk properly as he had some sort of deformity on the right foot. There was some grumbling in the class until the latecomers settled down.

I was both attending the lesson and watching the students, trying to observe their reactions as much as I could. Some started by writing notes. Some soon gave up and just sat there watching and listening. There was a good number of them who had just sat there watching with their elbows on their desk, supporting their chins with the palm(s) of one hand or two. The faces I saw looked troubled. It seemed to be impossible to know or even guess who was making the best use of the time.

The lesson I watched was entirely lecture-based; the instructor on the screen suggested that students copy some sentences and went on lecturing.

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She further asked a few questions which she answered immediately afterward, usually in less than a minute's time. One of the exercises she gave them made an impression on me. It was about an unfaithful lady who had conceived a child and accused her man of not supporting her, and how she lost a court case that ordered a blood test of the lady, the accused and the baby. I wondered about the moral value this example set for girls as responsible citizens in supporting and guiding their families.

The teacher was taking down notes of his own and got up intermittently to write some brief notes on the blackboard. Some students wanted to attend both, what the lady on the screen was saying and what their teacher was writing on the blackboard. I thought that he was preparing review notes for his students, which he would discuss at the end of the TV lesson, for which he will only be left with 5 minutes. The lesson continued up to 8:25 and suddenly the power failed. The class was immediately plunged into silence followed by some murmuring. The class had not attended TV lessons for the past two days and were surprised that this phenomenon was repeated for the third day in a row.

The teacher looked at me, an unexpected and unusual guest, and went to the front of the class and started to take over the class. He began by writing some more notes on the blackboard while students continued murmuring. Some of those who were not writing started to copy some notes from their friends sitting next to them. The teacher called for silence and started to summarize the lessons in English. He soon reverted to Oromifa, the regional language. I do not understand this language, but I felt as I watched their faces that the students seemed to relax to communicate. Then slowly the time allocated for this lesson came to an end at 8:40 a.m. The teacher and I left the class. One student followed him to ask a question which they discussed in Oromifa.

The power came back on, and soon I had to join a second TV lesson with Grade 12 between 9:20 and 10:00 a.m. on the same date (29 December 2004). The lesson in this class was on "Cells and metabolism". Again the teacher did not brief the class about the day's lesson, as he did not know where the lesson could start due to the breakdown in satellite communication on December 27 and 28, 2004. So we waited and the white lady instructor with her English accent appeared on TV. She summarized the previous lesson, which the students and their teacher had missed. She

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went on discussing cell anatomy of prokaryote and eukaryote cells and how proteins are synthesized. In between she asked the students to copy some notes and even asked them to copy down a three-dimensional color diagram of a ribosome, for which she gave them 90 seconds. The reaction of the students was as I have described the previous class. They tried to follow the lesson, stopped when they could not work as fast as the program, and finally got confused about whether they should copy the notes the teacher was writing on the blackboard or those on the TV. As one might guess, some students totally gave up taking notes and started watching what was happening in the class in general. This time there were no latecomers, as it was already too late (9:30 a.m.) for letting students into the school compound. The method of teaching on the TV was again entirely lecture-based, and some of the phrases used by the lady towards the end of the lesson were noteworthy.

As the lady TV instructor was summarizing the day's lesson, she was saying:

“Remember I told *you*...”

“*You* have now completed...”

“*You* have also looked at...” (emphases mine)

I began to wonder, what happens if students did not get what she was saying? Is that the boundary of responsibility sharing? Is it up to the students to be responsible from this point on, as the teacher has no role in the lesson delivery?

This class went on as programmed and the teacher had his notes on the blackboard to summarize the high-tech lesson in the last five minutes. As usual he started in English and finished in Oromifa. During this session the teacher had covered only 10% of the class hour, which is 50 minutes long. Students had neither answered nor asked questions nor made any sort of general comments. As the bell ended the session, he asked students if they had questions. There were none and we left the class.

Day II: 05 January 2005

I arrived at the school early at 7:40 a.m. At 8:00 a.m. I went to the same Grade 11 where I was on 29 December 2004. I did not see the teacher so I went to the class by myself. Most students were in class. Some greeted me with a smile, as I was by this time a familiar face. To gain the students' acceptance I gave them a big smile and greeted them in Amharic, my native language. I also sat down in the front row where most students do not sit, as it is not a favorable angle to watch the TV. The students packed themselves into a corner where they could see the TV better with less light reflection. The trade-off was the inconvenience of writing and discomfort of sitting in a narrow space.

I asked the students where the teacher was and they told me that he had to attend a meeting with a delegation that came from the Ministry of Education. Then I asked if there was going to be a TV lesson without him. Well, yes, they said, adding that the student representative would go to the office and collect the key to open the TV box and the TV remote control. So I had to wait as a student came in, opened the box, pulled out the TV, sat down and started to select the biology lesson of the day for Grade 11. By then it was already 8:12 a.m. and the lesson had already started. From the subject matter I could guess the topic was on "Genetic disorders in humans".

The white lady presenter on TV discussed 11 human syndromes, asking students to copy some notes from the screen, and then she asked some questions, which she again answered quickly. The TV lecture went further to discuss the latest technologies in genetic engineering and the moral questions associated with them. The teacher came in at about 8:20 a.m. after finishing his meeting. He sat down quietly and tried to make out what the lesson was all about. After some time he started to get up and write down his short notes on the blackboard. Surprisingly the behavior of the students was the same in this class too.

At around 8:30 a.m. the TV lesson came to an end without power interruption. The teacher then started to summarize what he had gathered during the second half of the lesson. At this juncture something unusual happened. A tall man suddenly popped into the class without even knocking at the door or giving any greetings to the teacher or the students. The teacher

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suddenly rushed into a seat and the students and I were caught by surprise. The class went into sudden silence.

The man, who did not specify who he was, started speaking in English. He said he was one of the delegates from the Ministry of Education and he wanted to collect feedback on the entire operation of the preparatory program³.

Speaking in English, he said, “The stakeholders of this program are students, teachers, parents and the government. So we were sent here to collect your views on the preparatory program by using questionnaires and interviews. Now I want you to select ten students, four females and six males from this class. I also want another five students to give me the names of their parents who will fill out the questionnaires and be interviewed by us like the selected students. Remember,” he warned, “that the five parents should be living in Alemaya town so that they can either come here to the school for the feedback or we can go to their work places”.

The students kept completely quiet. I was not sure if they understood everything that he was saying. He repeated his request. Again there was no response. I was quietly observing what was going on, as I was not sure about what was happening. At this moment I knew then where the teacher had been, and what he was doing when we began the TV lesson.

Slowly the students started to talk with each other in the regional language. I could not hear properly or understand what they were saying. I can only assume that they were asking each other what it was all about. Suddenly one boy spoke up in Oromifa. Then the guest started to explain things in Oromifa. Students again kept quiet contemplating what they were supposed to do. He said in English that he wanted to have the names and they should start to suggest names. No names came up. Everybody got restless. He seemed to be in a hurry to get all of this done in the shortest possible time. He started requesting some students to suggest names. No reaction again. He waited for a while. Nothing happened. At the end he started to go around asking for volunteers. All of those who were requested declined to give their names. He finally resorted to identifying students by

³ The lessons offered on plasma TVs for Grades 11 and 12 are meant to prepare them to join higher education institutes.

himself without even requesting the assistance of the teacher. At this time I left the room.

Later, I had a discussion with the principal as to what this was all about and why the man from the Ministry was in such a hurry to come up with a list of names. He told me that they were sent to Alemaya to evaluate the status of the preparatory program and how the TV lessons were improving the quality of the students that were joining higher education institutes. He assumed that political parties from the opposition⁴ were questioning the Ministry with regard to the quality of education for those students joining higher education institutes and their potential failure, particularly due to the centrally monitored curriculum developed as per the TESO document and worsened by the uni-directional lessons offered on TV. He could not even guess why the delegation from the Ministry was in such a hurry, although the letter they brought with them from the Ministry to the school stated that they should stay for five days at Alemaya alone. He said on that day they visited the classes, the delegation left the school after depositing the questionnaires in the principal's office to get them filled out by students and parents, and to be sent to them to Dire-Dawa, a nearby regional city some 45 km west of Alemaya. The delegates did not conduct any interviews as they said they would.

Reflections

I attended three television sessions on two occasions. I wish I had attended more, but I also suspect it would be more of the same thing. All the sessions were completely teacher-centered or more specifically TV lecture-centred and completely uni-directional. The differences from regular teaching were that:

- The lectures were prepared in a foreign land.
- The instructor on TV was a white lady.
- The lessons were done on TV and broadcast via a satellite system with state-of-the-art technology.

⁴ This year (2004/05) is an election year and opposition parties are covering every bit of ground to criticize the government.

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- Lessons were communicated through very good, but alien, South African English.
- The students were completely passive throughout the program.
- The teacher at Alemaya was passive except at instances at the beginning and end of TV lessons, i.e. only when possible.
- I could see that most students have started to become punctual because of the TV lessons. It looks like they are aware of the risk that once they miss the TV lessons they miss them forever.

The first problem may be that the lessons are prepared and presented by foreigners. Would it be naive for one to wonder why this happened? Couldn't Ethiopians do both preparations and presentation, or at least the presentation? Couldn't Ethiopians contextualize lessons to Ethiopian situations and examples? Professor Calleweart (see below) observed a TV lesson on Ethics in January 2005 in a high school in Addis Ababa; the lesson talked about American and British ethical values and problems girls face related to having sex at the cinema in South Africa. He then wondered if such a lesson could not have been contextualized to Ethiopian cultural values. I also ask myself how many young Ethiopian children have an opportunity to go to such places, particularly girls, or even have the ability to imagine such a setting as a movie theatre.

As described above, students have always begun each session by making an effort to catch up with the lessons. Each time more and more students regress towards sitting and watching what happens. The lessons were simply too fast to follow the concepts. From my own experience as a student in a lecture-based system, even with the cruelest teacher, we had managed to ask questions or even win his/her sympathy to repeat some discussions in class. A human being and citizen speaking the regional language could be persuaded to become engaged in some form of discussion, I feel, unlike an inanimate TV system.

I could see that there was no need for the teacher to prepare lesson plans or laboratory practicals. All the planning of the lessons was done from where the TV lessons originate, in line with the curricula designed centrally by the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa. Teachers had apparently no

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input into the development of the curricula as they did not have anything to do with the preparation of lesson plans or their presentations.

The TV lessons have completely removed the teachers from the scene. “Students are confronted with the policy makers or curriculum designers at the Ministry of Education, and not their immediate teachers”¹. Even when the teacher is not there, students operate the TV and attend their TV lessons, as observed on the day the teacher had a meeting. “This can be done by anyone including the gatekeeper”². Education is supposed to be based on ideas like those expressed by the MoE (1995:2) which reads: “Teachers are essential agents for positive societal change. Those adhering to the shift in paradigm, i.e., teaching which makes changes in ideas and directly in peoples’ lives, taking the real world into the classroom and teachers out into the world and democratizing teacher education – giving teachers, students and citizens confidence to make decisions and taking initiative, to take control of their world”. This statement contains beautiful words that are absurdly opposite to what is happening on the ground. How can teachers play such a role where they are limited to ten minutes of a class, where they do not have any say in the development of a curriculum and where they do not plan a single lesson to interact with their students? How can students play their role as described in the TESO document (MoE, 1995), when they are stuck with an inanimate plasma TV as their teacher and have very little interaction with their teacher, who is supposed to be a symbol and representative of society and its interests? The same question can also be raised for parents, who are not in a position to complain about or acknowledge the merits of any teacher, when the lessons are offered by a TV.

It was then very difficult for me to envisage how a teacher could do continuous assessment, as demanded by the TESO document, of lessons he did not plan or execute, as demanded by the TESO document. Or is that

¹ Personal communication with Professor Staf Callewaert of Denmark who has worked over 30 years in African education.

² Personal communication with Dr. Lars Dahlström, renowned Swedish educator in African schools for over 25 years from the Department of Education, Umeå University, Sweden.

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going to be done by the TV program itself? This would be very interesting and a new method to experience.

The example given about the unfaithful wife was morally unjustified and completely wrong to instill in the minds of children, considering the gender equity we demand and the role females play in family responsibility. Better examples could easily be found.

What happens with the lessons that are missed because of power failure and breakdowns in satellite connections? I can just sit here in my chair and imagine what the program leaders at the center could do. Would they check every corner of the country where power has failed and prepare special sessions, or re-run programs to areas where satellite connections have broken down? Could there be re-run sessions in a week so that students can catch up when they have missed lessons? How could the time then be managed in such circumstances on the part of the central organizers and the students? The schoolteachers are out of the picture anyway. The point that should not be forgotten is that throughout these scenarios, teachers and school administrators have no role to play or they are simply left out. Would it be possible to make the lessons available on the web so that schools can download them when classes are missed for some reason? The school I visited has no Internet connections at this time.⁵

The other option is if the lessons could be available on CDs for replay or if schools could copy them as they are transmitted. The school principal told me that they are provided with six CDs that contain all the TV lessons in the form of teachers' guides and student handbooks. These are not for re-running missed lessons but only for printing. Printing teachers' guides is relatively easy as their number is small. However, to provide printed materials to students is a cumbersome task both in terms of bulk and cost. As a result, students have to entirely depend on the lessons transmitted through the plasma TVs, so long as they do not miss them for one reason or another.

I also have difficulty imagining what could happen when TVs break down or need replacement parts or repair. I must safely assume that the

⁵ The school principal informed me that they have now received the facilities required for the purpose, including nine computers, and await only the telephone connection and assistance in technical work that goes along with it.

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Ministry has alternative plans of delivering lessons in such classes or schools. How are students of private schools going to be accommodated into the education system, as they are not at present in possession of any plasma TVs. They have apparently taken over the new curricula from the Ministry but conduct classes using their own old method or maybe through the student-centered method as stated in the TESO document. Is the Ministry allocating a yearly budget for new schools that are added every year, maintenance costs or provision for generators to be activated whenever power fails? Is there consideration for supplies like CDs, reproduction of teacher and student guides, fuel for generators, or reserve plasma TVs for immediate replacement if some suddenly stop functioning? Such questions torment me as I sit and try to consolidate my ideas into this paper.

I am aware that some government schoolteachers are engaged in extra classes out of the regular working hours and on weekends. Some teachers collect payment from students for the extra work, while some do it for free. The latter situation is impressive, but the question is how long it can last. It is also tempting to ask for what purpose, as teachers in all government schools have been denied regular salary increments for the past four or five years. Why should they then beg the question by adding more labor on themselves outside their constitutional rights?

In this regard we can also look at the case of the biology teacher at the Senior Secondary School that I visited. He carries 25 credit hours of work per week, while the normal load is only 18. As per the existing schedule in the school there is no room to give quizzes, examinations, oral tests, etc. during regular hours. To realize the TESO guideline on continuous assessment, all such activities should be done outside the normal working hours in the evenings and on weekends. The teacher is not financially compensated for that either. I am very appreciative of their patriotism, but again the question remains, for how long can it last? Could activities that include working both the weekdays and weekends affect the quality of education? Don't students need breaks (off hours and weekends) to work on assignments, reconstruct what they have learned throughout the week and prepare themselves for the new lessons to come?

How long should teachers be kept on the fringes of their profession with only five minutes before and five minutes after TV lessons? Is it cost effective for a poor country like Ethiopia? What is the point of training

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many more teachers for high schools at six universities and a number of teacher training colleges? Should these trainees keep on learning how to plan lessons which they will not practice in schools? Will they be employed by the government just to operate plasma TVs, not to put it in overly blunt terms?

Would it be fair to propose that all stakeholders as suggested by the Ministry of Education and others, approach each other at a democratic national conference and debate the situation that is currently prevailing on the ground instead of forcefully sampling students from the classrooms? Undeniably, the delegate on 05 January 2005 wanted to come up with a list of students and parents that he could present to his bosses. This makes the situation even more complex since the selection seemed to be manipulated to meet an already determined conclusion. The action taken on the ground by the delegation, which can safely be assumed to be similar in most schools of the country where such delegations were sent, is quite the contrary to what is written in the TESO document: "... democratizing Teacher Education – giving teachers, students and citizens confidence to make decisions and take initiatives, to take control of their world" (MoE 1995: 2).

Conclusion

From the two documents of the Ministry of Education, namely, the Education Sector Development Programs I and II (MoE, 1999 and 2002, respectively), and the Teachers' Education Systems Overhaul document also formulated by the Ministry of Education, it may be correct to assume that there is the desire to transform teaching from how it is regarded in the present Ethiopian situation (least desirable, financially least motivating, no future career development opportunities, etc.) into a profession that is rewarding for those involved and is a socially acceptable and respected career. This seems to be difficult to realize with the introduction of the plasma TV system, where teachers have very little to do and have no influence on or contribution to the development of children in schools. Horn (1997: 4) states that the transformation of teaching from an occupation into a profession creates new leadership roles for teachers who wish to stay in the classroom and are willing to take on additional assignments. He further

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discusses how teachers should be provided with necessary leadership development opportunities and that they should be compensated for their extra work and responsibilities. Rigid scheduling of timetables and insufficient time for teacher collaboration [or involvement] (Leonard & Leonard 2003: 137) will hinder such development and keep teachers in the position of being onlookers. It is therefore a prerequisite “to make collaborative practice in schools a genuine priority that provides teachers with substantial and ongoing development in the conceptions and meaningful application of shared professional work. Professional learning communities can only exist in an environment that not only espouses values of collaborative practice, but which is also committed to cultivating a climate of trust founded in professional regard, personal respect and shared commitment to common goals (Leonard & Leonard 2003: 139).

Based on the reflections discussed above, I feel that the present trend of teaching in Ethiopian high schools using plasma TVs seriously scales down the involvement of teachers in curriculum development and implementation, their place in the community and the ethical values they should represent and guide in their communities. Without freedom from fear and retribution, without support and encouragement in all their implicit and explicit forms, without building teachers’ confidence in what they do in collaborative practice (Leonard & Leonard 2003: 139), without the appropriate compensation for all the extras they do (Horn 1997: 4), it may be futile to achieve the aim of developing teachers and teaching into a respectable, motivating and socially acceptable role-model type of profession and providing students with the appropriate education that will be socially useful.

Providing lessons on plasma TVs given by foreigners from an advanced country may add to Ethiopia’s involvement and commitment to globalization. However, despite its unchallenged and unfettered expansion, globalization is *not* value free (Steingard & Fitzgibbons 1995: 31, emphasis original). As discussed above, there are quite a lot of materials that are not contextualized to the Ethiopian educational setting, as in the cases of girls in cinemas and the unfaithful wife. Unthinking importation too often concentrates on identifying ‘surface’ similarities, but does so without reference to the cultures in which the policies or practices were conceived (Walker 2003: 148). According to Dimmock and Walker (1998) such

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importation of foreign education materials, referred to as “cross-cultural cloning”, ends up in expanding the Anglo-American education system deep into an Ethiopian society, vehemently eroding national and regional ethical values, leaving no chance for young Ethiopians to uphold and build on their own cultural values.

It is also imperative that teachers themselves go the extra mile to meet the needs of society, always being vigilant to remain models of good ethics and taking the necessary responsibility as role models. It is therefore important for educators to feel the power of their collective will to do good things in school (Campbell 2003: 122). According to Leonard and Leonard (2003: 139) teachers need to do this if they are to gain credibility. Pidocke *et al.* (1997) hold that teachers must be accountable to community norms and expectations of the wider society. I must go further to suggest that it is imperative that continued, free and democratic engagement in discussions must be conducted and implemented by all stakeholders about collaborative work and research into teaching. The final hope may be to create an environment where teaching in Ethiopian high schools is carried out by humans to and for humans, and any inanimate object would only be a supportive or supplementary aid to the teaching exercise. This would facilitate the interaction between teachers as representatives of the community image and their students, who should be molded in the norms and standards set out for them by society.

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