

**Provision of Schooling by the Eritrean Peoples
Liberation Front (EPLF) in the Field from
1976-91**

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Abstract

This mini thesis deals with the historical development of the provision of schooling in the war zones under the EPLF focusing on the period between 1976-1991, that is, from the establishment of the Revolutionary School (also called Zero School) until the independence of Eritrea. It also tries to give a general background about the Eritrean national liberation movements and their struggle to achieve independence. To provide schooling in times of war and in war zones is very difficult.

But many national liberation movements provided education largely basic education to the peoples under their control and their respective fighters. As SWAPO did for Namibian refugees, the ANC to South African refugees, and the PAIGC to those liberated in Guinea Bissau, the EPLF also educated its fighters and peoples under its control. This has been investigated by analyzing the efforts of the EPLF educators to overcome the war challenges in providing education to the fighters and the peoples in the liberated areas of Eritrea.

This mini thesis also tries to give a highlight concerning the contribution of the wartime experience in the education sector to the educational program of independent Eritrea

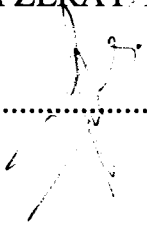
DECLARATION

I declare that *Provision of Schooling by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) in the Field from 1976-91* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

BINIAM ZERAY TESFAMARIAM

JUNE 2003

Signed:



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KEY WORDS:

Eritrea

EPLF

Colonial Education

Struggle for Liberation

Provision of Schooling

Revolutionary School

Zero School

Curriculum

War zone

Liberated areas



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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLA	Eritrean People's Liberation Army
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
ERA	Eritrean Relief Association
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MOE	Ministry of Education
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
PGE	Provisional Government of Eritrea
PLF	Popular Liberation Force
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
RICE	Research and Information Center of Eritrea
SOMAFCO	Solomon Mahalangu Freedom College
SWAPO	South West African Peoples Organization
TPLF	Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Key words.....	iv
Abbreviations.....	v
Introduction	1
Overview of the Thesis.....	3
Chapter one: Back Ground to the History of the Eritrean Struggle 1961-91.....	4
1.1 Introduction.....	4
1.2 Early Colonialists of Eritrea.....	5
1.3 Italian colonization of Eritrea.....	6
1.4 British Administration.....	8
1.5 Eritrea and the Big Four Powers.....	10
1.6 Federation	11
1.7 Armed Struggle and liberation movements.....	16
1.8 Brief History of the EPLF Struggle.....	20
Chapter two: Education in War Zones.....	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 SWAPO's Experience.....	25
2.3 The ANC Experience n Exile.....	31
2.4 PAIGC's Experience.....	36
Chapter three: Education in Eritrean War Zones Between 1976-1991.....	43
3.1 History of Education in Eritrea.....	43
3.2 EPLF's Education Program.....	45

3.3 The Revolution School: historical development ...	46
3.4 Curriculum Development at the Revolution School.....	52
3.5 Principles Included to strengthen the curriculum.....	58
3.6 Teaching Experience.....	61
3.7 Responding to War Challenges.....	63
Chapter Four: Lessons Learnt from the War Experience for the Current	
Education System.....	66
4.1 Introduction.....	66
4.2 Literacy Programs.....	67
4.3 Women and Education.....	74
Conclusion.....	81
Bibliography	85
Appendix	I



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Introduction

This mini-thesis sets out to examine the education system provided by the EPLF Education Department during the liberation war and to find out whether the wartime experience has contribution for the education system in independent Eritrea. To look in to these issues this study tries to answer the following questions:

Main Research Question: *What kind of education did the EPLF manage to provide in the battlefield to its members?*

Sub Questions: 1-What motivated and characterised the liberation struggle in Eritrea?

2-What does the literature say about the provision of schooling in the battlefields of other countries?

3-What was the purpose of the Ethiopian education system in relation to the Eritrean people especially during the struggle period?

4-How was the Revolution School founded? And what was the nature of this Revolution School?

5-What kind of curriculum (that is subjects, materials, teaching strategies and assessment procedures) was offered?

6-How far were the teachers who were also fighters competent on the subject they taught? What measures were taken to improve their skill and method of teaching?

7-What were the main problems of the EPLF 's Education Department while providing schooling in the field?

8-Did it (the Revolution School) has any contribution or effect to the Eritrean education system after independence?

Until 1976 it was very difficult for the EPLF to implement its educational program in an organised way mainly due to the civil war that was going on between the EPLF and ELF fighters. Therefore, this study focuses its discussion on the period starting from 1976 during which the Revolution School was founded to 1991 during which Eritrea became

independent. Hence, the topic of this mini-thesis is *“Provision of Schooling by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) in the Fields from 1976-1991”*.

This study is based on three types of resources:

1. Books and Articles
2. Documents
3. Interviews

The relevant documents are kept at the National Research and Documentation Centre in Asmara, Eritrea. The collection at this centre is the basis for my study. In fact the documents need to be catalogued in a more systematic way so that researchers can find what they want very easily. All the documents and archives are listed down (by hand writing) in a big notebook. Some times pages are missing from the notebook. As a result there can be a chance to miss relevant documents while looking for their titles in the notebook. But in general there are a lot of documents, which are collected by the EPLF Research Centre during the struggle period.

The other type of resource is based on oral informants. In most cases I have used my informants to confirm and cross check the information that I collected from the documents. I have interviewed four informants. The first is Tesfay Barya-Gaber who had joined the liberation struggle in 1978 and who started to teach in the Revolution School in 1979 until he became head of the Tigrigna Panel. Now he is working at the office of the National Curriculum Division. The other informant is Birhane Demoz who joined the liberation struggle in 1978 and started to serve in the EPLF Education Department as a teacher in the Revolution School and later a member of the curriculum-planning group. Now he is teaching pedagogy at Asmara TTI. Aynalem Marcos who had served at the Revolution School as a Geography teacher and later as member of the curriculum-planning group. Now he is working at the office of Demobilization. Tedros Seyum who had joined the EPLF Revolution School as a student at the age of nine and who participated in the literacy campaigns conducted by the Education Department in the liberated areas starting from 1983. Now he is working at the Ministry of Education. All of the interviews were conducted at their respective offices.

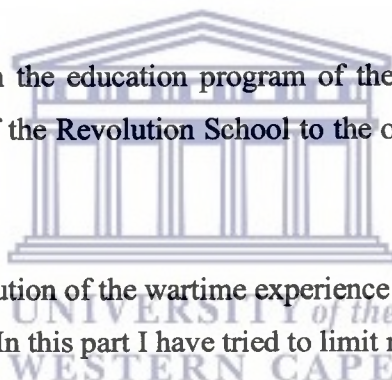
Overview of the Thesis

Chapter one focuses on the historical background to the Eritrean national liberation struggle. It briefly describes the presence of different colonial powers in Eritrea. It also explains the role of the EPLF towards the achievement of the Eritrean independence.

Chapter two deals with the experiences of some of the African national liberation movements with particular emphasis on the experiences of the ANC of South Africa, PAIGC of Guinea-Bissau and SWAPO of Namibia. It deals with the educational activities of these organisations while they were conducting their national liberation struggle.

Chapter three is a discussion on the education program of the EPLF. It focuses on the development and contribution of the Revolution School to the overall education activity of the EPLF.

Chapter four looks at the contribution of the wartime experience towards the education program of independent Eritrea. In this part I have tried to limit my focus of discussion on two important issues: literacy program and on EPLF's recognition of women's right for education.



CHAPTER ONE: BACK GROUND TO THE HISTORY OF THE ERITREAN STRUGGLE (1961-1991)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Eritrea is a newly independent country. It is located in the Horn of Africa, bordered to the north and west by Sudan; South by Ethiopia; Southeast by Djibouti and to the Northeast by the Red Sea. It occupies a strategic position along the Red Sea and its coastline stretches more than 1000kms.

The people of Eritrea known as Eritreans are of various origins: the Nilotics, the Bejas and the Semites. Of these groups the Nilotics are said to be the earliest inhabitants of the area- present day Eritrea. The Bejas from the Sudan also settled in northern and northwestern Eritrea where the Baria and Baza (Kunama) originally lived. The last group the Semites (Sabeans from Yemen) came and settled in the highlands of Eritrea (Haile, 1988: 12). Through time the newly arrived settlers, the Sabeans, mixed with the Bejas and founded a number of towns of which Aksum became the seat for the Aksumite kingdom and Adulis the port of their civilization (Tsegai, 1988: 68; Haile, 1988: 12). As Haile quoted Robert I. Rotberg who studied the political history of Tropical Africa, “the Aksumite kingdom controlled much of what is now Eritrea and north eastern Ethiopia” (Haile, 1988: 12; Connel, 1993: 50). Trade was an important economic activity for the prosperity and power of the Aksumite kingdom, which lasted until the 7th century.A.D. Due to the wave of Islamic expansion the Aksumite power declined. The Beja people founded their own kingdoms by the middle of the 8th century and these kingdoms exercised power until the 14th century during which “Eritrea came to be known as the country of Medri-Bahri (Land of the Sea)” (Haile, 1988: 12). At the same time the Mereb River was regarded as the boundary line between Medri-Bahri and Ethiopia, the then Abyssinia. Both, Medri-Bahri and Abyssinia were at war in different times during the succeeding centuries (Haile, 1988: 13).

1.2 EARLY COLONIALISTS OF ERITREA

Starting from the second decade of the 16th century the Ottoman Turks had a strong foothold on some part of the coastal areas of the Red Sea for about three centuries. Between 1557-1848 Massawa was formally ruled by the Turks (Gottesman, 1998: 40; Peter: 43). From the coastal areas the power of the Turks also extended as far as Keren and Sahel to the interior (Haile, 1988: 14).

While the Ottoman Turks controlled the coastlines of Eritrea, the other part, the western lowlands, was “under the control of the Funj kingdom of Sennar whose control lasted until the early 19th c.” (Tsegai, 1988: 69). The rule of both these foreign powers, the Ottoman Turkey and the Funj Kingdom, in Eritrea ended with the coming of a new alien power, Egypt, in 1865 (Haile, 1988: 14). The Egyptians were then helped by the British in their move to control the Red Sea coastal plains, which were regarded as a strategically important area. At first the Egyptians got the right of entrance to the port of Massawa by getting a lease from the Turks in 1848 (Connel, 1993: 50). In fact with the opening of the Suez Canal the strategic importance of the Red Sea was increasing as it created a short cut sea route from Europe also the Middle East to India and the Far East (Tsegai, 1988: 69). By the 1870s the Egyptians continued to expand to the interior regions of Eritrea and replaced the Turkish rule in Keren and Massawa (Connel, 1993: 50). Basing themselves on these areas of Eritrea, the Egyptians also tried unsuccessfully to invade Abyssinia by the middle of the 1870s. Then starting from 1876 the Abyssinian’s, under Emperor Yohannes, were in control of the Eritrean highlands until 1889 during which the Emperor (Yohannes) was killed while fighting the Mahdists (from the Sudan) at the Battle of Mattama (Haile, 1988: 15).

In this way the Abyssinians presence in the highlands of Eritrea came to an end. The Abyssinians could no longer control the highlands mainly for the following reasons: the coming of a new colonial power, Italy; the defeat of the Emperor by the Mahdists and the

absence of a strong government in Ethiopia after the death of Yohannes, that is, “there were multiple regional dynasties with no strong central authority” (Haile, 1988: 16).

1.3 ITALIAN COLONISATION OF ERITREA

The Italians got the first foothold in Eritrea in 1869 when they succeeded to purchase a piece of land around the coast. This purchase can be regarded as a foundation for the later Italian colonization of Eritrea. The first Italian group who made the purchase was a missionary group (Connel, 1993: 51). These missionaries while returning back home did collect important information about the area and the people living around the coast. Then the Italian government made another move to purchase Assab from a local Sultan. They wanted Assab to make it a fuelling and commercial station (Haile, 1988: 16). Regardless of the Egyptian protests by the middle of the 1880s the Italian troops finally controlled Massawa and continued to advance to the interior regions of Eritrea (Haile, 1988: 17; Habte Selassie, 1980: 53). Again this Italian colonial expansion around the Red sea was favoured and encouraged by the British who were then trying to stop the French colonial expansion in the Horn of Africa. Under these circumstances the King of Italy finally issued a decree, which formally established Eritrea as the Italian colony at the beginning of 1890. Now the colony was named Eritrea and was defined as a ‘Nation State’ under Italy. At the same time this decision helped to develop the feeling of national identity of Eritreans (Pateman, 1990: 8). This name, Eritrea, was taken from a Greek word for red, which is associated with the areas of the Red Sea (Connel, 1993: 53). The Italians were then interested to make Eritrea a settler colony. This was the beginning of Italian colonialism in Eritrea. The Italians controlled Eritrea until the British defeated them in the Second World War, 1941. During this period of Italian colonialism Eritrea developed as a distinct society and territory (Tsegai, 1988: 70). Already after the death of Emperor Yohannes of Ethiopia on 2 May 1889 the Italian colonialists signed a treaty, the Treaty of Wuchale, with king Menilik (of Shoa in Ethiopia). Under this treaty king Menilik recognized the presence of Italy in Eritrea as a colonizer and the Italians in return promised Menilik to assist him in keeping his title and Crown against his rivals. The Wuchale Treaty also defined “the boundary line between the Italian colony of Eritrea and

Abyssinia” (Haile, 1988: 17). Later in October 1896 another Treaty, the Addis Ababa Treaty, was concluded between Emperor Menilik of Ethiopia and the Italian colonialists in Eritrea.

In the Addis Ababa Treaty Menilik accepted and approved the Italian control of Eritrea and at the same time put his claim about the Ethiopian desire over Eritrea. "In the case where the government of Italy should wish to abandon, by its own decision, a portion of territory in its possession it will return to Ethiopia" (Gottesman, 1998: 40).

Just like that of the other European colonizers the Italians controlled Eritrea mainly for their own economic advantage (exploitation). By the beginning of the 20th century many unemployed Italians began to immigrate to Eritrea. And the number of the Italian settlers in Eritrea was increasing through time. In the late 1940s there were about 60,000 Italian settlers in Eritrea (Firebrace, 1985: 7). Because of the presence of such a large number of Italian settlers, for instance, the agricultural policy in Eritrea was designed mainly to satisfy the interests of these settlers and in fact at the same time to increase the Italians exports to Europe and other parts of the world. On the other hand such policies of the Italians intensified the socio-economic development of Eritrea. That is,

the commercialization of agriculture, introduction of new crops such as cotton and coffee, introduction of veterinary medicine to improve the health and productivity of livestock, the importation of agricultural machinery and tools, and the consolidation of vast parcels of land cultivated under Italian ownership hastened the disintegration of the traditional...socio-economic structure in the lowlands and the feudal social structure in the highlands (Gottesman: 423).

With regard to the infrastructure the Italians constructed extensive communication and transportation facilities in their colony, Eritrea. This made it easy for the movement of Eritreans from one place to another. The industrial sector also showed a great change during the Italian colonial period. As a result of these developments many Eritreans from the countryside were moving out to work on the projects opened by the Italians. All these changes helped to develop national identity and national consciousness of Eritreans of the time (Habte Selassie, 1980: 51).

In general the Italians used Eritrea as a source of recruitment for soldiers to implement their desire for colonial expansion, to satisfy their economic interest on import and export trade activities and as a base for the invasion of Ethiopia and as a centre to administer Italy's East African Empire, 1936-41 (Negash, 1990: 9). At the same time the Italian colonization of Eritrea created a political entity and modernized the country.

1.4 BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Due to its defeat in the Second World War Italy lost all of its African colonies. The great powers (USSR, UK and the USA) decided that Britain should govern Eritrea as a protectorate. Therefore, by 1941 the British defeated the Italians in Africa and at the same time replaced them in Eritrea. That is, the British Military Administration (BMA) was established and it continued to rule Eritrea until 1949 and then replaced by the British Foreign Office, which continued to administer Eritrea until September 1952 as "Occupied Enemy Territory" (Firebrace, 1985: 18). At first the British did not get rid of all the Italians from the system of administration. The British continued to use some Italian officials in running the territory, Eritrea. In fact due to the political reforms at home the British introduced a number of changes in Eritrea. One of the important changes was that they eliminated the 'color bar' system, which the Italians had used. The Italians imposed this racial policy on Eritrea in 1937 forbidding Eritreans access to jobs, schools and other social services (Connell, 1993: 54). But the British started to use native Eritreans especially at the lower ranks of administration (Gottesman, 1998: 44; Firebrace, 1985: 18).

On the other hand, the British, from the very beginning had their own objective concerning the future of Eritrea. That is, "to partition the country along religious lines aiming to give the coastline and highland areas to Ethiopia and the Moslem- inhabited northern and western lowlands to their colony, the Sudan" (Tseggai, 1988: 71). By implementing such a policy the British thought that they would create animosity and difference between the major religious groups, Muslims and Christians, of Eritrea and at the same time to weaken their unity. While the British were trying to apply their divisive

plan of partition, the Eritreans on the other hand were taking their own measures on their own way. For example the leaders of both religions started to agitate the people for a 'united Eritrea' (Tseggai, 1988: 72).

During the Second World War and especially after 1941 Eritrea, while under the British control, served the Allied Powers' war effort. Her economy was directed "to meet the needs of a war economy" (Gottesman, 1998: 44). The USA also used the Eritrean ports for war purposes. Therefore, until the end of the Second World War the Eritrean economy was getting strong as the British also strengthened the Eritrean industry. But after the end of W.W.II the Eritrean economy began to decline as so many industrial plants and equipment including the activities of the ports were dismantled by the British (Firebrace, 1985:18). As Gottesman pointed out, in 1948, the worst year of the post-war depression, "637 businesses closed and 10,000 Eritreans became jobless" (Gottesman, 1998: 44). As the number of the unemployed Eritreans increased, the political consciousness of the working class also increased. For example there were strong but unsuccessful Eritrean protests against the British actions of dismantling the economy. In fact the British did not prohibit the Eritreans from establishing political parties and trade unions. Therefore, different political parties emerged in Eritrea in the 1940s (Gottesman, 1998: 44; Tseggai, 1988: 72; Connell, 1993: 55).

1.5 ERITREA AND THE BIG FOUR POWERS

When Eritrea was given to the British in 1941, it was already agreed that the victorious Big Four Powers would decide the future of Eritrea. By the end of the Second World War (August 1945) the future status of former Italian colonies began to be debated and discussed by the then heads of USA, Britain and USSR. On this issue there were conflicting interests among the Big Powers. Decision was then passed to see the matter in a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Four Powers, which included France. In this case the future status of Eritrea was one of the issues on which was reflected the conflicting interests of the Big Powers. Concerning the future status of Eritrea the Big Powers made different proposals at different times. For example at a

meeting in London on 8 May 1949 the Committee which had been formed to bring solutions in relation to the future status of former Italian colonies developed a proposal called the "Bevin-Sforza formula". The plan was named after its organizers, Ernest Bevin the British Foreign Secretary and Count Sforza, the Italian Foreign minister. With regard to Eritrea the proposed plan was to partition the country between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Ethiopia. That is, the area (west) dominated by Muslims was to be given to the Sudan and the area (highland) dominated by Christians to Ethiopia (Firebrace, 1985: 18). In fact this plan was opposed by Eritrean political leaders and supported by Ethiopia as it was hoping to get access to the sea. When this proposal, the Bevin-Sforza formula, was submitted for discussion to the General Assembly, Soviet Union and other Arab- Asian countries opposed it. Therefore, the plan failed and another proposal was made in September 1949 especially with regard to Eritrea. That is, to send a commission to Eritrea to investigate the problem. On the other hand the Ethiopian government opposed this recommendation. Regardless of the Ethiopian opposition the Commission of Inquiry was sent to Eritrea with the following task:

"...to ascertain more fully the wishes and the best means of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, to examine the question of the disposal of Eritrea and to report to the UN General Assembly, together with such proposals as it may deem appropriate for the solution of the problem of Eritrea." (Haile, 1988: 19-21; Firebrace, 1985: 18)

The commission, which was formed by the representatives of Guatemala, Pakistan, Burma, South Africa and Norway, went to Eritrea in February 1950. Finally the Commission members came out with their own plans in their reports. Guatemala and Pakistan supported the idea of independence for Eritrea (after a period of UN trusteeship); Burma and South Africa supported the idea of federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia and Norway's side was on the idea of the union of Eritrea with Ethiopia. When the Eritrean case was discussed at the UN, the interests and wishes of the Eritrean representatives (also of the Eritreans) were not taken in to consideration (Tsegai, 1988: 73; Haile, 1988: 21). The General Assembly being influenced by the Anglo-American

interests finally rejected the proposal, which favored independence for Eritrea. The Soviet Union, Pakistan and Iraq in fact supported the idea of independence.

1.6 FEDERATION

After hearing the reports of the Inquiry Commission (December 1950) the General Assembly as mentioned above was then presented with three solutions to pass its decision in relation to the future status of Eritrea. In fact, as Trevaskis put it "the General Assembly was no better informed as to what the inhabitants of Eritrea wanted, or the truth about Eritrea's economy" (Trevaskis, 1988: 101). Regardless of this, on 2 December 1950 a resolution was passed by the General Assembly in line with the recommendations made by the South African and Burmese representatives of the Inquiry Commission. This decision on federation was passed to satisfy the strategic interests of mainly the USA and its allies (Firebrace, 1985: 17). The Resolution 390 A (V) was targeted to federate Eritrea as "an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown" (Trevaskis, 1988: 101; Schwab, 1985:101). This Resolution granted:

1. Full autonomy for the Eritrean Government in all domestic affairs with definite limitations of the respective jurisdictions of both the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments;
2. A democratic regime in Eritrea with all its requisites and safeguards respect for human rights and fundamental liberties and government of the people by the people (Haile, 1988: 21).

The implication of this decision was to give Eritrea some power especially on domestic affairs related with legislation, executive and judicial powers. In the case of "defense, foreign affairs, currency and finance, foreign and interstate commerce and external and interstate communications including ports" power was invested in the Federal Government that is Haile Sellasie's government, for the so-called 'federal government' was never established (Erlich, 1983: 8; Schwab, 1985: 101).

At the same time in December 1950 the General Assembly assigned an elected commissioner Mr. Anze Matienzo of Bolivia to facilitate the process of federation. The tasks of the Commissioner were:

1. to consult with the British Administration, the Ethiopian Government and Eritrean inhabitants.
2. to prepare a draft for the Eritrean Constitution.
3. to advise and assist the Eritrean Assembly in its consideration of the constitution (Iyob, 1997: 83)

Based on the UN Resolution the Commissioner drafted a constitution for Eritrea and on 10 July 1952 the General Assembly approved the final constitution for Eritrea. And the emperor of Ethiopia ratified this final copy on 11 September 1952 after which Eritrea was transferred to a status of federal unit (Iyob, 1997: 87; Trevaskis, 1988: 101).

To bring a solution for the Eritrea problem after the end of the Second World War the UN took about five years of debates and arguments. During these years the fate of Eritrea reached "to the brink of partition, union with Ethiopia, independence and even Italian trusteeship" (Trevaskis, 1988: 102). On the other hand during these five years the Ethiopian government was doing its best to get controlling power over Eritrea even by organizing political parties in favor of union with Ethiopia. Such political parties increased the animosity against those Eritreans who were in favor of independence as a result of which violence and disorder continued to prevail. In this case "with the problem of Eritrea's future solved at last, it was widely believed that passions would die down and order would be restored. The belief was illusory" (Trevaskis, 1988: 102).

On 15 September 1952, the British Occupation of Eritrea came to an end. The Federation became formal and Tedla Bairu became the first Chief Executive of the Eritrean government (Ghebremedhin, 1989: 161; Connel, 1993: 57). On the same day with a great ceremony the Ethiopian flag replaced the British flag in Asmara. The Eritrean flag was raised only in the next morning. And with this the United Nations Resolution on

Federation was put in to practice (Trevaskis, 1988: 128). Now it seemed that Eritreans and Ethiopians shared power.

Immediately after the withdrawal of the British army the Ethiopian force (about 3000) moved in to Eritrea. This Ethiopian army was expected to keep peace and order in Eritrea and at the same time crush any activity opposing federation. As the rule of federation started the Ethiopian government began to violate the principles of the Eritrean constitution, which was drafted by the UN Commissioner. For example on September 30, 1952 the Emperor of Ethiopia declared "the federal Ethiopian court to be the territory's final court of appeal" (Iyob, 1997: 88).

In fact the Ethiopian violations of the Eritrean constitution continued after that. During 1952 and 1953 measures were taken against the rights of Eritreans. Eritrean newspapers (like *Dimitzi Ertra-Voice of Eritrea*) were banned. These newspapers were critical of the federation (Pateman, 1990: 6). Eritrean males living in the urban areas were obliged to carry identity cards. In such a way the Eritrean rights were eroded which in turn weakened the Eritrean autonomy granted by the UN General Asssembly. After the mid-1950s the Ethiopians started to use intimidation and force (military) to implement the Ethiopian interest in Eritrea. Active supporters of Eritrean autonomy in the Eritrean federal government were even threatened by unionist elements. For example in May 1955 Ibrahim Sultan an active supporter of autonomy, was accused of defaming a foreign official (Sudanese) and put on trial. A few months latter the chief Executive, Tedla Bairu, was forced to resign and a supporter of Union with Ethiopia replaced him. Towards 1956 the process of eliminating the Eritrean federal government was increasing. Even bills were passed for "change of the name of the Eritrean government to that of Eritrean administration, the adoption of the Ethiopian flag and the introduction of a large number of Ethiopian administrators and teachers in to Eritrea" (Iyob, 1997: 89-90).

By bringing a number of Ethiopian professionals like administrators and teachers in to Eritrea the Ethiopian government started to control the key positions in the economic and

social activities. With this began “a policy of Amharization or Ethiopianization” (Iyob, 1997: 90).

On the other hand the Eritrean representatives in the assembly were trying to protest the violations of the Ethiopians by sending petitions to the UN. But these Eritrean leaders were accused and arrested for making contact with the UN. Such kind of political repression finally forced many Eritrean political leaders to leave their country and live as exiles in Egypt and the Sudan (Iyob, 1997: 90-91). Those who remained in Eritrea also continued to protest the Ethiopian violations and interference. Such Eritrean oppositions were expressed in different ways.

By October 1961 reports of Shifta [rebels] activity had increased, especially under Hamid Idris Awate in the Agordat region of the western lowlands. Awate is credited with firing the first shot at an isolated Ethiopian garrison in the western lowlands. Awate had ‘taken to the field again’ not merely as a bandit but for more significantly political reasons, (Iyob, 1997:92).

In other cases those Eritreans who were collaborating with the Ethiopian government were also given serious warnings (and even some times assassinated) by the active Eritrean nationalists.

By the middle of 1962 rumors were spreading about the forthcoming unification of the Eritrean Assembly with Ethiopia. Angered by such rumors many high-school students went out in to the streets for demonstration objecting the unification and Ethiopia’s actions. And this demonstration was an indication for the presence of organized resistance to the increasing Ethiopian encroachment (Iyob, 1997: 93).

Generally until the end of the 1950s the Ethiopians succeeded to dismantle the Eritrean governmental structure. That is, Ethiopia had started to violate the Eritrean autonomy by sending a military force to Eritrea with a covering reason of protecting the ‘federal government’. And this military intervention was followed by a number of measures against the interest and right of the Eritreans. These included, the prohibition of the independent political parties in 1956; the General Union of Eritrean Labor Syndicates

was also banned in 1958 and the suppression of the official Eritrean languages, Tigrigna and Arabic; the imposition of the Ethiopian official language, Amharic; the suppression of the rights of Eritreans to speak, write or assemble freely; the expropriation of Eritrea's share of custom's duties; the closing of many factories to weaken the Eritrean economy; the removal of the Eritrean flag (1960) and avoidance of the seal of the Eritrean federal government (Tsegai, 1988:74; Pateman, 1990:6; Mukangara, 1978:124-25).

It was because of the above-mentioned reasons that the Eritreans started to protest against the Ethiopians. At first the Eritreans resistance was peaceful. Although they were not successful the Eritrean leaders had tried to send petitions to the UN and the Emperor of Ethiopia. But they got no response (Firebrace, 1985: 18; Connell, 1993:58). In reality the autonomy of the Eritrean government had been guaranteed in the constitution granted by Resolution 390A (V). In the constitution it was declared that, "the provisions of the Federal Charter would not be amended or violated by any body other than the General Assembly" (Haile, 1988: 27). The Eritreans were hoping that the UN would intervene to rescue the Federation. But they were wrong. That is, the UN and especially the USA, which had initiated the idea of federation, failed to take any measure against the Ethiopian's violations of the Eritrean constitution. Now the Eritreans were left with no other choice except starting an armed struggle. Therefore as a continuation of the struggle clandestine political movements like '*Mahber Sheweate*' (Union of Seven-Eritrean Liberation Movement born in 1958) began to be formed in Eritrea (Haile, 1988: 27-28; Ghebremedhin, 1989:171) for purposes of coordinating the nationalists struggle.

Regardless of the Eritrean opposition and after weakening the structure of the Eritrean federal government, finally in November 1962 the Federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia was dissolved and Eritrea became part of Ethiopia. Gradually, through murders and intimidation, the Eritrean autonomy was neglected. On 14 November 1962 at a meeting of the Eritrean Assembly, the 'puppet parliament', a statement already prepared by the Ethiopian government was read to notify the members of the Assembly and the people that the federation came to an end and Eritrea was united with Ethiopia. It became the fourteenth province of the country (Haile, 1988: 29; Chaliand, 1969: 98). In connection to

this, Connell (1993) quoted Richard Johnson, the US Consul in Asmara at the time, who secretly stated to the State Department about the real situation in Eritrea. He said, "the unification was prepared and perpetrated from above in maximum secrecy with out the slightest public debate or discussion" (Connell, 1993: 57). The Haille Sellasie government was trying to use every means to annex Eritrea. He was even trying to give the process legal support. As Ellingson pointed out "as early as 1955, the palace had begun preparing the way, in legal terms, for the eventual annexation of Eritrea. In November, the emperor promulgated a revised constitution for Ethiopia which left unmentioned the special federal status existing between Eritrea and Addis Ababa" (Ellingson, 1989: 197).



1.7 ARMED STRUGGLE AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Once Ethiopia dissolved the federation, those Eritreans who had been struggling to keep the autonomy of Eritrea decided to continue their struggle by arms. Already before 1960 as the Ethiopian intervention was increasing many Eritreans were leaving Eritrea to the neighboring countries mainly to the Sudan and Egypt. And these exiles mostly prominent Eritrean patriots started to organize themselves as resistance groups in collaboration with those inside Eritrea. Therefore by 1961 they were successful to form an armed organization called the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). The founding members were thirteen with only seven guns (Tseggai, 1988: 76; Habte Selassie, 1980: 64).

The Eritreans fighting on the ground was started on 1 September 1961 by Hamid Idris Awate a native of Tessenei when he fired shots against a police post (Connell, 1993: 58). Awate died in mid 1962 (Habte Selassie, 1980: 64). This day is taken as the starting point of the armed struggle. The armed struggle was started in the western part of Eritrea, which was dominated by Muslim peasants. Thus the people in this part of Eritrea, the peasants and nomads, became the basis for the ELF fighters (Mukangara, 1978: 127). The nationalists at the same time also continued to organize themselves politically particularly

in exile. By 1963, the exiled nationalists in the Sudan formed a Supreme Council (under ELF) with different branches. Idris Muhammad Adam was elected as its president. This person was “a member of the Bani Amir tribe, former president (1955-56) of the defunct Eritrean Assembly, an active leader throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and an exile in Cairo before the annexation” (Erlich, 1983: 22). There were also other prominent Eritrean nationalists who were members of the Supreme Council. One was Walda-Ab Walda-Mariam a Christian and an exile in Cairo since the late 1950s and the other was a Muslim called Uthman Salih Sabi (based in Beirut). The main tasks of the Supreme Council in relation to the fighters were to provide them supplies, political leadership, finance and arms. It also organized for the fighters advanced training mostly in Arab countries like Syria (Erlich, 1983: 22-23).

The nationalist movement was also increasing its power by the middle of the 1960s as a large number of young Eritreans flocked to join the organization, ELF. After annexation the Haile Sellasie government was unable to satisfy the interests of the modern and educated Eritrean youngsters. Also, Haile Sellasie's attempt to impose the medieval emperors in Eritrea was highly opposed by those young Eritreans who had been exposed to a 'highly standard of political life' during the colonial period. Besides these due to the decline of the Eritrean economy the number of unemployed Eritreans was increasing which in turn helped the nationalists to get mass support. On the other hand with the coming of a new group of Eritrean youth internal pressures were also developing within the organization (ELF) due to its 'loose organizational structure' (Habte Selassie, 1980: 64). At first the gap was seen between the young military leaders in the field and the exiled politicians on the basis of ethnic, religious and regional differences (Erlich, 1983: 23).

Towards the late 1960s the dividing gap within the ELF was widening. A strong resentment among the fighters also developed against the Supreme Council and this was first organized by a new movement called the 'Tripartite Union'. As the pressure was intensified, the ELF called a national conference on 25 August 1969 on Eritrean soil in order to solve the internal problems. It was called the Adobha congress. However, the

outcome of the Adobha congress was an open schism between the men in the field and the exiles and an even worse division between west and east (Erlich, 1983: 26; Habte Selassie, 1980: 66). A new General Command replaced the Supreme Council. On the other side a group opposing the General Command also formed the General Secretariat of the Eritrean Liberation Front under the leadership of Uthman Salih Sabi who again formed a new movement, the Popular Liberation Forces (PLF) (Erlich, 1983: 27-28).

The formation of the PLF in a PLO base strengthened the Eritrean nationalist movement. Largely due to Uthman Sabi's effort the PLF obtained financial and arms support from Arab countries like Libya, the Sudan, South Yemen and others. A number of Eritrean youngsters were also sent to Cuba and China for a training of advanced guerrilla tactics. Therefore, by the end of the 1960s the Eritrean nationalists began to conduct "acts of sabotage and terrorism, including hijacking of planes, kidnapping of foreign diplomats, blowing up of bridges in front of cameras and ambushing and assassinating Ethiopian functionaries and collaborators" (Erlich, 1983:28).

Early in the 1970s another important organization was formed by the prominent Eritrean nationalists called the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces (EPLF). That is, this new organization split off from the older organization, ELF, due to its ideological and organizational differences. EPLF's foreign mission was mainly represented by Wolde-Ab Wolde-Mariam and Uthman Salih Sabi and the field force was under a military committee headed by Isayas Afeworki. The new movement, the EPLF, consisted of different groups of Eritreans: Christian highlanders, coastal Muslims and other groups living in exile. However, the difference between the two major organizations ELF and EPLF was widening from time to time. The EPLF was focusing on Marxism where as the ELF was following the principles of the 'Pan-Arabist regimes of Syria and Iraq' (Erlich, 1983: 31-32). As Schwab stated, "the EPLF was the more precise in terms of its ideology". The ELF based itself mainly on the values of Islam and feudal sentiments (Schwab, 1985: 105). Habte Selassie also quoted one of the leading members of the ELF, Uthman Salih Sabi who agreed on the organizational weakness of his organization. He (Uthman) said "the leadership of he front-myself one of them- committed a serious

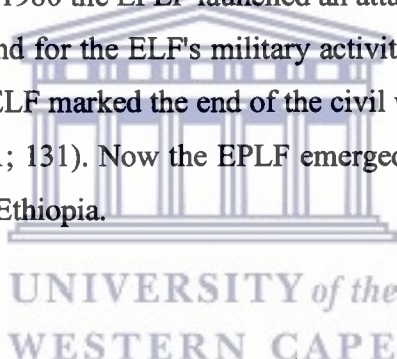
mistake by giving priority to the gun instead of the organization” (Habte Selassie, 1980: 64). Such differences finally brought the two movements in to civil war, which lasted from 1972-74. As a result of this civil war a large number of Eritreans lost their lives. It also weakened the military power of the Eritrean nationalists (Tseggai, 1988: 77; Iyob: 118).

In 1974 a great social change took place in Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by a group of officers. The new government in Ethiopia also continued to fight against the Eritrean nationalists. This was because of the fact that the new government also accepted the idea that granting independence to Eritrea would lead to the disintegration of Ethiopia (Schwab, 1985: 105). At the beginning of 1975, the Ethiopian government continued to take harsh measures against the Eritrean youth, which in turn increased the number of new recruits to the liberation fronts. Among the new recruits, there were workers, professionals and women (Iyob, 1997: 119). But this time the two Eritrean liberation movements made an agreement to coordinate their forces and to fight against the Ethiopian army. As a result in 1975 the war was in favor of the Eritrean nationalists. The Ethiopian army suffered defeat after defeat. Therefore, in 1976-77 the nationalists controlled a larger part of Eritrea. According to Tseggai the liberation forces controlled a number of large towns, which included Nakfa, Af-Abet, Keren, Dekmhare, Debaroa, Mendefera, Agordat, Tessenei, Segeneiti, Nefasit, Ghinda and Embatkala (Tseggai, 1988: 78). The EPLF at this time was able to establish facilities like workshops, co-operative, schools, dispensaries, roads etc. in the liberated areas. (Firebrace, 1985: 53). This action made the EPLF unique in the history of African revolutionary movements (Chaliand, 1969: 99). This achievement brought the Eritrean nationalists closer to liberation.

Nevertheless, in 1978 with a strong foreign assistance (Soviet Union and others), Ethiopia launched a massive attack against the Fronts (EPLF) in Eritrea. This resulted in the withdrawal of the liberation movements from the areas they had occupied. Now Ethiopia succeeded to control most of Eritrea, which included the densely populated areas. After this, the EPLF retreated to and held the town of Nakfa, which became "a

symbol of defiance and determination". Nakfa, located at the northern part, became the EPLF stronghold for the following years (Clapham: 208). The retreat for the EPLF was 'strategic' because "it minimized civilian and military casualties" (Firebrace, 1985: 54). On the other hand the ELF faced high casualties. The Fronts failed due to the lack of unity and coordination between them. Distrust continued between the national liberation movements (Iyob, 1997: 120; Tseggai, 1988: 80; Pateman, 1990: 7).

Within the ELF itself, disagreements continued to exist due to its organizational weakness. The fighters even tried to put the leadership of the ELF under question mark. For example in 1976, the Eritrean Democratic Movement was secretly formed within the ELF in order to bring organizational changes. The relationship with the EPLF was also declining as a result of which by 1980 the EPLF launched an attack against the ELF. This attack of the EPLF brought an end for the ELF's military activity in the Eritrean soil. At the same time this defeat of the ELF marked the end of the civil war between the Eritrean nationalists (Iyob, 1997: 120-121; 131). Now the EPLF emerged as an influential power in the liberation struggle against Ethiopia.



1.8 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EPLF STRUGGLE

During the 1980s the EPLF came out as a strong national liberation movement. Describing the EPLF of 1987 Tseggai quoted the French author, Gerard Chaliand who wrote:

Over the years, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front has demonstrated an ability to sustain two mobilisational tasks, which are crucial for the development of any effective national liberation movement. It has been able to build a strong organization, which has remained cohesive; and it has shown a capacity to generate cadres. This success in mobilization represents a great achievement... Their workshops are unique in Africa. They handle the repair of trucks, metal work, carpentry and joinery, textiles and radio repairs... The workshops are also mobile (Tseggai, 1988: 82).

Beginning from the late 1970s the Ethiopian army was equipped with massive arms by the Soviet Union and its allies. At the same time, the number of the Ethiopian troops in Eritrea was increasing. In addition, because of the huge supply of arms from outside the balance of military power became in favor of the Ethiopian army. The result of this was that by 1978 the Ethiopian army was successful to control most of the areas, which had been occupied by the Eritrean nationalists. Realizing the potential power of the Soviet-backed Ethiopian army the EPLF had avoided direct confrontation and took a strategic measure, that is, "strategic retreat" or "strategic withdrawal" to its base camps in Nakfa in northern Eritrea. From this position then, the EPLF was able to survive and recover its power (Iyob, 1997: 130).

Having the superior power in armaments and number of soldiers, the Ethiopian army made a number of strong offensives against the EPLF with the objective of eliminating the movement from the Eritrean soil. Nevertheless, it could not achieve that goal-elimination of the EPLF. One of the offensives called the Sixth Offensive or Operation Red Star was the largest Ethiopian offensive involving a large number of soldiers and armaments. To start this offensive in February 1982 the Ethiopian army was preparing itself for about two years under the leadership of the head of the Ethiopian State, Mengistu Hailemariam. Regardless of the strong organization and preparation of the Ethiopian army, this Sixth Offensive did not eliminate the EPLF. The EPLF weakened this long awaited Ethiopian preparation for offensive by making surprise attacks before hand (Firebrace: 54). This was a "blow to the prestige of the [Ethiopian] government and especially of Mengistu, who had taken a prominent personal part in the campaign" (Clapham: 209) but it strengthened the morale of the EPLF fighters. On the other hand, after 1978 the EPLF from its base was strengthening its power as the influx of new volunteers was increasing. There was no outside support for the Eritrean nationalists. Even Ethiopia made a strong campaign to divert the foreign supporters of the Eritrean nationalist. Ethiopia was in fact successful in isolating the nationalists from their former supporters, which included Yemen, Cuba and Libya (Iyob, 1997: 120). For this reason, "the emphasis on a self-reliant economy was put in to practice by innovative use of limited resources and technology to ensure the maintenance and survival of the EPLF"

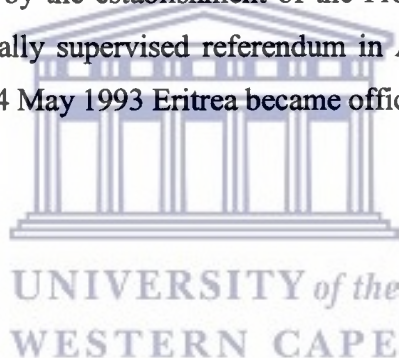
(Iyob, 1997: 130). The failure of this large Ethiopian offensive encouraged the Eritrean nationalists to continue their struggle because now (1982) they started to regain their military power. In fact, the Ethiopian offensives did not stop at this point of failure. It also continued although it was not successful to destroy the liberation struggle. In this case, the main reason behind the very survival of the Eritrean nationalists was that they had a popular support in Eritrea. In fact the EPLF was made up of volunteer Eritreans who were deeply concerned and committed to the EPLF objective of national liberation and social revolution.

The EPLF was able to survive after a series of Ethiopian attacks. This was mainly because of the support that the EPLF obtained from the Eritrean people of which the majority are peasants. To get popular support the EPLF officials did not use coercive approach among the civilian population and particularly the peasantry. For example, unlike many other armed groups, the EPLF did try its best to feed the peasantry, who were suffering from famine during 1984-1985. To support the peasantry, the EPLF had already formed its own relief agency called the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), which was also supported by Eritrean expatriates in the West and the Middle East. In the health sector the EPLF also provided for its people clinic services which is also an indication of the EPLF 's concern for those people under its care. In May 1979 ERA opened its own clinic in exile (that is, in Port Sudan). The clinic was also providing its services for those war victims including children (<http://infotrac.london.galegroup>). The other measure, which brought popular support for EPLF was its land reform policy, which were applied in the liberated areas. As Iyob pointed out,

some lands formerly administered by absentee landlords or evacuated by fleeing Ethiopian military administrators were distributed to land less peasants, while others were retained for use by the EPLF's medical units and feeding centers. Meanwhile the religious prohibitions against women's ownership of land or leadership roles were eliminated (Iyob, 1997: 130).

After the mid-1980s EPLF again started to show its military power by scoring a series of military victories over the Ethiopian army. In its military activity the EPLF was successful to combine both guerrilla and conventional tactics in order to defend itself and

at the same time to counter attack the Ethiopian government. It started to coordinate its activities with the Ethiopian opposition movements such as the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Due to such coordination the Ethiopian military activity was in trouble. Therefore in the late 1980s, the Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA) which already started to use captured tanks and other weapons was successful to score important victories over the Ethiopian army. For instance the case of the Battle of Afabet (1988) in which the EPLF captured Afabet, headquarters of the Ethiopian army in northeastern Eritrea and the victory to capture the port of Massawa on February 10, 1990 can be mentioned as good examples. These victories of the EPLF facilitated the downfall of the Mengistu regime. Then, on 24 May 1991 the EPLF controlled Asmara, the capital, and this ended the Ethiopian rule over Eritrea. This was followed by the establishment of the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE). In an internationally supervised referendum in April 1993 the Eritreans voted for independence and on 24 May 1993 Eritrea became officially independent.



CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATION IN WAR ZONES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

With the growth of the industrial capital, the west European capitalists became powerful over the traditional feudal lords. The capitalists succeeded to control the state power and the expanding trade activities. With the expansion of trade, the western capitalists developed a new interest. They started to look for places (less industrialized regions) from where they could get raw materials for their industries. And these less industrialized regions were found outside Europe, that is, in Africa, Asia and Latin America. To come to these continents the capitalist countries arranged their own means like that of the Berlin Conference. In general the process of colonization was accomplished either by using force or acquisition

At the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) the West European capitalist countries divided Africa among themselves in to areas over which the capitalist countries would have spheres of influence. This conference paved the way for the colonization plan, which included the exploitation of raw materials of the African countries. In fact besides the capitalists other social groups like missionaries were also coming to Africa. The main purpose of those missionaries was to convert the colonized peoples in to Christianity. To achieve this goal, therefore, “the colonized communities, it was planned, needed to be educated for basic literacy to be able to read the scriptures, before conversion in to Christianity could be successful” (Njobe, 1990: 25). In this case the first social group of the colonized communities targeted by the missionaries was the economically poor classes as the rich families were able to employ teachers for their own children. But here one should bear in mind that the missionaries were not interested to teach the poor classes, as they were being equals of their masters. It was rather aimed mainly at the possibility of converting the students in to Christianity. For example Njobe pointed out that “the missionary pioneers of education in the colonies of Southern Africa were never oriented towards educating for ideals such as non-racialism, egalitarianism and for

material equality beyond spiritual equality before God” (Njobe, 1990: 27). The missionaries came from societies in which the division of the society into rich and poor was accepted. Hence, they could not go further beyond the liberation of the souls of the colonized communities and particularly the poor classes. The missionary schools were concerned only in teaching the poor classes how to read the Bible and speak their (missionaries) language so as to establish communication between the converts and the missionaries. In this case it is true to say that most of the missionaries were trying to assist the colonizers in establishing firmly the colonial domination.

On the other hand the colonialists also formed their own system of colonial education to ensure colonial domination. That is, after colonization the colonizing nation implements its own educational system within the colony. The main purpose of such colonial education was to create or develop a colonized personality, which would show disrespect or ignorance for one’s own culture and national identity. By doing so the colonialists hoped that “the colonized personality will instead prefer more complete identification with the colonizer’s culture, value systems and way of life in general even to the extent of showing contempt for most of what is indigenous as being ‘uncivilized’” (Njobe, 1990: 29). Education was considered as an important facilitator of the process of assimilation in which the colonized peoples were being forced to adopt the cultures and traditions of the colonizers. It was in line to this idea, to use Paulo Freire’s phrase, ‘de-Africanization of nationals’, that the contents of colonial education were developed.

Through time colonial education created division within societies as ‘educated’ and ‘uneducated’ social groups. The so-called ‘educated’ social groups were those who passed through colonial education and ‘uneducated’ social groups were those with only traditional education or no education. However, although those regarded as ‘educated’ groups acquired some basic skills, they were not treated as equals of the colonizers. This was mainly because of the low quality of the colonial education. The colonized people were trained not to be creative and self-reliant rather to satisfy the interests of the colonizers in assuring or sustaining colonial domination. After passing through the colonial education the colonized Africans were expected, “to embrace sizeable amounts

of the colonizer's values, practices and outlook often at the expense of the traditional values, practices and outlook" (Njobe, 1990: 37). Such tendency of those colonized peoples, particularly described as 'educated' peoples, on the other hand, created a difference of outlook with the so-called 'uneducated' social groups because the educated groups were trying to identify themselves with the colonizers. But this does not mean that those 'educated' peoples also obtained equal status or opportunities like the educated colonizers. This gap on the other hand intensified the conflict with the colonizers, which in turn forced some of the educated Africans to lead their peoples in the struggle for liberation of their respective countries. While conducting the struggle the liberation movements were also interested on education. It was essential for the nationalists to create new and better life for their respective peoples. That is, to have the struggle on continuous progress, it was necessary to improve the life of the peoples, which was something the colonialists had never done. In this case education was one of the important innovations that the nationalists used to create a better life and at the same time to solidify mass support.

In the following pages I will try to see the efforts and experiences of three African nationalist organizations: SWAPO (Namibia), ANC (South Africa) and PAIGC (Guinea-Bissau) in providing schooling for their respective peoples. The schools were opened either in the areas controlled by the liberation movements or in the neighbouring states for those in exile.

2.2 SWAPO'S EXPERIENCE

After the end of W.W.I South Africa obtained (1919) a mandate to administer Namibia (South West Africa) under the League of Nations. Latter in 1966, this mandate power of South Africa was cancelled by the UN. But the South African colonial government refused to accept the decision to grant the territory independence. Instead the South African government continued to use "Namibia as a place to settle poor whites being displaced from agriculture in South Africa" (Ellis, 1984: 18). As a result of the South African's decision, the peoples of Namibia started to struggle under the leadership of

SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples Organization), which organized the guerrilla warfare to free Namibia from the colonial domination. As the South African oppression increased a large number of Namibians also started to fled to the neighboring African countries mainly Angola and Zambia especially through out the 1960s and early 1970s. In fact relatively speaking most of the refugees were moving to Zambia as Angola was still under the Portuguese rule (Ellis, 1984: 54).

According to Ellis, by the middle of the 1980s about 70,000 Namibians were in exile. The majority of these Namibian refugees who were found in Angola and Zambia were young people. Because of the intolerable educational conditions under Bantu Education, a large number of Namibian students were forced to leave their country. Besides this in the early 1980s the Namibians especially the males between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five were also obliged to serve, militarily, the South African colonial government (compulsory military service). These were some of the causes for the large exodus of young Namibians to the neighboring African states where SWAPO refugee camps were established. (Eriksen, 2000: 112; Harber, 1997: 121). SWAPO as a leading organization took the responsibility to run the settlement camps and to help the refugees, for example, by providing social services (health, education etc.) for the Namibians in exile.

At Nyango (Zambia) and Kwanza Sul (Angola) refugee camps were established for Namibians and these camps were run by SWAPO. Here in the camps SWAPO provided different kinds of social services of which education was one service. In these camps schools were opened for young Namibian exiles. In fact, schools although opened in exile were also attacked by South African forces. For example in May 1978 South African paratroopers attacked the school at Kassinga in southern Angola. In this action a number of Namibian refugees were killed. As a result of such attacks the educational center was moved to the North of Angola at Kwanza Sul (Ellis, 1984: 55). The schools gave emphasis for “literacy and a non-South African version of Namibian history, with English being used as the medium of instruction” (Harber, 1997: 121; Katjavivi, 1988: 109-111).

The structure of the educational system in exile generally started from kindergartens followed by six years of primary education and three years of secondary education. The major subjects offered were language, writing, mathematics, social studies, environmental and health studies, and creative activities. To improve the content and teaching method teachers were organized into groups according to their subjects. The groups were required to meet once a week usually on Saturdays in order to prepare the coming week's lessons. It was hoped that this group work finally would serve as a basis for the publication of text books in collaboration with other educational institutions (Ellis, 1984: 57).

Political education was also another important aspect of the school curriculum. Teachers were trained through scholarships mostly in socialist countries, which included China, USSR and other East European countries (Katjavivi, 1988: 110). In fact there were problems with regard to the lessons of political education in classes due to the absence of a clear cut ideology of the leading organization SWAPO itself. As Harber put it, "SWAPO was very concerned about getting international support from a diverse range of countries for a primarily nationalist struggle for independence and therefore it had to be pragmatic and its rhetoric had to match its audience" (Harber, 1997: 122). Because of such nature of SWAPO, it was very difficult to teach 'a coherent and consistent' political directions in the classes. Moreover, the structural form of SWAPO, authoritarianism, was also another problem as it "developed a political culture that frowned on spontaneity and debate, and increasingly defined criticism as disloyalty" (Harber, 1997: 122).

On the other hand, regardless of the authoritarian culture of SWAPO during the liberation struggle period education was an important activity to initiate the idea of democracy and participation with in the liberation movement. For example with the formation of the Namibian National Student Organization inside Namibia (June 1984) members of the Student Representative Councils of schools were elected democratically. One of the main purposes of such representative Councils was "to coordinate all the student activities at school and represent the students wherever possible" (Harber, 1997: 123).

Another good example where the principle of democracy was initiated was at the People's Primary School in Katatura inside Namibia. At this school emphasis was given to develop the ability of students for critical thinking and self-expression. In this case teachers played a great role to help students in developing self-confidence and creative mind. Outside Namibia the principle of democracy was also applied in relation to 'equal access' to education for all Namibian refugees (Harber, 1997: 124).

Before achieving independence especially by the middle of the 1980s SWAPO was turning to give emphasis on the application of democratic principles or ideas on education. To try out such ideas a new school was opened by SWAPO in Loudima, Congo in late 1986. It was called the Namibia Secondary Technical School. The objective of this trial was to help SWAPO to apply the new ideas for secondary education in an independent Namibia (Harber, 1997: 124). That is, it was built as a pilot project to provide SWAPO with a good experience in the provision of secondary education especially after independence. In fact, the technical School also helped the Namibian students in exile with secondary education. The school also confirmed SWAPO's ability to construct and run schools in the eyes of donor countries. The other significance of the Loudima School was that in the school SWAPO was able to develop new curricula and syllabi for Namibian secondary education (Eriksen, 2000: 112).

With the formation of the Loudima School as a comprehensive institution, SWAPO was able to provide different educational programme for its students. The school programme, which included science, technology, agriculture and polytechnics combining theory and practice, was arranged for five years ranging from Form1-Form 5. The Loudima School was supposed to be a prototype for free Namibia and, therefore, new education policy and a guiding curriculum were designed for the school in 1984. In fact "the syllabi and curricula were continuously developed during the years the Loudima school was operating, based on the experiences acquired and with the aim of making them suitable also for the schools in Namibia after independence" (Eriksen, 2000: 116). In the

preparation of the curriculum a number of experts from other countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe and Norway were also participated.

Scandinavian countries supported the technical school. This could be seen from Norway's role in the construction and running of the Namibian Secondary Technical School (in Congo). It was "an example of a project initiated by a Norwegian NGO to SWAPO, and as an expression of the direct support rendered for SWAPO by the (Norwegian) Foreign Ministry" (Eriksen, 2000: 112). Norway provided about fifty million Norwegian Kroner for construction purposes and at the same time to facilitate the work of the school it also provided ten million Kroner annually. The Loudima technical school was large in terms of school size. It was constructed in an area of about 750 sq km. The site was granted to SWAPO by the Congolese government. Access roads were also constructed around the school (Eriksen, 2000: 112).

There were Scandinavian teachers and advisers in the school. Those foreign teachers had their own contribution in designing the course of study offered in the school. At the same time the curricular approach was influenced by "SWAPO's desire to begin to work in a way that was the antithesis of the South African style of education dominant in the then South West Africa" (Harber, 1997: 124).

With regard to examination principles the Loudima School adopted the British school system. That is, instead of the South Africa matriculation the Namibian students were required to sit for the Cambridge International General Certificate of Senior Education Examination, which was arranged by the examination boards of Zambia, Zimbabwe and the University of Cambridge (Eriksen, 2000: 116). The South African matriculation examination was no more applicable for the new Technical School. In stead the International General Certificate of Secondary Education was selected to evaluate the performance of the pupils. The main focus of the new curriculum was to encourage students to think critically and participate in group work and discussion. The curriculum also initiates the learners to challenge their teachers, which was then considered by others as wrong character or lacking in respect for elders. By then showing respect to elders and

not disagreeing publicly with someone senior in age (Harber, 1997: 124-125) was seen as good African values.

The Loudima Technical School was not the only one to use new methods of teaching during the SWAPO struggle period. During the 1980s other schools like the Kwanza Sul Education Centre in Angola also followed the Loudima experience by introducing new teaching methods, which made the system learners-centred. In this case contributions were made by those Namibian teachers who returned back from abroad and Swedish teacher educators who run the Integrated Teachers Training Program (Harber, 1997: 125),

When the technical school was opened in December 1986 it had a Namibian principal with teachers from different countries which included Namibia, Denmark, Norway and later were recruited from Finland, Great Britain and Australia. Congolese were also participating in the school activities (Eriksen, 2000: 119).

The teaching staff was organized in departments, which included Science, Language, Social Sciences and Pre-Vocational training. As mentioned before the staff consisted of professionals from different countries and organizations. Each group of teachers had also its own field or subject to teach in the school. But at the same time all teachers were also required to help in other fields with shortages of professionals. As Eriksen pointed out:

Pre-vocational training was mainly taken care of by Finnish teachers, while the agricultural department was administered by WUS, Denmark and the Danish teachers recruited by the Namibia Association mainly concentrated on physical sciences, maths and language, while the Namibian teachers were responsible for social sciences and co-responsible for a number of other subjects (Eriksen, 2000: 119-120).

The first group of students who arrived at Loudima came from SWAPO's educational centres in Zambia and Angola. These students, before coming to Loudima were given an intensive course in English as a preparation to join the new Loudima technical school. In such a way due to the different background of the students, 'bridging-courses' were developed to prepare the new students for Form 1 (Eriksen, 2000: 119). It was expected that five years stay in the school would prepare the students for further learning at higher

level or for work. The five years stay in the school was divided in to two parts. During the first three years students learned junior secondary education which involved or focused on theoretical and pre-vocational training. After the three years course at junior secondary level the students had to sit for examinations to continue their education. The last two years were allotted for senior secondary education, which would also familiarize students with vocational skills (Eriksen, 2000: 119-120).

The school was administered by a board of representatives from SWAPO, the UN, the Norwegian foreign Ministry, the Namibia Association and the UN institute for Namibia and WUS Denmark. The school administration was also concerned about the students' life. For instance, to avoid students' social problems like homesickness, measures were taken by the school administration. To help the pupils in their daily activities a committee was formed involving adults with a housemaster as leader of the committee. Students were also encouraged to participate and refresh their minds in leisure time activities like sports and video shows organized by the school (Eriksen, 2000: 120).

Finally, when Namibia achieved its independence in 1990, the board decided the fate of the Loudima Technical School. By the end of 1990 the board passed a decision to close the school after a year and to transfer the students with the equipment to Namibia. Based on this decision at the end of 1991 the Loudima Technical School was handed over to the Congolese government (Eriksen, 2000: 121)

2.3 THE ANC EXPERIENCE IN EXILE

The ANC was working in exile from 1960-1992. During this period a large number of ANC members in exile were granted political asylum in different countries like Nigeria, USSR, East Germany, Britain, Cuba, Tanzania and Egypt. In the 1960s these exiled South Africans were allowed to attend the state schools of the host countries. Therefore, in this period (1960s) the ANC did not take the initiative to form its own schools in exile. When the liberation struggle was intensified within South Africa, a large number of

South Africans began to leave their homeland and started to live in exile (Govender, 1997: 12).

After the Soweto uprising of 1976 the number of young South African refugees in exile was increasing. From these refugees the ANC was interested to create skilled manpower for liberated South Africa. This spurred the ANC to develop educational projects in exile. That is the high influx of young South Africans in to the neighbouring African states inspired the ANC Education Department (which was formed in October 1978) to formulate strategies in order to provide schooling and accommodation for the youth in exile (Govender, 1997: 13&82). To achieve this objective the ANC started to provide schooling for the South African refugees under its care. At different refugee camps the ANC then opened schools at different levels ranging from a kindergarten to a college.

One of these schools was opened in Tanzania (Mazimbu). The Mazimbu site about 100 hectares of land was granted to the ANC by the Tanzanian Government as an act of solidarity. Mazimbu is located two hundred kilometers southwest of Dar-es Salam and ten kilometres from Morogoro (Govender, 1997: 14). The school at Mazimbu was named after one of the ANC's combatant Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, and hanged by the apartheid government on 6 April 1979. It was called the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO). Tanzania was taken relatively as a safe place for the ANC from the increasing incursions of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in to the neighbouring or bordering states. The school was formally opened in August 1985. At first, SOMAFCO was intended to be a secondary school. But latter it included the adult, primary and nursery sections in addition to the Charlotte Maxeke Children's centre, the Eli Weinberg Photographic Laboratory and the arts workshop (Govender, 1997: 14-15).

The college was supposed to serve the ANC as "a window to future South Africa...to create a new person, a new type of South African, who will be dedicated to democratic values, who-will be non-racist in his or her perception of society and also be committed to social justice" (Harber, 1997: 143). Therefore, the school system was designed in a

way to create a skilled and politically conscious South Africans. It was also stated in the ANC Education Policy that SOMAFCO would be "a political school or a school with a clear political orientation to redress the legacy of Bantu Education" (Govender, 1997: 19).

At SOMAFCO the role and advantage of the students in the educational activity was different from the situation prevalent under Bantu education. To describe this difference Harber quoted a student from SOMAFCO:

I never imagined that there could be progress without corporal punishment or that persuasion could be used as a corrective measure. Under Bantu education everything comes from above but here the situation is different because we are given the chance to think for ourselves...Being able to work through a student council one could choose many avenues of expression or activities. I am now head of the news committee which daily monitors, writes up and delivers news to the students and the community. Bantu education teachers came to the classroom merely to do their duty. Whether the student grasps the subject matter or not is of no concern to them. At SOMAFCO the teachers are concerned about the individual progress of the students (Harber, 1997:44).

From the quotation one can see the nature of the school organization especially in terms of power relations which was 'less authoritarian and more democratic' as compared to the schools under Bantu education. At SOMAFCO there was a great attempt to eliminate or narrow the gap between teachers and students, a tradition that was inherited from the apartheid education system. Students were given the right to organize themselves democratically and at the same time to administer their own affairs through Students Council (Harber, 1997: 144-145).

While designing the ANC Education policy, different views were observed in relation to the aims of ANC Education. For example, at the First National Education Council meeting (1979) there were groups who wanted to focus on academic education and some other groups wanted to focus on political education. The notion of polytechnic education also became the focus of attention for other groups. In this case "the period 1979-1984 was characterized by sharp differences within the ANC Education Department over the

interpretations and direction of ANC Education for the Secondary School section of SOMAFSCO" (Govender, 1997: 103).

The supporters of academic education were in favour of providing basic knowledge free of political content. They also believed that the ANC education should help the students to continue their studies at the higher level. They argued that the ANC education should create a skilled manpower that would be able to take the responsibilities to manage the huge socio-economic development in the post-liberation period (Govender, 1997: 85)

Those groups who wanted to focus on political education argued that all courses should be designed with in the context of the ANC political and ideological outlook. They wanted to direct the ANC education for the armed struggle. But this was difficult for application because of the political and ideological differences that existed within the ANC it self. The differences were reflected on proposing the aims of ANC Education (Govender, 1997: 95-96).

The proponents of polytechnic education wanted the ANC Education to be linked with productive work. For this group of supporters polytechnic education was:

The cornerstone and starting point of a broader view of mass education linking theory and practice, school and community and learners in the real life activities of communities-economic, cultural and political (Govender, 1997: 98).

Therefore, the recommendation of this group for SOMAFSCO's education program was to introduce productive activities which included agricultural and industrial production, that is, activities like carpentry, metal-work, vehicle engineering, animal production, food processing, textiles, soap-making etc. (Govender, 1997: 99).

The other sections also faced problems in the formulation and implementation of their own curriculum. Broadly speaking the ANC Education department was not ready to prepare curriculum for these three sections of SOMAFSCO. Therefore, " a curriculum

designed to prepare secondary school students for entry to tertiary institutions was uncritically applied to adult education" (Govender, 1997: 104). With regard to the primary school, which started in 1980 the staff was given the task of designing the overall objectives. But in reality the staff at the primary school was not trained in curriculum development. Even then it was difficult to find qualified teachers at the primary school.

When the nursery school started in 1980, there was no curriculum to start with. Like the primary school the staff was given the task to design the program for the nursery school. Different subjects like numeracy, health, art, craft and culture were included in the syllabus. The facilities like playground, readers etc. prepared for the nursery school were also inadequate (Govender, 1997: 110).

The other problem that SOMAFCO faced during its existence in exile was the shortage of qualified teachers to run its programs. Therefore, to fill the gap unqualified personnel were recruited at SOMAFCO. This practice on the other hand increases the workload of the qualified teachers, as they had to supervise the unqualified staff members in relation to methodology and content (Govender, 1997: 113).

Besides SOMAFCO the ANC also opened other schools in the refugee camps especially for those South African students at the lower level, which included kindergarten and primary schools. In Dakawa, 60km away from Mazimbu, the Tanzanian government in 1982 also allocated a settlement area for the increasing number of the ANC refugees. At Dakawa the ANC also established schools for the South African refugees. One of these schools was the Ruth First Education Orientation Center. One of the tasks of this center was to accommodate and cater for those young people who came from home in the middle of the school year and who could not be enrolled in classes at SOMAFCO. The students would stay at this orientation center until they could be received by SOMAFCO. The center would help the Education Department to assess and upgrade the academic levels of incoming students. Here the students were also introduced with the politics and liberation program of the ANC (Govender, 1997: 20).

2.4 PAIGC's EXPERIENCE

For about ninety years Portugal colonized the people of Guinea-Bissau. In 1974 the Guineans under the leadership of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), which was founded, by Amilcar Cabral and his associates freed the country from the Portuguese colonialism. The people fought a guerrilla war against the Portuguese from 1963 until 1974 at which Portugal recognized Guinea-Bissau as an independent state. The achievement of the PAIGC guerrilla movement to force out a colonial power was the first in the history of Sub-Saharan Africa. But defeating of the colonialists was not the only objective of PAIGC during the struggle period. As Urdang put it, "the overall perspective of the PAIGC embraced the need simultaneously to pick up arms and to build a new, non exploitative society" (Urdang, 1979: 15).

In this case one of the important activities, which would help to build a new and developed society was education. Therefore, during the struggle period PAIGC was trying its best to provide schooling for the peoples in the liberated areas regardless of the dangers and difficulties that were prevalent in the life of the liberated zones. That is, every day life in the liberated zones of Guinea-Bissau was full of dangers similar to the realities that exist in war zones (e.g loss of lives). Describing her experience about the way of life in the liberated zones of Guinea-Bissau Urdang wrote:

The reminders that life was being lived in a war zone were omnipresent. An ear was always turned for the faintest sound of the bombers which at any time of the day or night, might be circling above one or another area, dispensing their bombs... I was already accepting as routine the trips to the trenches whenever the bombers could be heard overhead (Urdang, 1979: 49-50).

It was under such circumstances that the PAIGC succeeded to provide education for its people in the liberated zones. Education was taken as a fundamental necessity for building new society.

At the beginning it was very difficult for PAIGC to establish and run schools in the liberated areas. The educational facilities (materials and professionals) were very limited.

Therefore, PAIGC had to start from scratch. Moreover, under colonial domination most of the Guineans were deprived of basic education and their traditional way of life was also distorted by the colonialists. To start the process of education, PAIGC formulated its goals by focusing, on “the need to relearn and revalue Guinean history and culture, to inculcate in the people an integrated national culture transcending the tenuous boundaries between the different ethnic groups” (Urdang, 1979: 170).

Schools were then opened in the liberated zones under the supervision of PAIGC. There were three types of schools in the liberated areas during the struggle period. One was established at the village level and the others at the region level, which were, called semi-internatos and internatos (like boarding schools) (Urdang, 1979: 172). In most cases the village schools were conducted in the open field around a tree. In some areas the village community also constructed schools. For example, in the northern part of the liberated zone where the central base camp of PAIGC was located the village people constructed different schools. Basil Davidson who visited the liberated zones of Guinea-Bissau in 1972 mentioned that PAIGC had initiated the formation of about 156 primary schools inside the liberated areas. Almost in all of these liberated areas there had been no such schools and therefore the people were illiterate. For this reason PAIGC was also conducting adult literacy campaigns in the liberated zones (Davidson, 1981: 129).

The semi-internatos, which were bigger than the village schools were, opened one at each region. Students were required to stay in such schools during the weekdays. By the end of the week they were allowed to go home in order to help their parents. In this case such boarding schools were provided with food (esp. rice) by the parents.

The other types of schools were called internatos. They were located at four places. One each in the northern and southern fronts and the other two internatos in the eastern front. The students conducted most of the activities in the internatos. The teachers were responsible for the content of lessons. In the internatos “PAIGC’s emphasis on the need for cooperation and collectivity in work as well as in day to day relationships, was incorporated in to its organization” (Urdang, 1979: 172).

In all types of schools the educational materials like books, pencils, blackboards, etc were provided by PAIGC. The Party obtained these educational materials (that is, pencils, books, writing tablets etc.) from outside support and moved them to the village schools or internatos on the heads or backs of the fighters who had to walk long distances in to the interior, liberated areas (Urdang, 1979: 171).

In each of the village schools usually opened at central places about sixty children who also came from nearby villages were enrolled. The age range was between seven to fourteen. Every day the students had to stay in school at least for five hours, as a result of which the pupils were required to bring their lunches from home. In fact the school term was arranged to be suitable for both parents and children. During the agricultural season students were free from schooling. Hence, they could help their parents who were peasants (Urdang, 1979: 172 & 176).

The number of pupils attending classes at the first year level was much higher than the succeeding years. One can see this from the following breakdown of attendance for October 1972 by Basil Davidson:

Year	Pupils
First	6,988
Second	849
Third	506
Fourth	172
Fifth	31 Secondary
Nursery	28 In Guinea

Of this total of 8574 pupils, 2155 were girls (Davidson, 1981: 129).

As to gender issues, particularly to establish equality between men and women, PAIGC schools in the liberated areas played important role. PAIGC's objective in relation to the rights of women was that by eliminating all forms of the oppression of women, it wanted to form a new society based on 'true equality'. To achieve this goal the teachers used to encourage all the students in the schools for equal participation in all the school activities

like in agriculture, gymnastics, fetching water, cooking etc. In all such school activities both girls and boys work on equal basis (Urdang, 1979: 179-180).

The main focus of these village schools was to teach the children how to read, write and do some figures. The teachers were soldiers who themselves were also trained by PAIGC experts (Davidson, 1981: 129). To keep up the efficiency of the teachers PAIGC used to organize teacher-training workshops. For example in its second teacher-training workshop (1966):

Two hundred teacher-members of the armed forces of the liberated regions attended lectures designed to remedy inadequacies in their schooling and there by raise the level of public instruction. Lectures on teaching methods, Portuguese, mathematics, geography, history, public-health and preventive medicine were given by Party specialists (Chalind, 1969: 62).

In the schools the teaching-learning process was conducted in two languages. For the first year classes the medium of instruction was Creole-the local spoken language where as after finishing the first year the transition was made to Portuguese. The curriculum included subjects like history, geography, mathematics and language. At the same time political education and agricultural production were also taken in to consideration in the academic routine. The subjects were designed and developed from the perspective of the children's lives and culture. At the beginning the books and the lessons were produced by the school teachers themselves based on their own previous experiences. PAIGC did not want to continue to use books prepared by others. The school curriculum also gave emphasis to the idea 'learning through doing'. Teaching only the theoretical part in classes was considered by PAIGC as "inadequate to equip the student for life in the new society. For example, students grew their own food and cultivated land adjacent to the schools...which demonstrated the importance of agricultural production to their society" (Urdang, 1979: 178-179).

Lessons were also given in the open field usually under a shade of trees. The students numbering about sixty in most of the schools used log benches for sitting. Due to the

difference in age and level the children were divided in to smaller groups to conduct the teaching. Therefore, the actual teaching was performed with each group differently but at the same time. After visiting one of the classes in the north, Chaliand observed the following:

Teaching was being done in small groups. One group crowded around its teacher at the blackboard and took turns at exercises in long division with numbers of up to four digits. Ten or so small boys followed a reading lesson given them by an older child. Then each in turn read off a brief passage of the text from his copy of the primer. The girls were taking dictation under the direction of a teenage boy. The most advanced pupils were writing a composition, while the second teacher was giving a geography lesson to the littlest ones. The groups were all quiet and industrious (Chaliand, 1969: 63-64).

On the other hand while conducting classes, both the teachers and students also faced challenging problems as much as risking their lives. Listening to mortar fires usually from far away was a common thing. But the real challenging problem was coming from the Portuguese bomber airplanes. The Portuguese were attacking the liberation fighters by sending its planes with orders to bomb every area suspected of accommodating the guerrilla fighters. Under such blind attacks the children were also becoming targets of the planes. Knowing such unexpected attacks, the children were also trained and taught what to do in times of plane attacks like running to the trenches, dispersing and lying down on the ground, covering anything which is glaring, etc. But this does not mean that the training helped the children to avoid fear while under attack. Voices of children's cry were common in times of the plane attacks. They always screamed in terror, as it was a matter of life and death (Chaliand, 1969: 65). It was under such serious problems that the PAIGC managed to provide schooling in the liberated areas. PAIGC also took its own measure to minimize the damages, which could be brought about by the Portuguese air attacks. For example schools were transferred to other locations every six months and around the class rooms there were also deep trenches (Urdang, 1979: 171).

To sum up, the above-mentioned liberation movements had similarities in terms of their educational objectives. One of the common objectives of these national liberation movements in relation to their educational activities was that all were working to form and build a new form of society with skilled administration, which would be completely

new in terms of personnel and structure compared to the colonial system. For this new system of administration in the post-liberation period, the liberation movements were preparing themselves in advance while conducting the armed struggle. That is, education was taken as an important bridge to build the new independent state. In most cases the contents and methods used in the teaching-learning process were applicable to the local circumstances and realities. The liberation movements were also interested in fostering the feelings of national identity as opposed to the objectives of colonial education.



CHAPTER THREE: EDUCATION IN ERITREAN WAR ZONES BETWEEN 1976-91

3.1 HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN ERITREA

The educational activity in pre-colonial Eritrea could be categorized generally as traditional education in which people like parents, elders, the community etc. used to teach the children informally and religious education in which students were expected to memorize and recite the words in the scripture.

Eritrea as mentioned in the previous chapter, was colonized by different alien powers for a long period of time. In fact the education system was also changing from one colonial period to another. Each colonizer designed its own education system in order to satisfy its own interest. But this does not mean that all the colonialists were interested to provide education opportunities to all Eritreans in “a systematic and progressive manner” In fact this colonial education system was not unique only to Eritrea. It was a common policy shared by all colonialists because “this policy of not extending education opportunities on a large scale was in accordance with a general policy of preserving the peace and thus avoiding projects which could stimulate radical or revolutionary changes with in their territories.” (Vos & Brits, 1990: 191).

During the Italian colonial period formal education was introduced in Eritrea. The objective of this Italian education system was to produce simple Eritrean professionals (like interpreters, clerks etc) who would provide help in the Italian colonial administration. Under the Italian education system Eritreans were not allowed to go beyond grade four level (*meglesti serate temiherti*: p3; Harber, 1997: 97). And the lessons which were provided by the Italians concentrated on “the supremacy and glory of Italian culture and history” (Firebrace , 1985: 117).

With the coming of the British the education system was relatively improved compared to the Italian period. The British tried to establish more schools and at the same time increased the level for Eritrean students to grade eight. Trevaskis stated (in Firebrace 1985:117) that by 1952 there were 100 primary schools, 14 middle schools and two secondary schools in Eritrea. However, concerning their objectives, the British were not different from the Italian colonisers. The British were also interested to create semi-skilled manpower that would speak English. The British also used schools as a means to apply their “Divide and Rule” policy in Eritrea. For instance, separate schools were formed for Muslims and Christians (Harber:98; *meglesti serate timiherti* p.3; Firebrace, 1985:118).

Then during the Federation period (1952-1961) the education system was supposed to be governed by the Eritrean autonomous government, independent of Addis Ababa. Arabic and Tigrigna were used as medium of instructions up to grade four and after that grade level English was used as medium of instruction. The Tigrigna text books were prepared by the Department of Education within Eritrea, where as the Arabic text books were imported from Egypt (Africa Watch, 1993: 2). In this period although the number of schools even in some rural areas increased, there was a strong pressure from the Ethiopian government, which wanted to bring the Eritrean education system under its control. To this end the Ethiopian government finally controlled the Eritrean education system. Then in 1957 Amharic, the Ethiopian language became the medium of instruction instead of the Eritrean languages, Tigrigna and Arabic. All the Tigrigna and Arabic books were burnt. By this time the Federation period was also ending (Education in the Liberated Areas: p.3; *meglesti serate timiherti*: p4).

Under the Ethiopian colonial period the Eritrean education system was replaced by the Ethiopian curriculum. The objective of this colonial education was to destroy the Eritrean identity and at the same time to inculcate and expand the Ethiopian sentiment and culture among the Eritrean children (Africa Watch, 1993: 2). On the other hand such move by the Ethiopian government resulted in the intensification of the Eritrean political movement against the Ethiopian government. The response of the Ethiopian

government to such Eritrean political movements was very harsh. Many students and teachers were imprisoned, tortured or killed (Harber, 1997: 100). For example in the first strike of students about 300 were imprisoned for a month by the Ethiopian government at a place called Adi-Quala (Africa Watch, 1993: 3). This harsh measure in its turn also affected the educational activity in Eritrea. A large number of school children were forced to become refugees in the Sudan. At the same time the Eritrean political movements continued to wage armed struggle against the Ethiopian colonial government (Education in the Liberated Areas of Eritrea: p4).

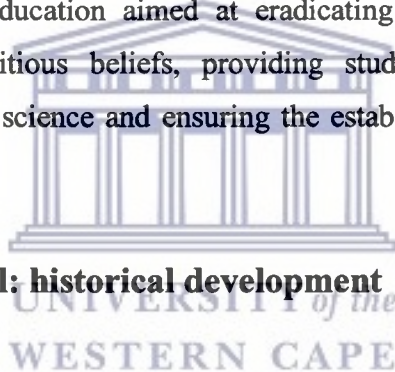
3.2 EPLF'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME (1977)

As a result of the colonial education system the majority of the Eritreans remained to be illiterate. Based on this reality, the EPLF adapted (formulated) its own educational programme at its first congress held at the beginning of 1977. In fact EPLF's concern for education had already began in the early 1970's during which it conducted literacy campaigns at a small scale concentrating among its fighters (Education in the liberated areas p.5). The education program of EPLF that was formulated at the congress had the following eleven points,

- Combat illiteracy to free the Eritrean people from the darkness of ignorance
- Provide for universal compulsory education up to the middle school
- Establish institutions of higher education in the various fields of science, arts, technology, agriculture etc.
- Grant students scholarships to pursue studies in the various fields of learning
- Establish schools in the various regions of Eritrea in accordance with the need
- Separate education from religion
- Make the state run all the schools and provide free education at all levels

- Integrate education with production and put it in the service of the masses
- Enable nationals, especially the students and youth, to train and develop themselves in the sciences, literature, handicrafts and technology through the formation of their own organizations.
- Provide favourable work conditions for experts and the skilled to enable them to utilize their skills and knowledge in the service of the masses.
- Engage in educational, cultural and technological exchange with other countries on the, basis of mutual benefit and equality (Education Under the EPLF, 1982: 8).

In general this program on education aimed at eradicating illiteracy, freeing the Eritrean people from superstitious beliefs, providing students with training in technology and other fields of science and ensuring the establishment of prosperous state in Eritrea.



3.3 The Revolution School: historical development

Although EPLF's concern for education began from the very beginning of its inception, the reality on the ground, the civil war, did not allow the EPLF to implement its educational aim extensively. The question of survival, until the mid 1970's, was a big issue for the EPLF as it was fighting against the ELF (local enemy) and the Ethiopian troops. Under such circumstances however the EPLF tried to use the temporary and periodic respites obtained during the civil war for conducting educational activities, which focused on literacy campaigns among the fighters. At this time a Tigrigna primer was prepared to facilitate the success of the campaign (Education under the EPLF: p10).

By mid 1970's, after the end of the civil war, the EPLF gave more attention to education. To begin with, a group, which consisted of former teachers and university graduates and students, was formed with a responsibility to prepare curriculum for

elementary school. But this task was very difficult for the members due to the following reasons. One of the reasons was that the members of the group did not have any experience in the preparation of a curriculum and did not know exactly what they should include in the elementary curriculum. Besides this the absence of reference materials also made the task more complicated. There was also a strong desire to prepare the curriculum in the two Eritrean languages, Tigrina and Tigre coinciding with the demands of the revolution. To achieve this an outline of the EPLF educational program was needed (Education Under the EPLF: p11).

Regardless of these problems the curriculum group started the actual preparation. Texts were then prepared for some subjects like general sciences and arithmetic whose principles are generally accepted. But again there emerged a more serious problem. There was no school to test the practicality of the draft texts. It was also difficult for the curriculum group to prepare the texts for the social science subjects, which required knowledge about the psychological, social and cultural background of the Eritrean children (Education Under EPLF 1982: p.12).

Due to all these problems it was finally decided first to open a school, which would serve as a springboard and testing ground for the applicability of the curriculum, which was going to be drafted. Now some of the members of the curriculum group were assigned to facilitate the project to open a school. The rest of the curriculum group returned back to the various departments of the EPLF (Education in the Liberated Areas 1978:16; Education Under EPLF 1982:12). The members of the curriculum committee had already realized that by facing the real problems on the ground, they thought that they could come out with a draft of tangible curriculum. Hence, the project to open a school was started early in 1976.

In September 1976 the school was opened at a place called Zero (a code name used by radio operators for the area) in Sahel. It was called the Revolution School or Zero School. It was established as a boarding school with the aim of providing regular education for the growing number of orphans and displaced children as well as serving

as a pilot project to test and develop a curriculum (Developing a National Education System: p.11).

The first group who arrived at Zero consisted of about 90 children who were mostly orphans or children of the martyred, children of nomads and refugees. The age range of these children was between six and fourteen. Except a few of them who had started elementary school most of the children had no educational background. This first group was soon joined by an increasing number of children from all part of Eritrea. By the end of 1976 there were more than 300 children in the school. At first about fifteen teachers were also assigned to teach the children. To run the school properly different groups of peoples which included teachers, care takers, nurses, and guards were also sent to the school. Each of the groups had its own task and responsibility. Teachers were expected to prepare themselves for teaching and guiding the students. The caretakers were responsible to prepare food, wash clothes of the children and keep their hygiene. The Nurses were responsible to control and follow-up the health conditions of the children. The major task of the guards was to keep the security of the school. For administrative purposes the students were divided in to age groups: the youngest between 7-10; the middle ones were between 11-12 and the older ones were between 12-15 (*Fitawrari: 2001:6-7; Education in the Liberated Areas: p16; Harber: 107*).

The revolution school was opened with third grade as its highest level. But it was continuing to increase the grade level by one step year by year. In this way by 1982 the school was successful to open a class for grade eight students. The following table shows the development of the Revolution School in terms of grade levels and number of students between 1976-1987.

Table 1 Students enrollment at the Revolution School: 1976-87

YEAR	GRADES								TOTAL
	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH	6 TH	7 TH	8 TH	
1976/77	147	93	66	-	-	-	-	-	306
1977/78	351	186	183	96	-	-	-	-	816
1978/79	341	534	249	165	105	-	-	-	1394
1979/80	399	310	336	267	192	105	-	-	1609
1980/81	300	218	298	392	554	176	82	72	2020
1981/82	355	327	321	203	187	198	95	-	1758
1982/83	839	494	294	231	123	-	-	-	1981
1983/84	392	589	491	304	190	28	-	-	1994
1984/85	401	471	391	302	194	108	17	-	1884
1985/86	778	456	431	363	217	-	-	-	2245
1986/87	1204	456	550	448	304	198	-	-	3160

Source: *Gemgam nay 10 amet temokro(1976-87):p.3;Fitawrari 2001:104*

N.B. The academic year in Eritrean schools starts in September and ends at June after which there is a long vacation until the next September.

First of all the education system was divided in to elementary school from grade one to grade five, middle school from grade six to seven and secondary school from eighth to tenth grade. The above table indicates that when the Revolution School was opened in 1976 the highest level was grade three. And it reached its peak at secondary level in 1982 in which 72 students attended grade eight. After 1982 although the number of students was increasing from year to year the secondary school was declining. One can also see that the middle school also functioned from 1979/80-1981/82 and after an interruption for one academic year continued again from 1983/84-1984/85 and then starting from 1986/87 to independence. But by 1989 the middle school was separated from the elementary school and continued to work independently. It was transferred to another place in Sahel called Embalko. On the eve of independence this middle school opened a secondary school for grade eight students (*Fitawrari*: p.12). In general the table shows the emphasis given to educational activities especially in the late 1980s.

The main reason for the interruptions of the middle and high school students after 1982 was that those students in these grade levels were required to participate in the literacy campaign which was carried on for a year beginning from early 1983. About 450 students from the Revolution School were sent to various stations of the literacy campaign in the liberated areas (Gotesman, 1998: 175). This campaign had in fact the following purposes. On the one hand it was considered as a pilot project to conduct in the future a broad literacy campaign involving larger number of peoples. On the other hand the student teachers were not expected only to teach but also they had to learn from the society about the culture, language and other aspects of social life (*Fitawrar*, 2001: 12; *nay 10 amet gemgam*: p14).

With in the Revolution school the students had developed a unique culture and consciousness, which was different from the other members of the Eritrean society. Explaining this situation Gotesman quoted a former student of the Revolution School, who said, “we were in that secret place under the valleys, the mountains. We had been separated, isolated there. We were eager to know how the people looked like and what do they say” (Gotesman, 1998: 200). Such kind of sub-culture was not in fact limited

only to the students of the Revolution School. In the base area the Front itself had already developed its own sub-culture unlike the traditional culture, which was dominant among the majority of the Eritreans.

The other reason for the interruptions of the middle and secondary school classes (1985/86) was that most of the students who had completed the middle school were assigned to continue their education in the newly formed (1985) arts school which provided lessons of music and drawing. (*statstikawi habereta 1989: p1*) the rest were then assigned to work in the different departments of the front. That is, to fulfil the demand for a work force in the various departments of the Front, some of the students who had completed the middle school were diverted in to vocational skills, which included mechanics, health, agriculture and communications. In such departments the students were also able to receive important skills and trainings while giving full service in the work (Developing a National Education System: p.13).

In addition to the above mentioned reasons students especially who completed primary school were escaping from the school to join the liberation army (*nay 10 amet gemgam: p.15*). But this action was wrong from the perspective of the EPLF education program, which regarded education as part of the liberation struggle. In this case there was a misunderstanding among the students about the struggled in the form of acquiring knowledge. Such students wanted to participate in the struggle by using firearms. In fact almost all of the students were too eager to join the army especially in times of offensives from the enemy. The feeling of dedication for the Revolution and their country was very strong among the students. But finally a continuous effort was put to make the students understand about the importance of education to build and develop a new Eritrean society. The students were taught to see education as an important tool to struggle against colonial oppression and poverty and as a corner stone in the liberation struggle. In this case the Front was finally successful to convince the students not to escape from school (*nay 10 amet gemgam: p16*)

Thirteen years after its foundation the Revolution School was able to accommodate more than 3700 students. There were also about 160 teachers and 450 caretakers in the school. The students came from all ethnic groups in Eritrea. By this time girls constituted about 40 percent of the total number of students (*statistikawi habereta: p.1; Fitawrari p.8*).

3.4 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT THE REVOLUTION SCHOOL

The long period of colonialism made the majority of the Eritrean peoples victims of ignorance and oppression. That is, the colonialists had deprived these Eritreans of the right to education, as their objective was to prolong the domination of the Eritrean peoples. The education system that was introduced and applied by each of the colonizers was directed towards fulfilling the objectives of the colonialists, consolidation of colonial rule and domination. Because of this, the EPLF then decided to eliminate and replace the colonial education system with a new one, which would serve the masses.

By 1977 the EPLF designed its own education program with specific objectives. So to change the objectives in to reality, it was necessary for the EPLF Education Department to prepare a school curriculum. But before that the Eritrean educators had pointed out the following weaknesses of the old colonial curriculum:

- It did not reflect the real conditions under which the Eritrean masses were living and was designed without taking in to consideration the interests of the peoples.
- Its focus and target was on creating a few Eritrean semi-skilled workers who would provide help only for the colonialists.
- It included unnecessary materials (like religious and repetition of topics etc) at different grade levels so that students needed long time (12 years) to finish schooling before the university level.

- It did not allow students to be critical and inquisitive, instead encouraged them to focus on memorization.
- It did not give emphasis for the revolutionary principle of the EPLF-Self Reliance.
- It encouraged the relationships between teacher and students to be like masters and servants.
- It did not encourage girls to attend schools
- It did not initiate students to participate in practical activities rather focuses only on theoretical studies (*meglesti serate temhirti: p7*; Education under EPLF 1982: p14).

In general in designing a curriculum it is first important to know and analyze the internal and external factors, which can influence school curriculum. That is, “the need of the society for which the curriculum is and background of the learner should be analyzed before a curriculum is designed and developed” (Asmara TTI,1994: p12). Doing so will help educators to formulate clearly the objectives of curriculum.

At first in 1975 a committee under the Education Department was formed with a task of preparing a school curriculum. But it failed to fulfil its task. Instead it decided first to open a school and then start to formulate a school curriculum from the scratch. Thus the school was opened in September 1976 in Sahel, base area.

The teachers in this school were left to educate the children from their own experience by using their own imagination and creativity. It was very difficult to get reference materials. Except for the draft texts on general science and arithmetic and the Tigrigna primer written for the literacy campaign in the early 1970s, the teachers had no other references. But the teachers, as Birahne Demoz (former teacher and curriculum designer) confirmed it, were trying their best to overcome these problems. They tried to solve problems through discussions and by sharing experiences.

By the end of the first academic year (1976/77) the teachers came out with a general framework within which a curriculum could be drafted. During this academic year the teachers gathered materials and some experience, which enabled them to have a general idea for preparing a primary school curriculum. Therefore, for the second time a curriculum committee was formed. And it succeeded to prepare an elementary school curriculum in the two Eritrean languages of Tigrigna and Tigre (Education Under EPLF: p.12).

First of all, the new curriculum introduced basic changes in the structure of the school system. The elementary education was to be completed in five years instead of the six years program of the colonial system. The middle school was arranged too be completed in two years, that is, in grade six and seven (Education under EPLF: p12).

The subjects prepared to be taught at both the elementary and Middle School levels were the following:

1. Political Education and the history of Eritrea and World Civilization
2. General Science and Agriculture
3. Arithmetic
4. Geography of Eritrea, Africa and the World
5. Languages (Tigrigna, Tigre, Arabic and English)
6. a) Handicrafts in elementary schools, including Basket weaving, Pottery, Knitting and Needlework etc.
b) Introduction to technical education at middle school level, including metal and woodwork, introduction to electricity and mechanical drawing.
7. Arts (drawing, sketches and water coloring)
8. Music and Culture (consisting of mainly of revolutionary songs and dances of different nationalities).
9. Sports (Education Under EPLF: p13)

In the new curriculum two Eritrean languages, Tigrigna and Tigre became the medium of instruction for primary schools. In a school, which was, located in an area

predominantly settled by Tigre people, the medium of instruction would be Tigre. The same rule was applied to the areas dominated by Tigrigna speakers. According to my informants Tesfaye and Birhane, the use of Tigre as a medium of instruction was of course the first time in Eritrean history.

Besides this the question of languages was an important issue for the Education Department. In Eritrea there exists different languages and cultures with different levels in their usage. By then the EPLF's policy on language was that "the languages in Eritrea should be freely utilized without the domination of any language by another" (Building a National System of Education: p.12). At first to apply this language policy on education was very difficult because some of the Eritrean languages did not have their own script. But in the late 1980's the Education Department succeeded to prepare elementary school texts in the Saho and Kunama languages by using the Latin script. (Building National System: p12).

Beyond the elementary level English was used as a medium of instruction. The Education Department believed that English would help the Eritrean students to follow and update themselves with the international developments in science and technology. Arabic was also taught at all levels as a subject with a conviction that it would help to communicate with the peoples of the neighbouring regions (Building a National System: p.13).

The primary school curriculum of 1977 was prepared on the basis of the materials and experiences obtained in the Revolution school. When the other schools in the liberated areas started to use or apply the new curriculum in 1977/78 academic year the teachers faced other basic problems. After preparing the curriculum the Education Department was opening schools in the liberated areas both in rural and urban areas, which included Keren, Elabred, Dekemhare, Segenaitti, Ghinda, Embatkala, Nefasit, Afabet, Nakfa and Adi-Tekelezan. At the same time studies were conducted to prepare a new middle school curriculum to serve the schools in Keren and Dekemhare (Education in Eritrea: p.23).

To begin with one aspect of the problems, the students at the Revolution School lived in a boarding school with close attention from their teachers and caretakers. This made the students' level or standard different (higher) from that of their age group in the rural or urban areas. As a result the texts, which were prepared for the Revolution School, became beyond the capacity of the students of the same grade level in the liberated areas. In some cases, Aynalem Marcos (former geography teacher and curriculum designer) told me that the examples and pictures mentioned in the textbooks were not found in the rural areas. Such things were found to be difficult to be understood by those students in the rural schools. In fact the main reason for such kind of mistakes was that most of the teachers who prepared the curriculum were originally from towns.

One of the measures that was taken by the Education Department to balance and integrate the curriculum with the students ability in the liberated areas was to lower their level by one or two grade levels. By doing such an experiment it was possible for the Education Department to find out the problems of the students and the curriculum it self. It was realized that the curriculum itself was beyond the capacity of the age group for which it was intended. So it needed some basic changes (Education Under EPLF: p.33; Firebrace: p117)

Thus the Department of Education finally decided to revise the 1977 curriculum after evaluating its experiences outside the Revolution School. As a result in mid 1978 the primary school curriculum was modified to make it simple and understandable to the intended children. In some cases changes were made in the curriculum. Then the newly revised curriculum was put in to practice starting from September 1978, beginning of the academic year. On the other hand by this time the war against the Ethiopian soldiers was getting worse so that the EPLF decided to make a strategic retreat. Until this time the larger part of Eritrea was under the control of the EPLF. Immediately after the retreat the educational activity in the former liberated areas was interrupted. A large number of Eritrean school children also escaped the Ethiopian

invasion in to the refugee camps in the Sudan. To continue with the education program the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) that was working under EPLF opened schools in the refugee camps in the Sudan so that the children would receive education. Such schools were opened in different camps (in the Sudan) like Port Sudan, Kessala and Ghedaref. These schools in the refugee camps used the same curriculum designed by the EPLF Education Department. But the medium of instruction was Arabic. It was thought that the students could survive in the Sudan as far as continuing their education in the Sudanese schools, if they were taught to master the official language of the Sudanese-Arabic (Firebrace 1985:122). Within the Eritrean border the Education Department also opened many schools in the newly liberated areas of Barka (Education in Eritrea: p.24).

After the strategic retreat the revised primary school curriculum was applied not only at the Revolution School but also at the schools in the refugee camps and in the newly liberated areas of Barka. Schools were also opened in the areas semi-controlled by the independence movement. Tesfay and Aynalem stated that this time the education programme was relatively going on smoothly.

In 1982 the Revolution School reached its peak by opening a secondary school. Students who had completed the middle school were admitted to grade eight, which was the beginning of secondary education. The curriculum for the secondary education was designed to be covered in three years. It was hoped that this curriculum would provide students a deeper and broader understanding of different subjects. At this stage students were to be trained in different specialized fields based on their inclinations. After completing the three years course students were expected to serve their people with their specialized skills. This curriculum was also designed with the objective of providing students with theoretical base for further studies at college or university levels (Education in the Liberated Areas: p8; Education Under EPLF,1982: p36).

In fact when the secondary school was opened it did not have enough teaching materials to start with a broad base. Originally the plan of the education department was to organize the secondary education in different streams like academic and vocational streams. But due to the limited resources the opening of such streams in the secondary school was very difficult. Therefore, only an academic stream was opened in the school. Even for this stream there was only a draft of the general outlines of the various subject matters. Teachers were left to prepare notes for their students based on the guidelines. In the process it was hoped that the teachers would gather and organize their experiences to prepare texts and curriculum for secondary education. Therefore, in 1982 the secondary school was at “experimental level” (Report on Secondary School Education: p3).

The subjects included in the academic stream were Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English, Mathematics, Geography, History and Physical Education. At the beginning more emphasis was given to the natural science subjects including mathematics and English. The allotted time for geography and history was between two and three periods a week for each subject. Besides this, to encourage individual students with interest on specific fields, the curriculum provided opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. For instance clubs were organized in the school to help those students to develop their interests. Others with interest on technical skills were also sent to the various workshops of the Front for practical knowledge. It was believed that such activities would help the students to integrate theory with practice (Education Under EPLF: p38).

3.5 Principles Included to Strengthen the Curriculum

In order to make the school curriculum practical, the EPLF educators took the following principles in to consideration. These were, the integration of theory with practice, strengthening the relationship between society and the school and the relationships with in the school itself.

In the EPLF schools students were expected to become patriots and active in the construction of a new Eritrean society after destroying the colonial order. To achieve this goal the curriculum was developed so as to link theory with practice. In fact the curricula designed during each colonial period of Eritrea were highly academic and divorced from practical application, but more so during the Ethiopian colonial period (Woldemariam, 1997: 52). But under EPLF starting from the elementary level students were taught subjects in relation to production. For instance at the elementary stage students in the handicraft classes were encouraged to create or produce some kind of articles from simple things which could be found easily in their environment like sisal, hides, clay, etc. In this case teaching Eritrean students handicraft had dual purposes. First, it helped the EPLF to fight against the backward views and prejudices, which had degraded handicraftsmen among the Eritrean society. Second, it helped to teach children about the advantage of mastering handicrafts (Education in the Liberated Areas: pp10-11). It is true to say that the involvement of students in such kind of production would enable them to feel the lives and experiences of the masses. At the end this would lead students to use their knowledge and skills to improve the living condition of the masses to which they belonged. As Vos and Brits (1990) stated, "education at any level is intended to be used as a tool for economic, political and social progress" Vos, 1990:176).

At the junior level subjects related to technical skills like metal work, woodwork, electricity etc. were given. The practical activities in such subjects increased the technical know-how of students and at the same time helped to make schools self-reliant. In the case of agricultural activities students were trained in farming techniques and animal husbandry. Besides these clubs like culture, science, art etc. were also organized in the schools in order to help students participate in practical activities. The Cultural Club, for instance, was making a lot of activities in relation to music and drama with the objective of recreating and enhancing the political consciousness of the fighters. In the Literature Club students were also able to voice their point of view and this had also its own contribution to the literary progress of the Eritreans (Education in the Liberated Areas: p13; *Fitawrari 2001:8*). In general the

program of the middle school education at the Revolution School was a preliminary effort to produce at least middle level technicians to fill the gap created by the shortage of skilled manpower.

The other factor, which obtained emphasis in the curriculum, was concerning the relationship between society and the schools. For instance, during the struggle period school buildings and educational materials were insufficient to implement EPLF's education program. Furthermore, the implementation of some of the major points of EPLF's education program like the eradication of illiteracy, the separation of education from religion, the provision of free and compulsory education and the integration of education with production would not be successful without the active support of the people. (Education in the Liberated Areas, 1978:134). Therefore, during the struggle period the involvement of the people in the educational activities was very important. If there existed a closer relationship, the society would always be ready to help schools in finding solutions for their problems.

The school curriculum also stressed on the establishment of good relationships within the school. In this case teachers were given high responsibility to create a convenient atmosphere within the school. They were expected to come down to the level of their students in order to equip them with the knowledge and skill to take responsibilities in new Eritrea. Students were initiated to participate in different committees of the school so as to be trained in the principles of decision making. In the Revolution School regarding such relationships, Gottesman quoted a former student, who said,

Teachers and students were cooperative, they learned together, they worked together, they lived together, they ate together, because they all are fighters. They're comrades...We only remember we are students and they are teachers when we are coming to class only. And a sort of discussion-hot debate sometimes-was going on in class (Gottesman, 1998: p21).

In the same way Harber also quoted a British who visited the revolution school in 1988 and who said, "as an experienced teacher, I have to say that even in the many

good schools that I know, I have never seen teacher- pupil relationship like those I saw among the sticks and stones of Zero School.” (Harber, 1997:109).

3.6 Teaching Experience

A teacher in a school community plays many key roles. That is, “he [she] has on the one hand an academic role concerned with scholarship and on the other hand he [she] is a character- trainer concerned with the development of the child’s whole personality” (Ottaway: 186). Thus, to fulfill their tasks as academician, teachers are expected to know their respective subjects very well. At the same time they should always be ready to update their knowledge in their respective fields so that they would not lose their post and respect as academicians. But it is not enough to have only knowledge. Teachers should also be capable and successful to pass the knowledge they have got to their pupils. For this the teacher has to be an expert in the teaching methodology.

But to follow such a line was a very difficult task for the teachers at the Revolution school as it was operating under war conditions. First of all getting teachers (qualified) was one of the major problems of the EPLF Education Department. The majority of the teachers who used to teach at the EPLF schools were high school students. There were also some university students with no previous teaching experience. Besides these, Aynalem and Birahne told me that there were also some qualified teachers who were university graduates and had previous teaching experience.

On the other hand most of those teachers who started to teach at the Revolution School were themselves students of the old colonial education. When they became teachers for the first time at the Revolution School, they started to follow the teaching methods adopted by their own former teachers who were used to a teacher- dominating lecturing system. But this was unacceptable under the EPLF’s education program, which required the presence of a two-way interaction between teacher and students and at the same time, which encourages students to be challenging, inquisitive and

capable of changing their knowledge to practical ends. Thus, the Eritrean educational planners consistently tried to avoid such methods, which gave emphasis to the way of learning by rote (Developing a National Education System: p.6).

There were also other problems that the teachers faced during the teaching-learning process. For instance, due to the lack of teaching experience the teachers at first failed to take in to consideration the economic, social and cultural backgrounds of their pupils. As a result the teachers could not integrate or adapt their lessons with the students' real life. But the Education Department soon redressed such habits. Teachers were provided with seminars and orientations to take note of the students' economic and social background (Building a National System of Education 1988:7). Teachers were also initiated to prepare lesson plan before going to classes. If the education is relevant to the students' real life, then it will help both teachers and students to participate in the developmental activities of the society.

The Education Department also tried its best to improve the skills of its teachers. One of the ways adopted by the department was the provision of correspondence courses beginning from 1984. Teachers outside the Revolution School but within the liberated areas were beneficiaries of the program. In 1988 this program was also extended to include fighters but it was not successful because the texts were beyond the capacity of the learners. Such programs in general helped the teachers to upgrade their academic knowledge and skill in teaching. The courses included mainly Science, English and Mathematics (Developing a National Education System, 1986:10).

The Department of Education also encouraged the teachers to teach one another by sharing their own experiences. Teachers were discussing about their own experiences whenever they met with one another, formally or informally. Berhane Demoz stated, "together as a staff, we helped each other, taught each other, re-educated ourselves, on the job, from time to time." One of the good experiences of most of the teachers at the Revolution School was that they did not wait for professional training from the

Education Department. They had already realized that they could learn from experience and practice on the spot.

The teachers had also developed the ability for patience and commitment to achieve their goals despite the hardships they faced. They were making a continuous follow up to their students whether they were in school or in their dormitories. Tedros Siyum, a former student confirmed that, whenever they met weak students in their classes, the teachers were always ready to give additional tutorial classes for those lagging students.

By the end of the 1980s the Education Department was able to get professional assistance from Eritrean educators in diaspora. They were invited to come to the field in order to provide or give in-service training to the teachers and other education staff members. In most cases the focus of such training was on pedagogy and psychology (Developing a National Education System 1986:42). During the long vacation periods (mostly between June-September) the education department starting from 1984 also arranged in-service training programs. The main objectives of this program was to improve the teachers academic knowledge, political consciousness and to create the possibility for teachers to exchange or share their experiences which they had developed in their respective schools (*nay 10 amet gemgam:p11*).

3.7 Responding to War Challenges

Glenys Kinnock after visiting the Revolution School wrote the following in her book *Eritrean Images of War and Peace*,

The school is carefully concealed. It is the largest school I have ever visited and consists of several age groupings in units dotted along a 12 kilometers valley. When we had our obligatory cup of tea before visiting the children and teachers at work, I looked around wondering where the school could actually be. How was it possible to completely conceal anything containing 4000 people let alone lively children? (Kinnock, 1988: 35).

As the school was situated in a war zone, it could not escape the attack from the enemy. Therefore, all the members of the school were always ready for unexpected bombing raids from the Ethiopian aircrafts. In fact a number of teachers and students were killed by the air raids. Because of this it was a very difficult situation for both the teachers and the students to conduct the teaching- learning process smoothly (Gottesman, 1998: 206; Kinnock, 1988: 35). The school was unable to stay at one place for long period of time. It had always to move from place to place so that it was able to survive until independence.

In 1978 at the time of the strategic retreat, just like the other departments of the EPLF, the Revolution School was also forced to change its place. Therefore, it moved first to a place called Hawle in March 1979 and then two months later to Jelehanti. Because of such up and downs the school program in the academic year of 1978/79 was not properly implemented. Then in 1982 during which the Ethiopian army made its huge offensive (called The Sixth Offensive) against the EPLF, it was also again very difficult to conduct the school activities at the Revolution School. Therefore, the school was forced again to change its place. This time the Revolution School moved to two places, partly to Arag and the other part to Ararb (in Sahel). But later the whole part of the school settled at Ararb where it continued to perform the school activities until independence (*Fitawrari, 2001: pp10-11*).

The other challenge that the Revolution School faced was a problem of class accommodation. After the strategic retreat of 1978 there was an influx of students to the Revolution School. As a result it became difficult for the Revolution School to accommodate all the students at the same time. Therefore the students had to attend classes either in the morning or afternoon shift. Besides this, there was also a shortage of desks. Some students had to sit on the floor during lessons. In fact this in its turn also had some effect on the classroom discipline due to those students squatting on the floor. It is not comfortable to squat on the floor so it is natural that they became restless. But this problem was not that much serious as students were cooperative. The students knew very well how they had escaped from the enemy troops. Therefore, they

understood that they had to tolerate the hardship in the classes. The problem of class accommodation was not a big issue to them. Therefore, such problems did not interrupt the school activities (Education in Eritrea: p19).

Furthermore, the preparation of food for students was another challenging problem for the Revolution School. The problem started with finding firewood. Students had to walk long distances in order to collect firewood. Getting nutritious food was also another part of the problem. According to Tedros, most of the time students ate continuously the same kind of food made up of lentils. Due to the shortage of nutritive food the students also faced some health problems.



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CHAPTER FOUR: LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE WAR EXPERIENCE FOR THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

4.1 Introduction

During the long period of liberation struggle the EPLF educators were able to accumulate valuable experience in relation to the design and implementation of adult and basic education programs and also in the development of education policy considering the reality in the liberated areas. At the same time the experience gained on the formulations of a new school curriculum reflecting Eritrean culture, history and economic needs is also unforgettable. These are some of the experiences, which served as base in the formulation and execution of the current educational policy, which in turn re-affirmed the elementary and middle schooling as compulsory for all Eritrean children. This education policy also adopted the goal of “Education For All” along the right for each nationality to use its own language at the elementary school level (Girls Education in Eritrea: 29). In addition the EPLF was also unique in relation to the status of women and their education during the struggle period. This was in fact in line to the belief of the EPLF to conduct social revolution and transformation while the war was still going on (Harber, 1997: 102). With independence the government promised to commit itself for gender equality and to improve the status of women in Eritrea. The Eritrean government has already believed that without the active participation of women, the country cannot achieve its objective for development. As a result women have made big strides in Eritrea. Society’s attitude towards women has more or less been changed. In this case women’s participation in education has an important role. Nevertheless, the women are still confronted with traditional and cultural beliefs, which had intensified their oppression for centuries.

In this chapter I will try to focus on the experiences gained in organizing literacy programs and the recognition of gender issues in all aspects of educational programs.

4.2 Literacy Programs

The problems and faults caused by colonialism on Eritrea are diverse. They range from a high percentage of illiteracy to an acute shortage of technical know-how; from the inadequate educational service to the depressed state of the Eritrean national cultural and linguistic concerns (Declaration of Policies on Education, 1991:2).

It was under such circumstances that the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) started its armed struggle to establish an independent and prosperous Eritrea. To this end the EPLF since 1977 included in its education program a statement, which gave emphasis to the eradication of illiteracy, that is, "to combat illiteracy to free the Eritrean people from the darkness of ignorance" (Education in the Liberated Areas, 1978:5). Therefore, during the struggle period literacy programs were organized by the EPLF Education Department. The administrative structure of the EPLF education Department had three divisions, each of which dealt with specific educational activities. These divisions were: Regular Education, Research Centre and Adult Education division. The major task of the Adult Education division was to provide basic and post-basic education. The basic education emphasized on reading, writing and numeration and also oral lectures on health and agriculture. The post-basic education gave emphasis to skill development in health, agriculture etc. The program was arranged to be completed in two or three years (*kirtschenfer timiherti*: p1).

The literacy campaign was conducted among the civilian population in the liberated areas and among the EPLF fighters. In fact the literacy program was also taken as part of the liberation struggle. That is, as a struggle to liberate the people from ignorance, diseases, poverty and oppression. Besides the fighters, the focus of this literacy program was in the rural areas where people live either as settled agriculturalists or nomads. Most of these people who were living in the rural areas were illiterate and did not know about the advantages of education. Therefore, the first task for the EPLF was to introduce and extend its educational program to the people in the rural areas. But this was not enough. Convincing the people about the values of education was the harder task for the EPLF.

Due to the economic problems it was very difficult for any member of a family to stop working in the farm in order to give time to education. Even the children were supposed to help their family at home, for instance, by looking after their livestock. Therefore, the EPLF had to find the right way and time to help the peasants and their children (Education Under the EPLF, 1982:29) in order to attract them in the literacy program.

First of all conducting a literacy campaign among the settled population is relatively simpler than with the nomadic people of Eritrea. In this case some attempts were made among the settled people to apply the educational program by using whatever spare time they had. But to try this among the nomadic people, it needed more patience from the EPLF. That is, due to the wandering nature of nomadic life, the EPLF education unit had to follow them wherever they moved so as to help the nomads in the fight against illiteracy. This was, of course, a good experience for the EPLF because it helped to reach for the first time the most remote areas in Eritrea in order to introduce the values of education. Therefore, by mid 1970s the literacy program covered wider communities in the rural areas (Education Under EPLF, 1982:29).

Generally this task was accomplished by overcoming the existing major problems in both agricultural and nomadic areas. For example, due to the absence of school buildings, the local people who had been organized under various People's Assemblies built new ones. In the areas where the building of new schools were impossible classes were conducted under the shades of large trees or in the open field where the weather was favourable (as in the highlands). In the areas where nomads stayed for a greater part of the year new schools were also constructed with the help of the nomads themselves (Education under the EPLF, 1982: 29). The other major problem according to Aynalem (informant), who had participated in the organizing unit of the literacy program, was related to the women group. As in the other African countries the women of Eritrea had also heavy responsibilities in the household activities. The responsibilities at home made the women of Eritrea to be over loaded by work and other social affairs during the day. Therefore they were unable to get time for education or if they got the time they would be tired

while attending classes. As a result of this many would decide to stop going to literacy classes.

The traditional and religious views also prevented women from attending literacy classes. In many places women were not allowed to go out of their homes. Parents were not also interested to lose the labour of their children by sending them to school. Therefore, at the beginning the literacy classes did not take deep root due to the social and economic barriers. In general, Birhane Demoz (informant) confirmed that regardless of such problems the EPLF Education Department gave a strong attention to the literacy campaigns. The literacy campaigns gave the teachers and educational administrators a good experience as educators as most of them were then still in their younger age. Today these people are working in the Ministry of Education with a greater responsibility to educate the whole country (Gottesman, 1998: 177).

In 1976 during which the EPLF dominated the largest part of Eritrea, an intensive literacy campaign was organized by the Education Department to be conducted in the liberated areas. But this program was interrupted due to the new Ethiopian offensives of 1978. However the campaign was started again in 1983. As cited in Gottesman the campaign was started:

On a large scale with 599 campaigners; out of this 451 were combatants, of course, who were grown up in the Zero School- they were in the grades of six up to grade eight. They discontinued their education for the noble cause of the literacy campaign for the Eritrean people. And we started the campaign in 183 centres or stations. And in these 183 centres, we had around 56,000 adults who were participating at that time (Gottesman, 1998: 175).

By 1983, the EPLF Education Department put a huge effort to conduct the literacy campaign. The general aims of the literacy programs during the struggle period were to acquaint the people with political, social and economic policies; create political mobilization and assure the greater participation of the people in the social transformation and the liberation struggle (Education For All: 57). The following table indicates the participation of the people in this literacy campaign.

Table 2: Participation of Women, Peasants and Youth in the first two years of the adult literacy campaigns conducted by The EPLF Education Department from 1983-1985.

Social Status	1983-1984		1984-1985	
	No. Registered	% Completed	No. Registered	% Completed
Peasants	7067	61	8143	75
Youth	3529	80	5471	64
Women	13704	67	15215	79

Source:(Green, C. 1994: 33)

In fact until 1983 adults were taught with texts and curriculum prepared for children at the Revolution school. That is, initially the adult education program was not integrated with the needs of the learners. But the aim was to serve the adult Eritreans, by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to strive for better life. Therefore, in 1983 a curriculum for the adult program was designed based on experience and preliminary studies of the former literacy campaigns. At the same time materials were produced for reading, writing and numeration in the two local languages, Tigriña and Tigre. (*nay 10 amet gemgamawi temokro, 1987: p4*). Regardless of the cultural and traditional differences between highlanders and lowlanders or rural and urban populations, the new curriculum for adults was applied and it worked for long. (Gottesman, 1998: 178) According to Aynalem Marcos, during implementation of the curriculum teachers had the chance for a certain degree of flexibility to accommodate the differences.

On the other hand during 1983 and 1984 the adult literacy program, which was organized by the EPLF Education Department was affected by the prevailing draught and famine in many parts of Eritrea. As a result of this the literacy campaign was limited to small areas. By this time the question of survival was the primary and serious issue for the people. Concerning the effect of the draught on the program Gottesman quoted his conversation with one of the organizers of the program in the following ways:

We had quite a substantial number of people totally refusing to participate in the program for certain reasons. First, the time we left- the time we embarked on this program- was a critical time economically because it was the drought of 1983 and

1984 and people were saying, "look, we don't have anything in our stomach; how dare you ask us to come and attend classes (Gottesman, 1998: 194).

So the literacy program was carried on with a very limited number of people. When the program was started in 1983 a large number of teachers (about 600) were assigned to different stations in the liberated areas. The majority of these teachers were students from the Revolution School. These student- teachers, especially from the Zero School had no idea about the social, cultural and economic life of the people to whom they were assigned. Therefore, the literacy organizers had prepared orientation programs for all the student teachers before they went out to their respective stations. Explanations were given about the culture, religion and way of life of the people in addition to some kind of training in relation to the methodology of teaching their lessons. In fact it is very difficult to say that the orientation gave the student teachers full information about the people whom they were going to serve. Both my informants, Aynalem and Birhane, told me that the student teachers were left at large to learn from their own experiences on the spot (Gottesman, 1998: 177).

The teachers were not expected only to participate in teaching. They were also required to participate in the people's work activities, which included building, terracing, gardening etc. On the other hand the teachers were made conscious to avoid the superstitions and traditional beliefs, which had prevailed among the people for long (Gottesman, 1998: 177).

The people were allowed to arrange their own literacy classes that suit their timetables. The people then felt that the program was not imposed on them. In addition to such advantages the literacy program was also accompanied by lessons on better techniques of agricultural production, animal husbandry and other skills. That is, the teachers were helping the people to acquire knowledge and simple skills that they can use almost immediately (Education Under EPLF, 1982: p30). As the majority of the participants of the literacy program were women, the teachers also used to present lessons in relation to family nutrition, household, sanitation practices (Gottesman, 1998: 177). This teaching was important because mothers are also the first teachers in their respective families. The

eradication of illiteracy among women would have an influence on the rest of the family. The EPLF educators then evaluated the program and the following conclusions were drawn:

The initial stages of the campaign have influenced the population considerably; the student teachers dispatched from Zero School grasped the concrete living conditions of their society through the program and this has opened new doors both to the students' learning and to serving society and the program has offered a fresh experience that will help the departments to work out a three-year special adult educational program. (Preparing a national Education System for Eritrea, 1986: 35).

The experiences attained during the long national liberation war have great contribution to introduce basic changes in the political, economic and social activities of the people at independence. The efforts put on the consolidation of national identity, unity, the promotion of attitudes, cultures and tolerance among the people are some of the experiences attained during the protracted national liberation struggle. During the transition period (1991-93) these experiences helped to lay down the foundation for building a new society. That is, "the political thinking, structure and development in Eritrea are the results achieved from the policies and practices of the national-liberation struggle" (Education for All: Policies, 2000: 2).

After the Eritreans achieved their full independence through a referendum made in 1993, the newly formed state began to reproduce the social and political experiences accumulated during the struggle period in line to the objectives of national unity, social justice and development. One of the areas addressed by the accumulated experiences was the issue of illiteracy. At independence the illiteracy rate in the country was very high. Therefore, starting from 1991 programs were arranged by the newly formed Ministry of Education to conduct literacy campaigns in many parts of the country (Green, 1994: 33-34). In this activity mainly the National Union of Eritrean Women and the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers also supported the Ministry of Education. In fact expanding schooling and eradication of illiteracy are part of the government's strategy aimed at producing a population equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and culture for a self reliant and modern economy (Macro Policy, 1994:39).

At first the program was started on a limited scale. The target groups, that is, the learners who were mainly women were then divided into two groups, youth and adult women. These became the primary targets due to their role to bring economic and social changes in the society. Initially the major objective of this program was to help the learners develop the ability to read and write and perform simple arithmetic. In addition to this the program was also intended to raise people's consciousness in civic rights and responsibilities and teach life skills. It was hoped that besides fulfilling the basic human rights of every citizen, the promotion of literacy would enable the Eritrean society to improve economic productivity and growth particularly in the rural areas where a lot of effort is needed to bring changes in the agricultural sector (EFA, 2000:57).

An individual who participates in the literacy program is expected to pass three phases or stages, each of which is lasting about six months. In each of the stages the learners are taught different skills and basic knowledge, which are important to improve their life style. The program included vocational training and lessons in relation to HIV/AIDS (EFA, 2000: 57). At the end of the first phase, learners are expected to attain a basic level of literacy and numeration. In the next two phases in addition to consolidation of the previously acquired knowledge learners are taught new basic skills (Our People are Our Future, 2001:55).

In this case there are also problems in relation to the continuity of the literacy program by individual learners. According to a report (EFA, 2000) prepared by Ministry of Education, "the limited effort made [*to promote continuity*] has shown that it is not always easy to maintain the achievement so that literate people do not relapse to their original situation". Therefore, the process to establish a literate environment especially in the rural areas is a challenging action for the literacy organizers. In fact some attempts (measures) are also taken to open some rural reading rooms equipped with post-literacy reading materials. At the same time radio programs for adult literacy were expanded. The radio program largely emphasized on health, agriculture, citizenship and environmental education. Listening centres were opened in markets and adult literacy stations (EFA,

2000: 58). And still this problem continues due to the absence of enough reading materials in the local languages.

In the late 1990s the literacy program were expanded. More attention was given to the disparity in educational accessibility and the minority ethnic groups in the remote rural areas of Eritrea. It also included out of school youth and shepherds. Generally, this plan was intended to teach a large number of adults from all parts of Eritrea (EFA, 2000: 18). The literacy program was very helpful to the individual learners. This was confirmed by the findings of the overall evaluation of the literacy program. It is stated that:

- The participants were able to read, write, keep their own accounts, fill forms, read road signs and deal with money transactions confidently and independently.
- Many were able to help their children with schoolwork by checking the exercise books, look after their health and sanitation and help them in their studies especially in lower grades.
- Many have become involved in development activities and political life (EFA,2000: 58)

The success of the literacy program was also approved by an international award given to the Adult Education Division of the Eritrean Ministry of Education. The 2002 International Reading Association Literacy Award was given to Eritrea on September 10, 2002, in Paris. Since 1979, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presents such awards every year (<http://www.reading.org>).

4.3 Women and Education

Before and during colonialism the role of Eritrean women was limited to domestic activities. Their status was subordinate in educational and socio-political spheres. The traditional attitudes mixed with religious beliefs had contributed substantially to the passivity of women in Eritrea (Wolde Selassie, 1992:67). The religious education, for instance, favoured the dominance of men. That is, in such schools only men were trained for religious activities and even some times for secular jobs, which required literacy. Women were not allowed to participate in such religious schools. Rather girls were left to

get their education from their mothers, which focused on household activities. But with the coming of colonialism, there was a slight change on the traditional attitude towards women. That is, as the colonialists started to establish large and small-scale factories, in various towns of Eritrea, a large number of men were flowing in to the towns leaving their wives behind. The women who stayed behind became heads of their families. There were also other women who started to work in the factories, which did not need skilled labour. But this does not mean that the women were completely accepted as equals of men. The point is that women in this period of colonialism started to participate in some of the activities, which had been reserved only for men (Wolde Selassie, 1992: 67). In general under both the Italian and British colonialism there was no effort to educate the Eritrean women, as the colonialists were interested mainly to secure the economic exploitation (Stefanos, 1997: 663).

During the war for national liberation there was a tremendous change concerning the provision of educational opportunities to Eritrean women (Wolde Selassie, 1992: 68). By the middle of the 1970s the EPLF had already realized the importance of fully engaging (participating) the Eritrean women in the struggle for independence. This recognition was a starting point to the EPLF's effort to establish educational equity between genders until the present time (IMF Working Paper: 4). By providing education it is believed that the women would be able to raise their consciousness to identify their own rights and roles in the society. Education would also help women to develop skills to work on an equal footing with men in the reconstruction of new Eritrea (Stefanos, 1997: 665).

Women had an important role during the national liberation struggle. They were involved in the struggle from being providers of intelligence to fighters against the Ethiopian troops. Their participation in this fighting forced the fighters, and later the population at large, to accept the equality of women and men. During the struggle period women constituted more than twenty-five per cent of the liberation force (Harber, 1997: 105). Women were also given military posts like the rank of Battalion Commander. Besides this the Eritrean women also participated in the other social and political activities of the Front working as educators, health officers, political leaders by mobilizing civilians

especially women in the liberated areas (Firebrace, 1985: 41). Thus, “in Eritrea the involvement [in the struggle] brought about improvements in their economic and social status, including increased access to education” (IMF Working Paper: 4).

The integration of the Eritrean women in to the new education system was not an easy task. The EPLF educators first of all had to fight the strong cultural and traditional barriers, which had prevailed for long among the Eritrean people. As Stefanos (1997) stated, one of the fundamental obstacles to women’s access to education was “the parental view [which considers] a girl’s only goal was to prepare for and succeed in getting married and that female education was an unnecessary frill or worse yet, a costly distraction” (Stefanos, 1997: 666). This parental view was also reinforced by the economic reasons. That is, most parents needed the help of their children mainly their daughters in the routine household activities. Especially in the rural areas girls starting from an early age spend most of their time in helping their mothers at home and carrying for young brothers and sisters. And this prevents most of the girls from attending schools. The EPLF tried to tackle such parental opposition to girls’ education by organizing intensive political education campaigns in the liberated areas. At the same time, during the campaigns, the EPLF leaders were also encouraging the village girls to come to the base area in order to continue their education at the Revolution School (Stefanos, 1997: 666).

The Revolution School was successful to abolish male chauvinism among its students. All my informants agree that at the Revolution School, girls and boys were regarded as equal partners in all school activities, which included academics, sports, building, fetching water from well etc. In addition, the number of female students attending at the Revolution School and other primary schools in the liberated areas was very high (IMF Working Paper: 3).

At independence the Eritrean government again confirmed its commitment to safeguard the Eritrean women’s right for education. This is accompanied by a statement in the Macro-Policy (1994), which stated “participation of women in education and economic

activities and employment will be expanded” (Macro Policy, 1994: 44). This is also the guideline for the Ministry of Education to address the gender issues in education.

In general during independence the girls’ enrolment at all levels and in most of the regions has shown improvement. In this case mobilization campaigns were organized by political leaders to persuade and raise the consciousness of the people beginning with the women themselves. Most of the time the women themselves were unable to oppose the prohibition of girls from attending schools, because they believed for long that traditional and religious rules had already decided their responsibilities and roles in the society. The women did not know that they had the right to question the traditional rules. Therefore, the campaign to increase the people’s consciousness was one of the important measures to encourage girls’ participation in education. Besides, the government also opened schools in the regions to reduce the problem of going long distances for schooling. Such measures of the government motivated parents and the community to send their daughters to school (EFA, 2000: 35).

The school curriculum has also its own initiatives to encourage girls’ participation in education and at the same time to eliminate male chauvinism among students. The school texts for instance are prepared with new images of women recognizing their role as fighters and workers during the struggle period. Points of discussions about the issues of women are also included in the textbooks (EFA, 2000: 26).

The Ministry of Education also took measures to train female teachers at the TTI level. This in its turn helped the strategy to encourage girls’ education by attracting them to schools (EFA, 2000: 35). In addition to this in the late 1990s, the Ministry of Education also started to train demobilized female National Service participants in basic teacher education. These trainees have already started to teach in various parts of the country. The appointment of female teachers has its own contribution to encourage girls’ participation in schooling (Our People are Our Future: 71).

As a result of the encouragement the gross girls' enrolment during independence is higher than the previous colonial periods. The government's effort to improve accessibility and coverage resulted in the quantitative expansion in terms of students' enrolments and schools (EFA, 2000: 27)

On the other hand the success of the EPLF Education Department in narrowing the gender gap during the struggle period was reversed at independence. (See the tables).

Table 3: The Enrolment of Eritrean Secondary School Students (Grades 8-11) Statistics in 1999/2000 Academic Year:

ZONE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
ANSEBA	3665	1437	5102
SOUTH RED SEA	384	240	624
SOUTH	12620	4758	17378
GASH BARKA	2703	899	3602
CENTRE	16524	14233	30757
NORTH RED SEA	1637	526	2163
TOTAL	37533	22093	59626

Source: Ministry of Education. 2000. **Basic Education Statistics, December 2000.**

The above table indicates that the female enrolment is only 37.1% from total enrolment (boys & girls). That is, through out the nation the girls' enrolment is small, only 37.1%. Most of the enrolment is concentrated around the Centre (i.e. capital city, Asmara). This shows there is a great gender disparity as we go to the regions and rural areas

Table 4: Middle and Secondary Level: Enrolment by Grades, Gender and Year during Independence.

YEAR	ENROLMENT AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL			ENROLMENT AT MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL		
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
1991/92	27627	14281	13346	27917	14414	13503
1992/93	31531	17141	14390	28431	15052	13379
1993/94	32756	19432	13324	32781	18129	14652
1994/95	36728	22097	14631	34995	19310	15685
1995/96	39188	23713	15475	39751	21648	18103
1996/97	40594	24262	16332	47460	26739	20721
1997/98	41615	25198	16417	57152	32998	24154
1998/99	47533	29777	17756	67021	37731	29290
1999/2000	57334	36504	20830	74317	41033	33284

Source: Ministry of Education November 2000. **Eritrea: Essential Education Indicators 1999/2000**. Asmara, Eritrea. (Publication).

Although, the newly formed Eritrean government promised to continue its commitment to establish gender equality in education, the gap between female and male enrolments started to be wide soon after independence. Such imbalances, in fact, have a negative effect on the strategic development plan of the Eritrean government, the human capital investment (EFA, 2000: 14). It is true that poor human capital for a country creates problem to absorb new technological developments. The involvement of women in education on the other hand enhances and assures the effectiveness of education, health and family planning programs

Some of the reasons given for the widening of the gender gap in school enrolments soon after independence were the following. In the post war period there was a demobilization of male soldiers, which intensified the fertility rates. This brought about the decline of girls' enrolment in secondary schools. At the same time the demobilized male soldiers were also returning back to schools. From the government side there was also a problem in relation to the slow pace in the implementation of policies (like the opening of care centres, kindergartens, improving home technologies etc) related to women right and

status. This naturally leads to a return to the traditional way of looking at women as subordinate to men (IMF Working Paper: 16). Asgedet also stated the following in her research:

I found evidence in my analysis of government documents, national newspapers, meetings with public officials and 1997 interviews with Eritrean women that there is currently a loss of momentum and, perhaps, a reversal in the movement to fully integrate women in to public life, including education (Stefanos, 1997: 680).

To sum up, the organizations of literacy campaigns and the recognition of education for women are not the only wartime experiences applied under today's education system. Another aspect of the wartime educational experience, which, continued to work under the present education system, is the method of assessment-continuous assessment. Under the current curriculum students are supposed to be evaluated continuously with a total of 60 per cent marks and for the rest of 40 per cent students are required to sit for examinations. With regard to the management of a boarding school the same war time experience is also applied at independence. During the struggle period the Revolution School was able to accommodate students from all the ethnic groups of Eritrea. At independence these students from all ethnic groups were also transferred to one of the places (Dekemhare) in Southern part of Eritrea. From among the first group of students at Dekemhare many had lost one or both parents in the war. These students who were attending local schools were living in dormitories, which had served as a camp for the Ethiopian army. Harber who visited the dormitories at the beginning of 1995, stated that "the domestic arrangements have retained much of the ethos of the Zero School. The dormitories are ethnically mixed, there is a strongly co-operative and friendly atmosphere" (Harber: 109).

In general, after independence the Eritrean government has been working very hard to establish and expand schools at all levels (elementary, junior and secondary levels). This expansion is also accompanied by a tremendous increase in students' enrolment and number of teachers. But still a large number of children are out of school. This necessitates the building of more new schools to increase access and opportunity of

education and at the same time to reform the current education system, which is in fact, undergoing at present.

Conclusion

By 1991 the EPLF Education Department was successful to develop and accumulate experience, which helped to lay the basis to work in post-independent Eritrea. At independence the EPLF Education Department was one of the well-organised and experienced divisions of the Front with skilled manpower.

During the struggle period education had an important role in terms of ideology. It was oriented to reproduce nationalism and patriotism among the Eritrean children. We have seen that the peoples of Eritrea were subject to long period of colonial occupation under various foreign powers. It was an Italian colony from 1890-1941. Between 1941-1952 the British controlled Eritrea. In fact as a result of these colonial occupations there were tremendous social, economic and political changes in Eritrea. After 1952 Eritrea became federation with Ethiopia. But in 1962 Ethiopia declared the end of federation and illegally annexed Eritrea as its fourteenth province. This annexation intensified the Eritrean resistance to Ethiopia's colonial rule. The Eritrean resistance in the form of national liberation movement continued until the achievement of independence in 1991. During this period of struggle the EPLF gained a strong support from the Eritrean people. Almost from every Eritrean family at least one member was participating in the struggle for liberation. The war also brought the Eritrean people together and strengthened the sense of national belonging.

During the struggle for national liberation, the EPLF, the leading political organisation, was working to bring national independence along a social revolution. For instance, during the war schools were established in the liberated areas. The EPLF Education department administered the schools with a new vision for the development of the

Eritrean society. In its views the EPLF education program was different from the former colonial education system applied in Eritrea.

In pre-colonial Eritrea the only formal education available was given by religious institutions: churches and mosques. It was the Italians who introduced modern education in Eritrea. The objectives were, of course, geared mainly towards satisfying the interests of the colonialists. The British although attempted to expand the educational opportunities for the Eritreans, were interested mainly to consolidate their colonial administration, for instance, by dividing schools on religious lines. During the Federation period, the education system was supposed to be under the Eritrean administration. At the beginning of the Federation period the Eritrean education system continued to expand. But later due to the Ethiopian government intervention, the Eritrean education system was affected. That is, the Ethiopian government began to eliminate the Eritrean identity in order to inculcate the Ethiopian culture in the minds of the Eritrean students. At the time of the Dergue (Ethiopian government after 1974) the Ethiopians from Addis Ababa controlled the Eritrean education system. In this period the role of education was to serve the objectives of the Ethiopian government (i.e. Ethiopianization) not of the Eritrean people.

Speaking about the education system inherited at the time of liberation in 1991, Osman Saleh, minister of education said:

Most of the education infrastructure was destroyed and there was acute shortage of teachers. The Teacher Training Institute in the country was requisitioned, in the last years of the war, to serve as an Ethiopian military camp. There were about 5000 teachers in the country of which 2,500 were Ethiopians who immediately left to their country after liberation. The provision of education was confined to urban and semi-urban areas only. Perhaps the worst aspect of the Ethiopian education system was the replacement of Eritrean languages and culture by their own. The sense of purpose of education was almost non-existent (Shebia.org/news: Interview with Osman Saleh)

On the other side of Eritrea the EPLF had also developed its own education system contrary to the Ethiopian education policy and curriculum, which was in fact foreign to the needs of the Eritreans. The EPLF was then concerned over the need of preparing a

new and suitable curriculum for Eritreans. Therefore, the education system was based on the principle that "the aim of education must be to reinforce and strengthen the Eritrean Revolution" (Firebrace, 1985: 118)

The EPLF believed that education should facilitate the transmission of political and cultural values, which would help to strengthen the base, i.e. popular support, to the Front. In the education system more emphasis was given to build an all round personality who would be proud of the Eritrean identity and culture. To achieve this objective the ELPLF educators hold advanced views on the preparation of the school curriculum. The curriculum which was designed by the Education Department was targeted to enable the learners develop skills to relate theory with practice. The content of the syllabus was related to the pupils' daily experience. Students were also encouraged to participate and make contribution in the productive activities of the local people. Under such circumstances continuous efforts were also made to improve and expand the curriculum and to make it more relevant to the society and helpful to facilitate the overall development of the country

While implementing its educational program, the initial target of the EPLF educators were its members- the illiterate fighters. In fact the EPLF Education Department was successful to make every fighter literate by 1972 (Firebrace, 1985: 118). From the very beginning there was a strong belief among the EPLF educators that they could not bring social transformations without having a literate and educated population. It is correct to take education as an important instrument in order to keep up with the continuing changes occurring in a society. By increasing the level of education of its fighters the EPLF was trying to build an effective fighting force, which would bring a social change by actively participating in the struggle. Such kind of education is regarded by Paulo Freire (cited in Jarvis, 1995) as "a practice for freedom through which process learners discover themselves and achieve something more of the fullness of their humanity by acting up on the world to transform it" (Jarvis, 1995: 84).

The other target of the EPLF educators in the implementation of the education program was the civilian population. The Revolution School was then established in the EPLF base area. Besides this, other primary schools were also opened in the liberated areas. These schools accommodated a large number of students. For instance, in 1977 there were about 30,000 students in 150 schools, which were under the EPLF Education Department (Firebrace, 1985: 119). The local people were supporting the efforts of the EPLF Education Department for example by building schools and supplying materials necessary for the schools. In this case the role of the EPLF cadres to convince the people about the importance of education is worth mentioning.

In the implementation of the educational program of the EPLF the Revolution School played important roles. It served as a centre and testing ground for curriculum development and for teacher training. It had also its own contribution for strengthening the unity of the Eritrean peoples. As boarding school it accommodated students from all Eritrean nationalities. The cultural club in the school used to prepare cultural shows (dances and songs) by reflecting the practices of all the Eritrean nationalities. Such practices helped the students understand and respect the cultures of the different nationalities. The Revolution School was also an important source of student teachers in conducting adult literacy campaigns in the liberated areas. Between 1983-87 students from the Revolution School were sent out to the villages in the liberated areas in order to teach basic skills to the illiterate peasants.

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4. Informants

- Informant: Tesfay Baryagaber

Place of interview: at his office (National Curriculum Department)

Date: 12 Feb 2003

- Informant: Birhane Demoz

Place of Interview: at his office (AsmaraTTI)

Date 17 February 2003

- Informant: Tedros Seyum

Place of Interview: at his office (Ministry of Education)

Date: 18 February 2003

- Informant: Aynalem Marcos

Place of Interview: at his office

Date: 20 February 2003.



Appendix : Interview

Informant: Tesfay Baryagaber

Place of Interview: at his office (National Curriculum Department)

Date: 12 Feb 2003

QUESTION (Q): How did you join the Education Department of the EPLF?

ANSWER (A): Basically before I joined the liberation movement I was working as a teacher. It was in 1978 that I became a full member of the liberation struggle. Before the strategic retreat I was working for the Front among the civilian population. By the end of 1978 I started to serve as a teacher in the Revolution School, two years after its foundation. This school was founded at a hidden place in Sahel at the foot of Mount Zagre, which was known by the code name of Zero. This area was rich in water supply. At first this was the only school run by the EPLF Education Department. But later in 1977 as the EPLF's base area were expanding; schools were also opened in the liberated areas, which included the big towns of Eritrea (like Keren, Dekemhare etc). This condition was changed by the time of the Front's strategic retreat.

When the Revolution School started to function in 1976 the teaching learning process was conducted in the two local languages, Tigre and Tigrigna at the primary school level, which covered from grade one to grade five.

Q: How did you formulate the curriculum?

A: The former teachers drafted the first curriculum. The curriculum we were using until 1979 was developed at the Revolution School. After applying this curriculum at the schools in the liberated areas, we continued to evaluate and reform it based on the experiences obtained on the spot. By 1982 again the curriculum was evaluated and reformed. And it is this curriculum that we are applying especially for the primary and junior secondary schools in our current education system.

Q: Can you tell me about the efforts taken to improve the skills of the teachers?

A: It is true that the experiences of the teachers were different from one another. There were teachers with out any teaching experience. For example those disabled (at the front) who had completed high school were assigned to serve as teachers in the Revolution School. In this case those experienced teachers were responsible to share their experiences with them. In other cases workshops were also organized to provide pedagogical courses for all the teachers who were even working in the liberated areas.

Q: Can you tell me about the role of the teachers in the life of students, I mean out side the school?

A: As teachers we were treating our students like our children because the majority of them were orphans. We were making closer follow-ups while they were out side the school. We used to organize them in study groups and helped them in arranging their study programs

Q: How can you explain the relationship that existed between teachers and students?

A: There was a smooth cooperation between students and teachers. The principle of self-criticism was applied among teachers and students. Usually the homeroom teachers were required to make general meetings with their students. In such meetings open discussions concerning the teaching-learning process were conducted. The students were also able to create understandings with their teachers.

Informant: Birhane Demoz

Place of Interview: at his office (ATTI)

Date: 17 February 2003

Q: How did you join the Education Department?

A: First I became a member of the research center. I joined the Revolution School in 1981. I was working on curriculum materials for the national literacy. And I was also teaching at the Revolution School.

Q: How did you respond to the war challenges?

A: The Revolution School was at the base area of the Front in Sahel. The school was changing its places moving as far as the frontier areas of the Sudan depending on the war situation. Before the strategic retreat the Education Department was involving a large number of people including from the civilian population. The Revolutionary School was the major part of the Education Department. By 1982 after the failure of the Six Offensive of the Ethiopian government, the Education Department started to conduct and implement its educational program intensively. It continued to involve the peoples living in the liberated areas. The educational activity was usually depending on the war situation, that is, when the war was in favor of the enemies, the educational program was limited in the Revolution School and when the war was in favor of the Front, the Education Department was conducting its activity on a broader base. For example immediately after the strategic retreat the educational activity was limited only in the Revolution School. By this time the education Department assigned most of the teachers and other staff members who had been working in the former liberated areas in its different offices where they were given the task of preparing textbooks, making researches etc. In this case we can say that after the strategic retreat the department obtained skilled manpower that would work in its offices. Besides the staff members, there was a large influx of students from the former liberated areas. As a result the number of students enrolled in the Revolution School was increasing. Under this one thing that you have to know is that the Front had already believed that with out education it was impossible to liberate the peoples of Eritrea. The trust in the eminence of liberation and the role of education in that eminence was basic because this vision has enabled the Front to trust that liberation is

necessary for Eritreans to be themselves and believe in education as a liberator at the same time.

Q: How were the teachers assigned to teach? Was there any criterion to select the teachers?

A: Educational background was always an important criterion. Based of their educational background the teachers were assigned to teach at the different grade levels.

Q: Can you tell me about the efforts or measures taken to improve the skills of the teachers?

A: Under this issue, improvement of the skills of teaching, the most important thing was the commitment of every individual to the principles and objectives of the Front at large. With such a commitment and interest it was very easy to implement the educational programs of the EPLF. That is, those teachers were working very hard in order to improve their teaching skills with in short period of time. This commitment was in fact the basic secret for the over all success of the EPLF.

Among the teachers there was also a great desire to share our experiences or pedagogic skills. Not all the teachers were unqualified. There were also qualified teachers who were university graduates and had previous teaching experience Therefore, as teachers whenever we met together, we usually discussed about our teaching experiences. That is, together as a staff, we helped each other, taught each other, re-educated ourselves, on the job, from time to time. Such practices were helpful to improve our pedagogic skills. In addition to this, during the long vacations the Education Department also organized continuous workshops and seminars. In the late 1980's Eritrean professionals from European and American universities were also invited to share their experiences.

Q: Did you have any foreign assistance?

A: Mainly we were self-sufficient. We did not have any foreign assistance. We were preparing our school materials either in our school workshops or the workshops of the Front. By the way, our curriculum was designed to encourage our students to develop their creativity and skills. So most of the school materials were prepared by our students. In fact in a few cases we were getting school material assistance from our Eritrean brothers and sisters who were living abroad.

Q: How did you assess your students?

A: In this case we used to follow the principle of continuous assessment. Since the Revolution School was a boarding school it was easy for the teachers to make closer follow ups of their respective students even outside classes and to know the students at individual level. So the assessment was a detailed and continuous one. Our today's method of assessment is also a continuation of the experience adopted during the struggle period.

Q: Can you tell me about the contributions or lessons that we have learnt from the wartime experience in the field of education?

A: Some times it is difficult for me to organize all these experiences that we gained during the struggle period. But in general I can say that we have got a lot of experience in all aspects of education because at independence the Education Department was successful to continue with its education program at the national level with the help of its accumulated experience and skilled manpower. The students of the Revolution School who had been involved in the literacy campaigns increased the skilled manpower of the Education Department. These, student teachers had already developed their teaching experience. At the same time they had learned a lot about the life experience of the peasants in the countryside while they were involved in the literacy campaigns. Having this manpower meant the greater the possibility and the advantage to utilize the skill, knowledge, experience, the information, and the commitment, which were developed during the struggle period.

The educational policies of the struggle period are still the basis for our current education system. For example localization in the development of the curriculum was an important aspect. Since 1976 we had already adopted the policy to use the mother tongue at the elementary school level. The recognition of the mother tongue in basic education in our current education system is therefore the continuation of our wartime experience. Literacy program was also another important activity of the EPLF Education Department. We have got a good experience in the organization of literacy campaigns and programs in very harsh and diverse situations.



Informant: Tedros Seyum

Place of Interview: at his office (Ministry of Education)

Date: 18 February 2003

Q: How did you join the EPLF Education Department?

A: At first I would like to tell you about the Red Flowers who were organized by the Front. Most of the students who joined the Revolution School at first were members of the Red Flowers. This group was made up of children who were supposed to grow up together in order to reflect the objectives of the Front. Before the strategic retreat there were different groups of Red Flowers. By then I was a student at Comboni School Khartum (Sudan) as a refugee and I was also one of the members of the Red Flowers. Then I joined the revolution school while it was moving from one place to another due to the war. So I became a student of the Revolution School in 1978 while it was at Jelhanti whose weather condition was very hot. by then I was nine years old and became a fourth grade student at the Revolution School. I was in fact a fifth grade student in Khartum. It was the policy of the EPLF Education Department to lower down one grade level if one came from other educational background.

Q: Can you tell me your social life activities outside the school?

A: As you know the school was primarily established to teach orphan children whose parents died for the cause of the Eritrean revolution. There were also students from all ethnic groups with different social and economic background. These students came from all walks of life. But when the students came to the Revolution School, they had to change their life style and develop the ability to live together based on equal status. In this case the role of our teachers was effective. They were in fact acting as our parents.

We were also divided into groups. Each group was a combination of students from different grade levels and ethnic groups. Each group had also its own particular name, which was given in fact based on surrounding areas or battled fronts. The group had its own leaders just like the ranks of the military divisions. As a result we used to go

to classes and back to our residences in lines like soldiers. We also ate together. Each group had its own leader who was responsible to feed his/her group. If you come to the nutritional content of our food, I can say that it was bad. We usually ate the same kind of food (like lentils) for a long period of time. Most of the time I can say it was almost like a mixture of salt and water. This had in fact a negative effect on the children's health and appetite. But to compensate these problems there was a highly organized psychological support from our teachers and guardians. Had it not been for them, it was very difficult to survive under such life conditions.

Q: Did you have other major problems?

A: In fact there were problems in relation to school materials. For example some times we used to share our pencils. But this was not a major problem for us because we had more serious problems. We were always afraid of the unexpected air attacks. For this reason we always woke up early in the morning before dawn. We usually went to the valleys in order to hide ourselves. Shortage of clothing was also another problem. We used to get these clothes from the Eritreans in diaspora.

Q: How can you explain the relationship that existed between teachers and students?

A: Of course we were trained how to respect our teachers and we were really doing that because they were caring people. But we were not scared to talk to them. For example if a teacher was late to classes, we were able to ask him/her why he/she was late. If we felt something wrong about a teacher, we were not afraid to talk about it with the concerned teacher. But this does not mean that there was no smooth relationship between students and teachers. We regarded our teachers as our parents. And they also considered us as their children. For example they [the teachers] were always ready to help us in our academic achievements. Whenever some one faced a problem of understanding of a subject matter, the teachers were always ready to organize additional classes especially for those weak students lagging behind their classmates.

Q: Can you tell me about the assessment procedures in the Revolution School?

A: You know what we are using today, the continuous assessment, was started in the Revolution School. We were given a number of class works, home works, projects, and tests which would be marked out of 60% and final exams marked out of 40%. Students were also rewarded for their outstanding achievements. We were also given as a reward something new like school bags, special pens etc which were not common in the field.

Q: What were the students' contributions to the curriculum development?

A: I started to realize the contributions of the students in the curriculum development when I began to teach in the literacy campaigns. Whatever new things were raised in the curriculum, the experiment was first conducted in our school, the Revolution School. That is, it was implemented on us. If the program works well, the educators would decide to carry on with it. So I can say that we were giving feed back to the curriculum designers.

Q: Can you tell me about the time schedule of schooling?

A: There was no regular yearly time schedule. It depended on the war situation and also on the weather condition of the surrounding area because as I told you before the Revolution School was just like a mobile school. Concerning the periods each lasted for forty minutes. We had also resting time once in a week usually on Wednesdays. It was a common day for all because Sundays or Fridays were regarded as religious holidays for Christians and Muslims respectively. We used this day mostly for cleaning purposes. We had also long vacations in the summer during which we were assigned to the different departments of the Front. This was helpful to develop our skills in practical works.

Q: Can you tell me about the contribution of those students of the Revolution School to the education system at independence?

A: This is what I am always worrying about. I am always speaking about the advantage of using those students of the Revolution School. I can say that the government did not use or utilize this skilled manpower properly. The government for the overall development of the society could have used the potential of this group.

When we come to our ministry I can say that at independence it was those students of the Revolution School who started to serve as teachers and directors in the remote areas of Eritrea where it was very difficult to send anyone there as a teacher.



Informant: Aynalem Marcos

Place of Interview: at his office

Date 20 February 2003.

Q: How did you join the Education Department of the EPLF during the struggle period?

A: it was in July 1978. Until 1982 I was serving in the Political Department. After the Six Offensive in 1982 I was assigned in the Department of Education. By then I started to teach geography and at the same time to participate in the preparation of the Geography curriculum. Late in 1982 I was also participating in the activity for national literacy campaign behind the enemy lines (i.e. in the semi liberated areas). By then I was working as a member of the organizing committee. The purpose of this committee was to gather information about the traditional, economic, social and cultural activities of the local people. We stayed among the people for about six months and went back to the base area in 1983 in order to prepare and develop the adult education curriculum. At the same time the curriculum for the regular education was also modified. By the way we were providing education during the liberation struggle period in the following major areas: at the base area which was more or less a secured place for our students, at the refugee camps in the Sudan and in the semi-liberated areas (behind the enemy lines).

Q: How did you develop the curriculum?

A: We believed that before starting to discuss about how to design a curriculum we had to identify first the ideological guidelines of the Front, which was of course the liberation of the peoples of Eritrea. So as education is one of the political activities which includes all the political, social and economic aspects of a society it was important for us to follow the main guidelines of the leading political organization, the EPLF

. Having this in mind we from all subjects sat together and started to discuss about the contents that we should include in our curriculum. At first we were sharing our experiences. We also tried to collect materials related to the former Eritrean

curriculum i.e. the curriculum used during the federation period, the Ethiopian curriculum, and the curriculum used by East and West European countries. We were looking the materials mainly to understand the experiences of the countries. Having read the materials we were trying to formulate our own curriculum based on the local context.

Q: How did you assign teachers? Did you have any criteria to select teachers?

A: We had in fact different approaches. The majority of the teachers were combatants. We had also some teachers with previous experience of teaching. We usually provided the teachers orientations and workshops concerning the upbringing of children; the curriculum materials and the teaching methodology. Especially such orientations were targeted to those new teachers with out any teaching experience. In relation to this by 1985/86 we opened our own Teachers Training Institution within the Revolution School and started to give short courses, lasting between four and six months depending on how much the teachers were urgently needed. Those new teachers who had completed the seventh and eighth grades at the Revolution School were trained here in the new training institution. They were trained in pedagogy, all the subjects and the upbringing of children. The trainees were continuously assessed in their course activities. The institution functioned in flexible time. We also bring all the teachers in the liberated areas every summer to orientate them and evaluate the curriculum. Some times Eritrean scholars were invited to give seminars and workshops.

Q: Did you have financial or any foreign assistance?

A: The first thing that you have to know is that during the liberation struggle period we did not worry about the financial sources. We were as a principle trying to be self-sufficient. Let's say we needed blackboard. By the way our curriculum was not only theoretical. It also included practical works, which included metal works, wood works and other handicraft works. So from these workshops we were able to get blackboards. If we could not produce the school material we needed, we used to get it from the workshops of the Front itself. No worry to import materials needed for the teaching learning activities from abroad. As far as textbooks were concerned we print

out them for our children in our workshops. We had school printing press. Some of the reference materials and library books were in fact requested from Eritreans in diaspora. We used to have somewhat modest library system.

Q: How did you assess the students?

A: We had our own framework of evaluation, which provided guidelines for our teachers concerning the evaluation procedures. That is, tests, class works, home works and projects were to be marked with 60% and the rest 40% was reserved for final examinations. This is in fact still in use under the present education system.

Q: How did you evaluate the education system in general?

A: We had different approaches. As curriculum designers we were going to the liberated areas every summer to gather the teachers for discussion concerning the educational activities of the year. During the seminar the teachers would tell us the experience they had gone through and we would make discussions on the raised problems. For example one grade four mathematics teacher could say, 'look the text book is very broad to complete with in the given time. From my experience I was not able to complete all the chapters and particularly this and that chapters are beyond and above the capacity of the students to comprehend'. And the other grade four mathematics teacher from another school would say, "Yes I would support the idea of the comrade. It is broad and the chapters should be revised again'. After such kind of opinions, discussions were carried on to develop the idea and to collect information on how to make modifications on the particular problems. Some times we had also unexpected problems concerning the curriculum. Let me tell you one real example. There was an article in the Tigre textbook. It was talking about the values of cats in the household. In fact the purpose of this article was to inculcate in the minds of the children the feeling of love of animals and at the same time to develop their reading skill. The problem was raised when we were discussing with the teachers in one of the general meetings. The teachers told us that this animal was not known in that particular community. So the kids were confused about this animal. Some were even comparing it with dogs. In this case the objectives of the article could not be fulfilled. But our education policy was based on the principle that the children should be taught

based on the objective reality in order to help them develop their thinking. In this way we were able to gather information to revise and evaluate our educational program. The teachers were helpful in giving us feed back to our questions.

Concerning the revision of our curriculum we had also tried to make a comprehensive analysis and evaluation in 1991. This curriculum had already worked for about 10 years. And this was the most ideal period to reform and modify the curriculum. Then practical work started in 1991 immediately before the achievement of independence. The research was started. Questionnaires were prepared and distributed to the teachers who were teaching at the base, in the refugee camps and in the liberated areas. But before completing this evaluation process, Eritrea became independent. Then, after the after the establishment of the National Curriculum Department the evaluation process again continued with the help of an international consultant All the information was again analyzed and evaluated. It was then decided to organize a national and international conference to discuss on the reform of the Eritrean national curriculum. But this never took place.

Q: How do you explain the relationship that existed between teachers and students?

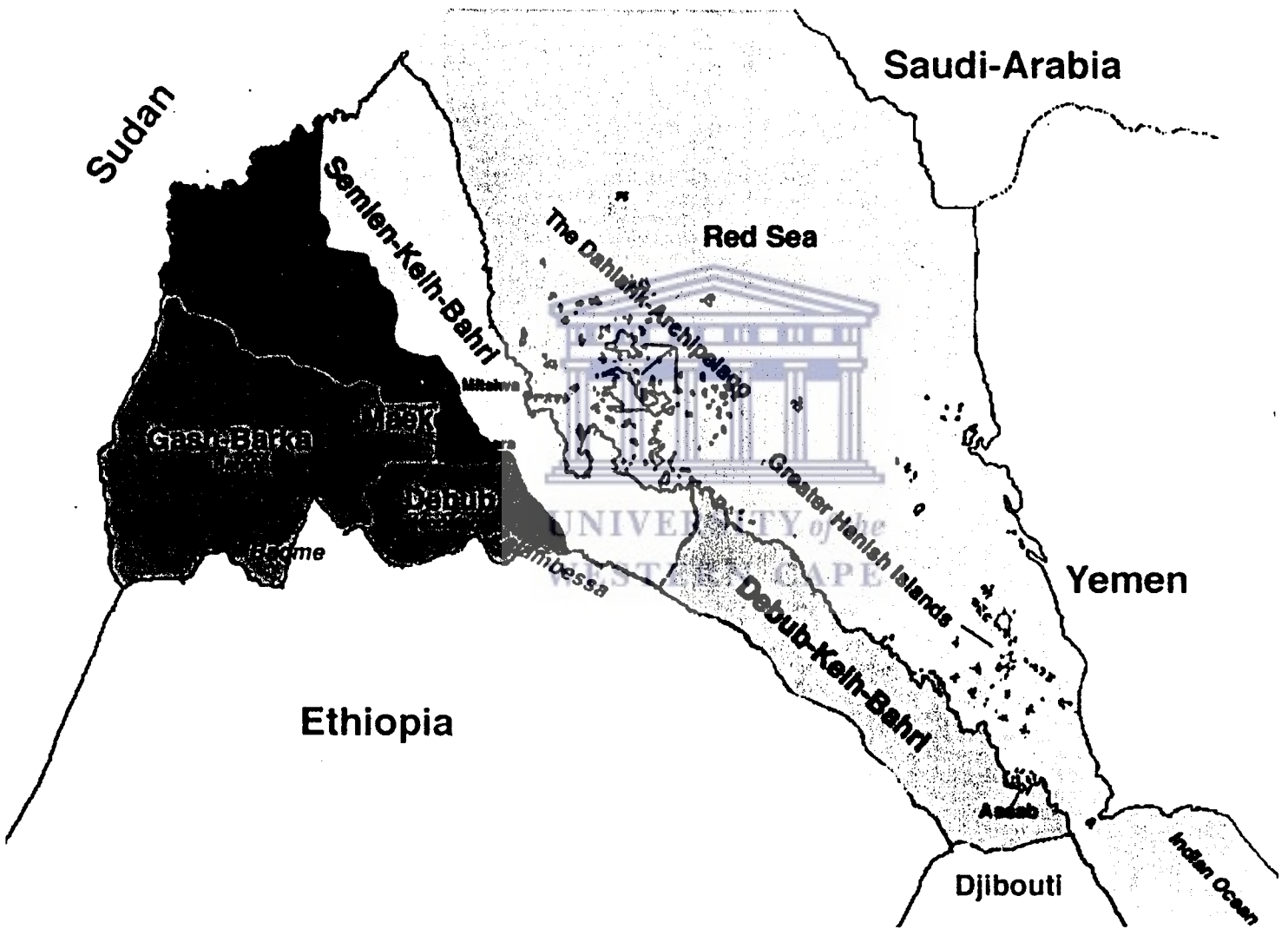
First of all in our education system corporal punishment was not allowed. The relationship was not like masters and serfs. Besides this we were trying to establish a smooth relationship. We had rules concerning the relationship between teachers and students. Homeroom teachers were required to discuss with their respective class students every two or three weeks. In the meetings students were expected to express their opinions concerning their subject teachers. They were allowed to speak out what ever they felt. Then the homeroom teacher would try to explain to students what was right to him/her. After this the homeroom teachers would present the report i.e. the points of discussions in the class to the general staff meeting for purposes of discussions and comments.

On the other hand teachers also considered their students as their children. Subject teachers were ready to give additional classes for those weak students. Homeroom teachers were also organizing study programmes for their students. In this case the first thing the teachers would do was to select a concerned mother (from the adult

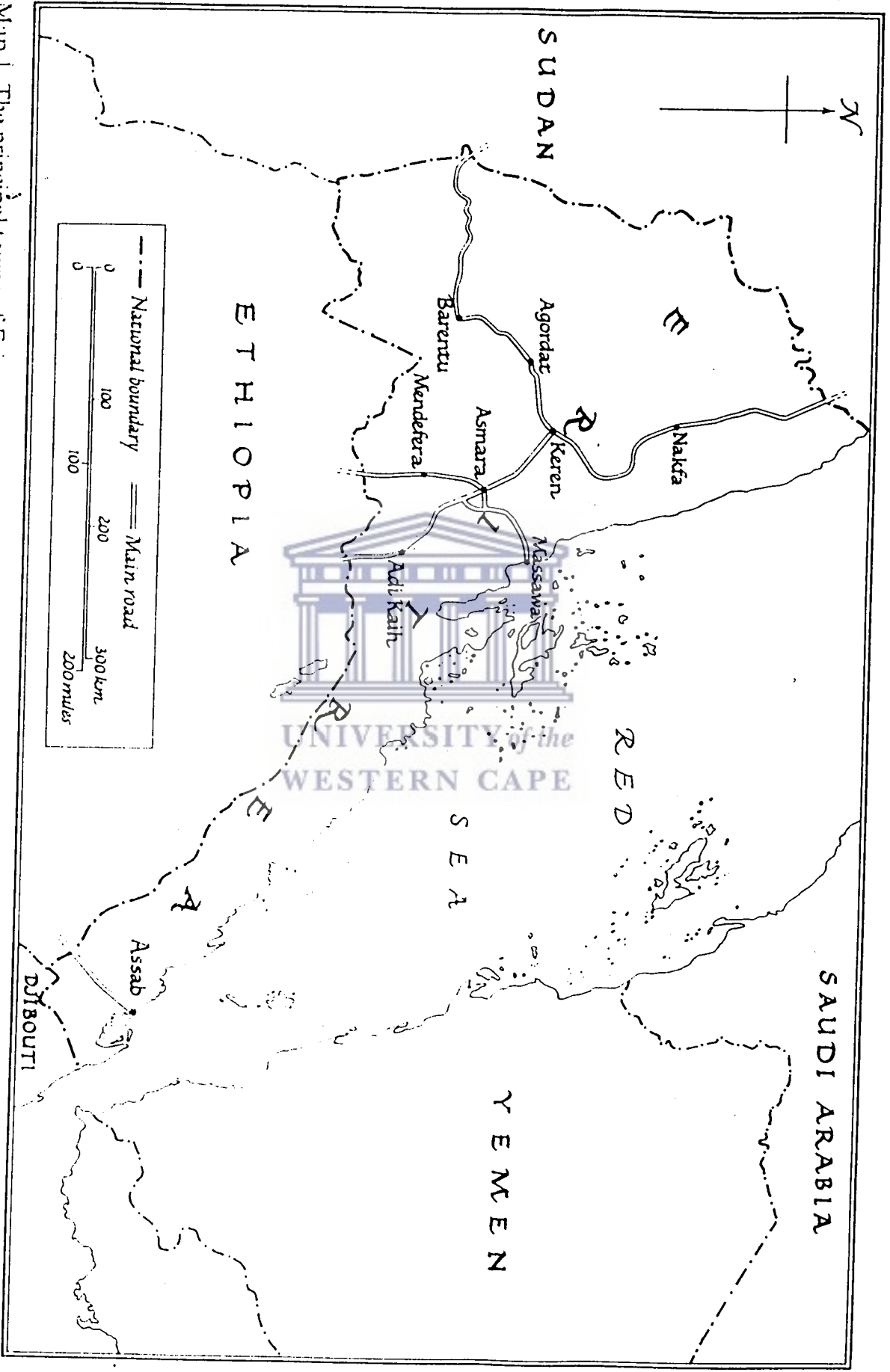
education classes) who would be responsible for the study programmes of the children who were living around her area. In such a way study programmes were organized with the help of the teachers and parents. In fact the teachers themselves also supervised these programmes. All these show the smooth relationship that existed between the teachers, the students and the parents.



ERITREAN Administrative Regions



Source: <http://www.netafrica.org/eritrea/eritrea-map.html>



Map 1 The principal towns of Eritrea

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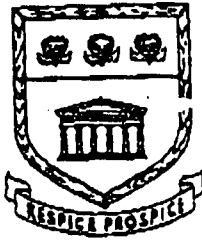
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HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Supervisor's report on Binjam Tesfamariam, "Provision of schooling by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) in the Field from 1976-1991", mini-thesis in partial fulfilment of requirements for M.Phil

The thesis has four chapters, one on the background to the liberation struggle in Eritrea, a comparative chapter on education in war zones in Namibia, Cape Verde and South Africa, a chapter on education in the war zones in Eritrea, and a chapter on the lessons learnt from the war experience for the current education system, especially with regard to literacy and womens' rights to education.

The thesis is fluently written, and provides information - including information from primary sources and from interviews - on a relatively obscure subject. In particular the author has used unique documents kept at the National Research and Documentation Centre in Asmara, Eritrea. The author has thus demonstrated command of appropriate techniques of research. The author has also endeavoured to find and discuss relevant comparative literature, though probably not all relevant literature. On p. 1 the author identifies eight questions, all of which are addressed and an answer given in the course of the thesis. The thesis is coherently argued, and adequately interpreted.

The first chapter gives a useful account of the pre-colonial and colonial history of Eritrea, of the post-WWII UN decision that Eritrea should be 'federated' with Ethiopia, of its absorption into union with Ethiopia, and the rise of the Eritrean independence struggle, and of the EPLF. It is a particularly useful summary for those who know little of the subject in South Africa. The second chapter discusses the schooling of Namibian refugees, the ANC's SOMAFCO in Tanzania, and the schooling of people by the PAIGC in the liberated areas of Cape Verde. While this does not ask all the questions it could ask, and ignores some recent literature, it is a competent account. The core chapter in the thesis is the third, which gives a detailed account of the evolution of the EPLF's education programme from 1976, including the establishment of the model and testing-ground, the Revolution School, the development of curriculum, the EPLF's philosophy of education, the methods of teacher training to avoid teaching by rote, and the difficulties created by the war situation. For a historian, this provided a fascinating insight into the EPLF - though perhaps educationalists would have further questions to ask.

The thesis is competent as regards the formal conventions of scholarship, as regards grammar, style and layout. However more use could have been made of the interviews in the text. There are spelling errors - Gotsman instead of Gottesman, eg on p. 71.

As it stands the thesis provide adequate evidence for passing the candidate - with a mark of 66.



HSRC

Social science that makes a difference

5 August 2003

Dear Mr. Bartes

Enclosed is my narrative report on the MA minor thesis by Mr. B.Z. Tesfamariam, as well as the forms that I am also required to submit.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt. An e-mail message to me at smorrow@hsrc.ac.za will be fine.

Yours sincerely



Seán Morrow (Dr.)

Chief Research Specialist
Democracy and Governance

Mr. Laurence Bartes
Student Administration: Examinations
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
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encl/...

Evaluation of Biniam Zeray Tesfamariam, "Provision of Schooling by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) in the Field from 1976-91". June 2003

The overall intention of this thesis is to place education under the EPLF in the context of that of other African liberation movements, to describe that education, and to draw from the experience whatever lessons for independent Eritrea may have been learned.

The background chapter on Eritrean history seems adequate to a reader like myself who I should say is only superficially acquainted with the history of this part of the continent. In an area where political allegiances and the background to them are controversial and could lead to partisanship, the writer seems, from a broadly Eritrean nationalist point of view, to have created a balanced and convincing picture.

The comparative examples of education in war zones in chapter two are interesting, though more could have been made of them. The chapter starts with a rather oversimplified view of missionary education, based largely on a work by Njobe, which itself comes from a very specific set of South African circumstances at a particular time, and is really an inadequate basis for generalization on this theme. For example, near the end of page 24 there are some lines that are difficult to understand (this is not typical of the thesis as a whole) but which seem to suggest that missionaries did not wish to teach the poor. This fails to capture the ambiguities of missionary education and the complex interaction between it and the formation of classes in African societies. Thus it becomes difficult to understand the transition from an apparently uniformly elitist missionary and colonial education to a situation where education derived from just such models in many ways provided the basis for liberation movements.

The chapter continues with examples of "education in war zones". More could have been made of this concept. In fact, the experience of PAIGC seems the closest to that of EPLF, in that their schools were indeed directly in a "war zone", actually under attack, and relying almost entirely on their own resources. The SWAPO and ANC schools were in neighbouring countries that were indeed menaced by the South African regime, but which were comparatively secure. They were also heavily funded from international bodies, NGOs and the like. This gave a very different trajectory to these institutions. In the next chapter, there is a mention of EPLF schools in exile in the Sudan, but this side of the movement's educational activity is not developed, and the emphasis is on the Revolutionary School inside Eritrea itself. More might have been made of the examples from other parts of Africa if these similarities and differences, and the implications for educational practice that must have flowed from them in terms of the teaching force, curriculum and so on, had been indicated more clearly.

I would say that the section on ANC schooling is rather skimpy even in relation to what might have been available to the candidate, though some relevant material has appeared since the thesis was being finalized. To help with future work on this theme, I will point out some literature, on South Africa and elsewhere, that was not consulted in writing this chapter. On Namibia, a source that should be consulted is Y. Nordkvelle, 'Teachers,

culture and politics: the struggle for a curriculum for the free Namibia. A case-study of the Namibia Secondary Technical School', *Journal of Education Policy*, 10, 4 (1995): 361-371. On ANC exile education, see Seán Morrow, 'Dakawa Development Centre: an African National Congress Settlement in Tanzania, 1982-1992', *African Affairs*, 97 (1998): 497-521. More recently, there is Seán Morrow, Brown Maaba and Loyiso Pulumani, 'Education in Exile: the African National Congress's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) and Dakawa Development Centre in Tanzania: 1978 to 1992', in Peter Kallaway, ed., *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened*, Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa, pp. 155-173. There is also the recent article by Morrow, Pulumani and Maaba, 'Revolutionary Schooling? Studying the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, the African National Congress Liberation School in Tanzania, 1978 to 1992', *World Studies in Education*, 3, 1 (2002): 23-37. For future reference, there is the forthcoming book on SOMAFCO by the same three authors. Another book that mentions exile education in Southern Africa is Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Vol. 2: Solidarity and Assistance 1970-1994*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002. A short piece about Zimbabwe, is P.M. Nare, 'Education and War', in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger, eds., *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, London: James Currey, 1995, pp. 130-138.

The heart of the thesis is chapter three. This is an interesting section, and adequate for the purposes of this minor thesis. It is based on documents from the Eritrean Research and Documentation Centre, secondary sources and four interviews. It deals both with the Revolutionary School, and, to a lesser extent, with the network of village schools and, during the time when the EPLF was under severe attack by the Ethiopian forces, the schools in exile in the Sudan.

In many ways, and this is not in itself a bad thing, this chapter suggests more questions than it answers. We are told (these are constant themes in this sort of situation in the sphere of education) that the Revolutionary School aspired to link theory and practice, to strengthen links between school and society, to break down hierarchies within the school, and to link theory and production. But there is little sense of how this actually worked out in practice: the South African experience would suggest that other sorts of reality (dislike of manual labour; contempt for the apparently unsophisticated local people, and so on) could intrude quite uncomfortably on these radical aspirations. A wider programme of interviews, with students especially, would be necessary to explore such questions. Similarly, it would be good to know in more detail what relations were like between the Revolutionary School and local people: there are interesting hints in the context of literacy campaigns, but also a suggestion that the school may have been in some sense a sort of urban implant into rural environments. Again, ex-students, and local people, would be the best sources here. There are also interesting hints that in spite of excellent teacher-student relations, there were difficulties with unqualified teachers following the rote-learning pattern that was the only pedagogical style they knew: the thesis explores the curriculum to some extent, but the classroom reality is more elusive. In short, to fully develop the themes that are raised in this chapter, it would be necessary to do more interviews, and perhaps, if they survive and are available, to explore the records of the actual school.

Above all, it would be necessary to bear in mind that what actually happens in educational contexts is often not what we are told happens.

The final chapter deals with lessons that might be learned from this experience. Questions of literacy, gender, language, the education of nomadic people and so on are raised. While the author is generally positive, problems, and even reversals, as with the education of girls, are not ignored. I am not quite clear as to the author's verdict on literacy campaigns, where the difficulties are stressed (69-70), and then the successes (72). Neither are the links of these campaigns with those in the liberation war period made entirely clear (72-74).

The thesis has a clear theme and adequately explores it, though there is room for considerable further exploration of its subject. This is to be expected in a minor thesis. The literature on parallel cases to that of the EPLF is adequately, though not comprehensively, explored. It is well presented, and the scholarly apparatus is clear. It is good to have the transcribed interviews. There could however be a table of abbreviations – for instance, if I am not mistaken, the “PLO” on p. 18 is not explained. A map of Eritrea and its surroundings, showing the places named in the thesis, also seems to me to be essential in a work like this.

In my copy of the thesis, I have made minor changes in language and punctuation on most pages. However, for the most part these do not interfere with meaning, and I think that most of them are well within what is acceptable from a candidate writing in what is not his or her first language. I am not going to make a long list of these minor points. In fact, it is well written. However, let me mention some points that are simply errors, or that I found obscure: these should be corrected before the thesis goes to the Library:

- p. 5, l. 9: Ottoman Turkey
- p. 6, l. 14: King of Italy
- p. 7, l. 11: A content point: were there really still 60,000 Italian settlers in Eritrea in the *late* 1940s? Ignore my scepticism if it is unjustified.
- p. 12, l. 16: Trevaskis
- p. 17, l. 17: Check the quotation: it seems wrong.
- p. 18, l. 7: PLO?
- p. 24, ll. 20-23: Rephrase these lines.
- p. 25, l. 5: Bible
- p. 31, l. 12: later
- p. 32, l. 1: years
- p. 33, ll. 17, 19: Umkhonto; Mahlangu
- p. 35, l. 3 (and thereafter): Govender
- p. 39, ll. 18-24: put this in the same font as the rest of the thesis
- p. 62, l. 2: planners
- p. 83: insert space between second and third paragraphs
- p. 86, l. 7: Irridentism

pp. 87-88: Harber and Iyob? Same book?
p. 88, l. 6: Windus ✓ Windus

I find it difficult to say if the candidate should be encouraged to proceed to doctoral studies. It might be easier to give an opinion if this was a full MA thesis. However, if I have to give a rather tentative opinion, I regard this as a competent piece of work, but not as it stands clearly pointing towards future doctoral studies.

The theme fully merits publication, with the emphasis on chapters 3 and 4. I do however think that in this case there would be a need to do more interviewing, especially of ex-students and teachers, and perhaps, if such material is available, more exploration of relevant archives.

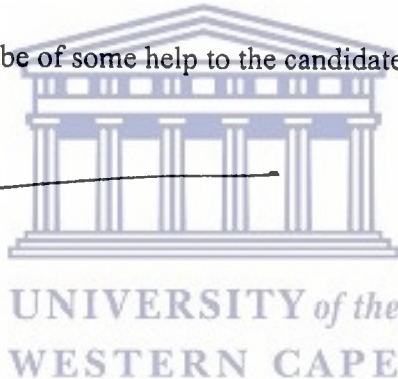
This thesis, in my view, should be accepted subject to minor corrections that the supervisor can check. The list of small items above should be corrected, and there should be a map and a table of abbreviations.

I hope that these comments will be of some help to the candidate in extending the study and publishing at least part of it.



Seán Morrow

Democracy and Governance
Human Sciences Research Council
5 August 2003



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

THESIS AND MINITHESIS EXAMINER'S FORM

Please read the "Information and Guidelines for Examiners of Master's and Doctoral Theses".
We ask that you complete this form and return it along with a full report.

Candidate's name

Biniam Zeray Tesfemariam

Type of thesis (please tick one):

Master's minithesis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Master's full thesis <input type="checkbox"/>	Doctoral thesis <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please circle ONE of the following recommendations:

- 1 The thesis as it stands provides adequate evidence for passing the candidate.
- 2 Subject to minor corrections being effected as specified in an appendix to my report, the thesis provides adequate evidence for passing the candidate. The corrections must be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
- 3 The thesis in its present form does not provide adequate evidence for passing the candidate and should be re-worked substantially as specified in my report. It should then be re-submitted for examination.
- 4 The thesis does not provide adequate evidence for passing the candidate.

For a Master's minithesis or Master's full thesis please indicate a percentage mark.

(A distinction or *cum laude* mark is 75% or above; a pass mark is 50% or above.)

68%

May a copy of your report be made available to the candidate?

Yes No

If so, may your name be divulged to the candidate?

Yes No

Signature of examiner.....

[Handwritten Signature]

Date.....

3/17/03

Name of examiner (Please print).....

P. KALLAWAY

Independent Examiner's Report: by Peter Kallaway

M.Phil Mini-Thesis:

Student : Biniam Zeray Tesfamariam:

**Topic : PROVISION OF SCHOOLING BY THE ERITREAN
PEOPLES LIBERATION FRONT (EPLF) IN THE FIELD
FROM 1976-1991**

The candidate undertakes an interesting study of the background to the relationship between education and national liberation in the context of the extended struggle for Eritrean independence in the period since World War II. Chapter 1 outlines the background to the history of the national liberation struggle in Eritrea (1961-91). Chapter 2, in a literature review, locates this struggle in the wider context of African national liberation and links those struggles to the particular experiences of "Education in War Zones" in Namibia (SWAPO), South Africa (ANC) and Guinea-Bissau (PAIGC). The following, substantive research chapter seeks to investigate the nature of "Education in the Eritrean War Zones between 1976-1991" – through the various phases of the struggle and in terms of particular key aspects of educational development such as literacy campaigns, women's education, and the development of curricula "relevant" to the circumstances. Finally, Chapter 4 attempts to draw together the threads of the story and to assess the "lessons learned" or to be learned from the frontline experience of education for policy making in the new nation established in 1991 after the defeat of the Ethiopian army.

There is a good grasp of the topic and an energetic engagement with the complexities of the colonial and post-colonial situation. There is also an attempt to locate the Eritrean experience in a wider framework of ideas and practices. Although this was not intended to be a critical analysis of the Eritrean political struggle, it would have been good to have more of an idea of who the allies of the revolutionaries were at various times – if for no other idea that to assist the reader to understand the ideological orientation of the educational changes proposed. (pp.20-23)

BUT there is rather too uncritical a view of the Eritrean educational project. The rhetoric of the revolutionary movements or the new government is taken for granted as being the “truth”; statements of intent or projected wish-lists are taken to be what actually happened. The researcher does not make enough of an attempt to distance himself from the evidence and to at least demonstrate that these were “goals” or “claims” rather than actual verifiable achievements. Eg. on pp.83 it is stated that “the content of the syllabus was related to the student’s daily experience” etc. This is an educational goal that is easily expressed but often difficult to decode or implement. If the claim is to be convincing it therefore needs evidence of how this was achieved or to what extent it was achieved, or whether it was achieved at all. In another example, the work assumes that the IGCSE does in fact “promote critical thinking and group work” etc. without bringing any evidence to show that this was the case in practice rather than just in theory.[pp.30.] And then there was a need to subject those claims or projects to a critical test of how the respondents saw what had happened. On the whole little space was granted to that kind of critical testing of evidence.- something that would normally be expected of good research. (*Triangulation* as the social scientists call it).

In short we have something of a romantic version of the revolutionary education tale here (what is sometimes called a “Whig interpretation of history”) where history is used to tell a heroic tale, when even from the point of view of the policy-maker it would be much more productive to understand the complexity and the *failures* as well as the successes.

The nature of the explanation of colonial education is rather thin in places and implies that it was entirely a one-way process of colonial imposition, whereas there is much evidence that colonial education was a much more complex affair than that. Namely there are good explanations of why some of the indigenous peoples had economic or social reasons (other than religious ones) for seeking colonial /formal education. Equally the candidate states twice that the reason why the British introduced Muslim and Christian education was to “divide and rule” but in the context of the 1950s this seems highly unlikely – it seems more in line with the idea of cultural and religious rights that was an important factor in educational policy at that time. The use of Njobe as the only source on these issues rather weakened the argument as he has a rather rigid viewpoint on these issues and does not reflect

contemporary scholarship on the issue. (The fact that the Catholic Institute for International Education was a key player in the establishment of SWAPO's educational project must be recognised).

Mini-thesis!

One of the shortcomings of the work was that it failed to explore what theories had driven "liberation education" in the period since the 1960s – in particular the ideas of Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire. (Freire is mentioned only once on page 83, and his work is not cited in the bibliography – but the ghost of his work lies behind the whole work). This tells me that there is something of a lack of theoretical understanding of the phenomena being described. In this regard I would recommend that the candidate reviews the work of Ron Arnove (1986) on Nicaragua (*Education and Revolution in Nicaragua*) and Sean Morrow on SOMAFSCO – various articles including on in EDUCATION UNDER APARTHEID – an a forthcoming book called EDUCATION IN EXILE (Skotaville Press). Govender was well used and shows the way for this kind of work.

- alphabetise* *ELF - Eriheon*
- A list of abbreviations used would have been useful.
 - There are a number of references that are cited but not listed in the bibliography : p50 and 64: Fitawrari ; pp.63 and 70 : nay10....; p53 : meglesti....; p51-2 : statstakawi.....; p82 : shebia.org /news etc

This is a substantial piece of work for a mini-thesis, and although it is in need of editorial attention in places, it more than satisfies the criteria for the mini-thesis. This mini-thesis meets all the criteria for a M.Phil.-thesis. It is well written and covers original material in an important and interesting area of educational research.

Peter Kallaway
Faculty of Education
31/7/03

Sean Morrow's report?