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Assessing the genesis, development and challenges of modern education in Ethiopia (1905–1941): a historical perspective

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia's modern education transitioned from traditional religious systems to modern during Emperor Menilek II's reign. A significant historical overview of modern education in the country was laid from 1905 to 1941; however, scholars made a passive remark to study the historical development of education in the period. Therefore, this study purposely assessed the period's early missionary, government-sponsored, and Italian-run modern schools. To conduct this study, the researcher collected primary and secondary sources. The sources were then arranged, presented, and carefully examined. Finally, a qualitative research method of a descriptive research design was principally employed to analyze the data. The analysis revealed that Ethiopia's education development has faced many challenges from the beginning to 1941. Despite efforts from rulers and intellectuals, Ethiopia's education faced challenges such as church resistance and the fascist massacre of educated Ethiopians in 1937, which resulted in the loss of educated preference. Education remained deficient in quantity and inappropriate in quality. In conclusion, numerous challenges significantly hampered the development of modern education in Ethiopia before 1941, leaving a lasting impact. Thus, education did not bring modernity to Ethiopia as expected. Therefore, understanding these challenges is crucial for informing contemporary educational policies and practices in Ethiopia.

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Introduction

Modern education in Ethiopia during the early 20th century marked a significant turning point in the country's history. Prior to this period, education had been largely confined to the religious sphere, with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Islamic institutions providing instruction in religious texts and traditional knowledge that present as the relevant background of this article. While these traditional forms of education had played a vital role in shaping Ethiopian society for centuries, they were seen as increasingly inadequate in the face of the growing demands of a modernizing nation.

Emperor Menilek II (1889–1913), recognizing the need for a more modern educational system, initiated the establishment of Western-style schools, starting with the opening of the first missionary school in Addis Ababa in 1905.

This move was followed by the opening of the first government-sponsored modern school, Menilek II School, in 1908. Subsequent rulers, including Empress Zewditu and Regent Teferi, continued these efforts, with the latter establishing a dedicated education budget in 1926 and issuing a proclamation in 1929 aimed at expanding access to education. The reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–1974) witnessed a further acceleration of educational development, with the establishment of a Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, the opening of new schools in the capital and provinces, and the expansion of opportunities for girls' education.

Despite these advances, the spread of modern education in Ethiopia during this period faced numerous challenges. Resistance from the Orthodox Church clergy, who viewed modern education as a threat to their authority, posed a significant obstacle. The dominance of the aristocracy in government schools also hindered wider access to education. The use of European languages as the primary medium of

instruction further limited the reach of modern education. The Italian occupation of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941 dealt a devastating blow to the country's nascent educational system, with schools closed and many educated Ethiopians targeted for persecution.

Modern education was founded in Ethiopia between 1905 and 1941. As a result, both positive beginnings and mistakes should be raised in this historical development of modern education. Talking about errors, positive aspects, and challenges is also crucial. However, many scholars have made a passing remark to study the educational development of the stated period.

Thus, the article aimed to examine, assess, and address the genesis, development, and challenges of modern education in Ethiopia from 1905 to 1941. It explores the motivations behind the introduction of Western-style education, the role of missionaries and the government in its expansion, the various obstacles that impeded its progress, and the impact of the Italian occupation. By providing a comprehensive historical analysis of this crucial period, this study aims to shed light on the complex and multifaceted process through which modern education took root in Ethiopia and its enduring legacy for the country's educational landscape.

Background of the study

Academicians accordingly explained education in their view. Education is an essential instrument for passing along information and culture from one generation to the next. A person gains skills, attitudes, and other behaviours that are indicative of practical values in the society in which they live through the process of education. A scholar in the field of education, Dr. Samuel W. Amadioha, agrees that advancing justice and social order requires the use of education as a vital instrument (Amadioha, 2011).

Education is highly valued in societies as a tool for gaining improved lifestyles and sophisticated thought (Dereje, 2024). Fast and sustainable economic and social growth of the country through robust human resource development is largely dependent on education (Kebede, 2014) and it is a means to bring changes in people's behaviour in a desirable and planned way. Therefore, education is the most suitable to guide the upcoming of our development. But modern education in Ethiopia was a late comer as a result of internal and external factors. Traditions have been a strong internal force, acting as a gate-keeper to keep out what was considered foreign at the time. Constant external aggressions provoke opposition and avoidance. Consequently, the nation has historically been among the least developed in the world in terms of education, with the bulk of its citizens having limited access to formal education (Dereje, 2024). In Ethiopia, there are two types of indigenous education. These are religious education and cultural education. The goal of indigenous cultural education is to impart cultural values, heritage, and ways of thinking to the youth in a variety of ways (Molla et al., 2022). Therefore, before the introduction of modern education in the country at the beginning of the twentieth century, education was in the hands of traditional Christians (Pankhurst, 1972) and Muslim elites. These were priests and sheiks who received education, and they could read, write, and understand their theology well (Abir, 1970). Ethiopia is unique from other world in the historical area of education. Ethiopia has a remarkably distinct educational history. The country's traditional schools were administered by *debteras*¹ and other religious clerics prior to the introduction of Western influence, which was initiated during Emperor Menilek II in 1905 (Milkias, 2011).

For a long period of time, Christian and Islamic traditional educations² have dominated in Ethiopia. Before we are going to see the evolution of modern education³, it is significant to see these traditional education dominants in brief.

Traditional Christian education

Traditional Christian Ethiopia is a literate society compared with others and possessing its own written language and body of literature, which comprising religious and historical works. Rulers and ordinary peoples could have attended their education in churches that was the only way of learning how to read and write in absence of modern education. The clergy for religious activity and noblemen for administration purpose were educated. One important institution in the traditional society of Ethiopia was the church, which served for elementary system of education for the clergy and nobility. Not only for religious and administration objective, but also traditional education was needed for overall cultural aspects of the society and performed it (Markakis, 1975). The church used to teach the disciples, from the

introduction of the alphabet or the letter for beginners to higher philosophical studies like book interpretation, dogmatic and church history education. The curriculum is divided into three main parts: it is intended first for beginners, then for intermediates, and finally for advanced scholars. The teaching was always in Geez (Kefyalew, 1994). Massive church disciples drop their education after they could read and write (Kebede, 2014). The priest who learned many years in the learning centres of the great churches and monasteries called *debtera* or *liq* (Ayalew, 2009; Levine, 1972). The advanced scholar teaching learning process requires average 15 to 20 years (Sirgiw & Yonas n.d.). Church education was designed to prepare clerical functionaries such as deacons, priests, monks, and *debteras* besides civil servants like judges, governors, treasurers, and general administrators for their subsequent roles (Tadesse et al., 2022).

Traditional educated intellectuals passed different levels and stages in their life of education and after completion of the schooling they became influential in the social, political, economic, religious and cultural aspects and life of the society (Milkias, 1976). Studying in this manner was required in order to maintain a complex educational system. Typically, there were five levels of church schools, which included the following: These study levels, the so-called *Nibab Bet* (House of Reading), *Qidase Bet* (Liturgy House), *Zema Bet* (School of Chanting), *Qine Bet* (School of Poetry), and *Metsahift Bet* (School of Exegesis or Commentary), are branches and stages in the church's traditional education (Kebede, 2014; Molla et al., 2022; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). However, so many scholars also categorized the church study levels into four by incorporating *Qidase Bet* to *Zema Bet* (Kefyalew, 1994).

Anyhow, at the primary level, *Nibab Bet* serves as the cornerstone for instruction in reading, writing, math, ethics, and morality. At this level, children start to learn the Geez alphabet, read and write it, and commit the several holy books to memory. Among the subjects taught at the highest educational levels are history, philosophy, theology, mathematics, poetry, and music. St. Yared is the subject of *Zema Bet*'s hymn, and the traditional dances and musical instruments that accompany its recitation are the subject of his musical notations. *Qine Bet* focuses on *Qine* (poetry) and the Geez language. The highest level of church education is *Metsahift Bet*, where students study the Old and New Testaments, *Mereha Ewur* or *Bahere Hasab* (Computation of the Church Calendar), and arts and crafts (Molla et al., 2022), *Metsahifite Menekosat* (the Syrian origin Book of Monks (Beaman, 2017) states Monastic Writings and Life of Monks), and *Liawunt* (the study of church fathers and their writings). From primary to higher education, Ethiopia is home to thousands of indigenous Christian schools that have been in operation for more than a millennium. Given that the exact number of Ethiopian indigenous schools is unknown, moderate projections place the number between 30,000 and 35,000 traditional schools still in operation. These educational institutions have long been a hub for the study of ancient history, the arts, knowledge, and skills. All of the nation's knowledge and wisdom came from these educational institutions. At a time when modern education had not yet been introduced, the schools were also helping Ethiopians become literate (Molla et al., 2022).

To acquire good knowledge students travelled from one place to the other place of learning institutions of the church by hold their learning aids (Levine, 1972), mostly in the Tigray and Amhara provinces of northern Ethiopia (Milkias, 2011). Prominent Christian education centres include Dima Giyorgis, Mota Giyorgis, Debre Libanos, Debre Asebot, Ziqualla Abbo, Gondar Medehane'alem *Metsahift Bets*; Washera, Gonji, Delanta, Lasta *Qine Bets*; Wadela in Wollo, Bethlehem monastery and Zuramba Maryam in Begemdir for *Zema* specialization; Debre Abbay *Qidase Bet* in Tigray. Some academics draw comparisons between professors of modern education and church exegetical and interpretation school teachers. This is determined by how they go with their education inside the church, the degree of knowledge they acquire, the title and respect they receive, and more. These religious schools are renowned for providing excellent teaching in many different kinds of fields. These study centres are typically few and sparsely spread. In contrast to *Nibab Bet* schools, which are widely dispersed throughout the nation where parish churches are located (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005).

Those who passed in these stages monopolized education and even no ministry of education until Lij lyasu's reign (Milkias, 1976) and the church played ministry of education role traditionally for a long period of time since the time of its naissance to the beginning of twentieth century (Kefyalew, 1994; Sirgiw & Yonas n.d.) indicated that how much traditional education monopolized knowledge and education. Well educated and trained traditional intelligentsia highly demanded by the feudal court and the church for religious sphere of their serve (Milkias, 2011).

Historically, the traditional education systems in Ethiopia grow side by side with expansion of Christianity in the first half of the fourth century A.D. In 320 A.D the two young Syrian brothers, Frumentius and Aedesius reach to Aksumite port of Adulis in their unsuspecting voyage. In A.D 330 Frumentius became the secretary of the Aksum king Ella Amida I and he was succeeded to convert the king's son to Christianity. When Ezana (r. 320–360) took the throne of Aksumite Empire after the death of his father, and followed by mass conversion to Christianity in Ethiopia about the mid-fourth century A.D. Christian education began in this situation and continued from this time (Milkias, 2011).

The church has been leading and teaching the people for a long time by facilitating and giving free education opportunities or scholarships to students. The educational content that the church taught was often religious and occasionally secular knowledge, so that students would grow up to be ethical and so that church laity and the people in general would have morals (Kefyalew, 1994).

Islamic traditional education

Like Christians, Muslim societies also have their own tradition of education in Ethiopia. In Muslim communities Quran schools are attached to the local mosques. In these schools' sheikhs served as teacher. Starting from the low-level Muslim pupils learn Islamic teaching in the Quran schools up to highest level (Markakis, 1975). Quranic schools appeared presumably since the 11th century in Ethiopia (Sisay, 2016), and the schools provide instruction in Arabic at the lowest level, where pupils study a few chapters of the Quran. Studying *Nahu* (grammar), *Fiqh* (Islamic law), and *Tafsir* (Quranic commentary) are subjects covered at higher educational levels. A typical rural school merely offers basic Arabic instruction and a cursory reading of the Quran. Only a small number of schools, known as medressa, provide the more advanced courses. These schools are typically located in bigger towns with a significant Muslim population, like Asmera, Dessie, Addis Ababa, Jimma, and Harar (Markakis, 1975). For instance, an Egyptian Mohammed Muktar observed the expansion of Quranic schools at Harar in the late nineteenth century. He witnessed day Muslim beginner learners of reading and writing besides night stripping Fiqh learners (Kebede, 2014).

In traditional Islam schools' teachers and students have carried out their teaching and learning job under big trees in some deficient cases. While some devout educators have taught in their homes, others who have access to various resources have dutifully carried out their duties in local mosques. These mosques could be located close to or connected to rural communities. Any site where an '*alim* (singular of *Ulama*) provides guidance is commonly called *dakhil*, internal life (Ahmed, 2006).

As already stated, traditional Muslim education has been carried out under such precarious circumstances in terms of both physical resources and manpower. Even if we may not confidently assert the presence and organization of curricula and syllabi, in the modern senses of the terms, we can still speak of their existence in one form or another. ... the curricula dealt with different subjects in a given school or any centre of higher learning. In different centres of traditional Muslim education in Ifat and Dera, the curriculum includes, for instance, subjects such as *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Nahu* (Arabic grammar and syntax), *Tawhid* (Islamic theology), etc. In case students are eager to pursue their higher education, they could move elsewhere, such as Ifat, Dera, Wollo, Harar and even abroad (such as the Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Egypt). Their aims have been to search for instructors to cover subjects such as *Nahu*, *Sarf* (morphology), *Mantiq* (logic) '*Arud* (prosody), *Bayān* (eloquence), *Balagah* (rhetoric) and *Badī* (metaphors). The syllabi, by the same token, largely focus on the wide range of fields of study already stated. In other words, the various topics in courses of study or teaching can be defined as syllabi. This has been in strict agreement with the various school centres (Ahmed, 2006).

There has been also strong custom of traditional Muslim education in Northern Shewa, as example, Ifat and Dera are the two major centres of Islamic education. Many Muslim students from different direction have been moved to these centres. Those who have learnt in these areas contributed a lot for the presence and continuity of Islamic religion and culture in the region and the remaining parts of Ethiopia (Ahmed, 2006).

Islamic communities have had constant contact with Islamic Middle East and shared the Quran interpretation of them in their Islamic teaching (Kabha & Erlich, 2006). Traditional Islamic education in Ethiopia has three objectives; the training of Muslim clerics, the spread and betterment of literacy through Muslim education, and the dissemination of Islamic dogma and religious practices (Ahmed, 2006; Sisay, 2016).

For specialization and to master Quran in general Ethiopian Muslim students like Christians moved from place to place in Ethiopia centres of traditional education and abroad for higher education, to the Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. There are commonly four Islamic school of law and traditional Muslim Pupils studied among the four Islamic school of law. Students able to read and write in Arabic and they became liberated from illiteracy and the educated Muslims lead the Muslim population. Centres of Muslim education used as meeting points for people coming from near and far (Ahmed, 2006).

To generalize the point, since Ethiopia is home to ancient civilization, education is not particularly new. Ethiopia has been the only Sub-Saharan nation with its own indigenous writing system since the declaration of Orthodox Christianity in the country in the fourth century A.D. Religious education, including writing, has been provided by the church, albeit to a small portion of the populace. In a similar vein, Islamic educational establishments have taught the Quran, especially to populations living in the eastern and western regions of the nation (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Until the 20th century, education was entrusted to religious institutions, and the government did not care whether the education provided by these institutions met the social and economic needs of the country and was appropriate.

Materials and methods

An introduction and development of modern education in Ethiopia is not well studied in detail. But education is a sensitive area and field of study all over the world. Especially in Ethiopia, the system of education is unique for a long period of time, and the introduction of modern education in the country is different from the other world and introduced lately. Due to this, it is important to have a deeper inquiry and research and to fill the historical lacunae as well as to add some information and insight on the existing one. To address the issue, the researcher set the general objective of this research to explore the genesis, development, and challenges of modern education in Ethiopia from 1905 to 1941 with specific objectives: to demonstrate the historical overview and to point out the major challenges of modern education in the period.

The research is conducted using the constructivist paradigm view with the qualitative research approach. The approach allows the researcher to conduct in-depth research on the issue under study. Document reviews and analyses have been used to gather pertinent sources. Document analysis has played a significant role in accurately processing information. The document review technique that provides the researcher with valuable information. Document analysis was part of the qualitative data collection strategy that the researcher engaged in throughout the research period. Document analysis is closely related to content analysis, meaning that the document under study contains the contents to be analysed. The documents analysed for this study include primary and secondary sources. The researcher confirmed the historical source's authenticity and credibility through its accuracy, occurrence, relevance, and authority. The primary sources, such as proclamations, letters, and cases. For instance, the researcher used Emperor Menilek's and Empress Zewditu's educational proclamations of 1906 and 1929, respectively, as direct quotes of their Amharic to my English translation to this article. The researcher also used different letters of Menilek II and such relevant primary sources as the case of Hana Salib. But such primary sources are obtained from the old Amharic books that are mentioned as direct quotations because many of the originals have been lost. The researcher also consulted secondary sources such as articles, conference papers, and books.

In this study, data was first collected systematically from relevant available sources. Then, the collected data were categorized depending on the thematic areas they represented. Third, under each theme, the collected data was presented, organized, and critically analysed based on historical methods of data analysis. Finally, the analysed data was narrated using a qualitative research approach and descriptive research design to achieve the objective of this article.

Modern education in the introduction and expansion period (1905–1941)

Modern education during Menilek II

Even if in Ethiopia traditional education was given by churches and mosque since the ancient period, but illiterates were about 90% of the total population before the beginning of modern education. The

illiteracy included highest government officials (Kebede, 2014). During the reign of Emperor Menilek II, important events took place in the history of Ethiopia. These were chiefly the foundations for the formation of modern Ethiopia, and it was where modern civilization including education was introduced to the country (Sergew, 2022). The post Adwa victory period leading to the development of foreign relationship (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005; Sisay, 2016) including to world powerful nations was marked by many modernization attempts. At the beginning of the 20th century, the situation started to change and shift towards education attempts. Emperor Menilek allowed the establishment of Catholic and Protestant missionary schools. The missionaries saw education in their schools as an effective means of proselytization for their religious mission. The missionaries opened schools in Ethiopia and send young students to abroad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bahru, 2002; Pankhurst, 1972).

Especially in the northern, central, southern and eastern regions of the nation, missionaries introduced subjects in modern education as a byproduct of their primary objective of evangelizing their different religious ideas (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005; Perham, 1948). The reign of Menilek II witnessed efforts to adopt western ideas and technology. Internally the king's keen interest to European culture (Alemayehu, 2003 E.C) and externally missionaries' interest of building schools to Ethiopians for their proselytization purpose was concurred. By using the scene as good opportunity, the king attempted to approach missionaries for the beginning of modern education.

Therefore, the genesis or foundation of modern education in Ethiopia was in 1905 when the first modern school was established at Addis Ababa by Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM). The school began the formal education by teaching English language (Markakis, 1975). Swedish Lutherans also opened the first modern school at Harar. Thus, Swedish Protestants were the most thriving in winning Ethiopian support in the sector of education. The Seventh Day Adventist and American Presbyterian missionaries also played non-sleazy role in the beginning of Ethiopian modern education (Perham, 1948).

The opening of the first modern school in Ethiopia was followed by Menilek's first educational proclamation in 1906, which stated and underlined the uses of modern education (Mahiteme-Selassie, 1942 E.C). The proclamation literally read as follows:

Until now, anyone who knew the craft was called by the name of shame. Therefore, no one was eager to learn and train. If we live in this harmful situation, churches will be closed. Rather, Christianity does not exist. In other countries, not only do the younger citizens learn, they also learn new things. Hence, as of today, all six-year-old boys and girls in Ethiopia should attend school. As for parents who would not send their children to school, when the former die, their wealth, instead of passing to children, will be transferred to the government. My government will prepare the schools and avail itself of the teachers (Mahiteme-Selassie, 1942 E.C; Sergew, 2022).

Emperor Menilek made the initial attempt to impose compulsory Western-style education in Ethiopia, declaring that parents who failed to take their children to school would face harsh consequences (Milkias, 2011). The proclamation clearly explains that the emperor was keen to bring about a new change by expanding education. The decree states that European education is giving benefits and stipulates that Ethiopians can also benefit if they are educated, and it is mandatory. It also gave legitimacy to education in general and to modern education students. It was also inclusive in terms of gender equality. The traditional education institutions of Christianity and Islam excluded female students with a majority of men. As a result, the number of traditional female church students in Ethiopia was close to zero, and the same was true for Muslim females (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). But the historical developments we see indicate that the proclamation has not been fully implemented.

After the Adwa victory, Menilek had keen interest in modern education to adequately prepare people for different careers (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005) and aimed to open schools for modern education, but the clergy and aristocracy opposed it. Menelik II, open to change, devised a plan to weaken opposition by bringing Orthodox faith adherents from Egypt as teachers to prepare people for various careers (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Five months after the Adwa victory, on July 3, 1896, Menilek wrote the following letter to *Abune Qerlos V*, the Coptic Egyptian patriarch at the time, via *Abune Mathewos*, the then bishop of Ethiopia:

To *Abune Qerlos*:

We intend to open a big school in Addis Ababa. Abune Mathewos heard my great idea and told me that there are many educated people in Egypt who are qualified to teach. [So], we told him that you [Abune Mathewos] should send [a letter] to *Abune Qerlos*. [Therefore], we have written you [this letter]. And if you see *Abune Mathewos* seal [in the letter], and if you find [the teachers we need], we would like you to inform us as soon as possible by phone without any impatience. The reason we sent you a letter is that it is better to bring our brothers who are similar in religion for education than to import teachers from other countries (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Sergew, 2022).

Shortly thereafter, the letter received a positive response from Egypt. Three Egyptian teachers came in January 1907 and started teaching in the school that opened in Addis Ababa (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C)

As already stated, following the battle of Adwa, it became clear that the traditional school system was unable to adequately prepare people for careers in statecraft, diplomacy, commerce, and industry to meet the demands of a modern nation. In general, with the expansion of the government bureaucracy and the organization of modern service institutions like transportation, telephone, railway, and such added with numerous social problems the importance of modern education has increased more than before. The concern led to the founding of Menilek II School (Aweke, 2015; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). Therefore, in addition to missionary schools in Addis Ababa the first government-sponsored modern school was opened by Emperor Menilek II by bearing the name of the king in October 1908 (Alemayehu, 2003 E.C; Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Pankhurst, 1972; Perham, 1948). The school's first teaching career began in the home of Alfred Ilg (Mahiteme-Selassie, 1942 E.C; Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C). Later, it was known as Menilek II School, which was moved to near *Abun Sefer* (quarter). This was a well-organized school (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C). Hana Salib was the first director of the school (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Sergew, 2022). The school was also called *Ecole Imperial Menilek II* (Kebede, 2014). In the School a group of young noblemen were attained including future emperors *Dejjazmach* Teferi Mekonnen and *Lij Iyasu* (Aweke, 2015; Markakis, 1975; Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C) as well as other highest future government officials like Birru W/Gabriel, Emiru Hayle Selassie, Mekonnen Endalkachew, Getachew Abate and Tsegaye G/Tsadiq (Sergew, 2022). There was no any age limitation for the enrolment and the school provided dormitory and food services (Kebede, 2014). Initially, the school welcomed about 150 boys (Aweke, 2015; Perham, 1948) from the aristocracy in order to provide a positive example for wider society. However, the majority of the nobility sent members of their servant, especially those they did not particularly like, out of respect for Menilek's directive, even though they were not thrilled about the idea of education and most definitely had no intention of sending their own children. Even after that, the students who had been sent to school caused a disturbance by skipping class, which prompted Menilek to write warning letters to the nobility urging them to return the miscreants back to school on January 8, 1909. The remnant letter addressed to *Negadras* (head of merchants) Haile-Giorgis revealed the dilettante of the nobility to modern education (Paulos 1984 E.C; Seyoum & Yonas, 2005).

When we read such encouraging and exhortatory letters in which Menilek II tried to make the people aware of modern education, we understand that the king was committed to the spread of modern education. On the contrary, it can be understood from the letter that even the officials and nobles who were the government officials did not make much effort to spread modern education, but they were from the opposition side. The lower part of the Ethiopian society was not even opposed to modern education, but did not have the opportunity and occasion to educate its children. Therefore, modern education was not widely accepted and expanded in Ethiopia in the early period.

In the Menilek II School teachers at the beginning were mainly Egyptian Orthodox Coptic Christians to pacify the clergy resistance to modern education (Sirgiw & Yonas n.d.; Seyoum & Yonas, 2005; Sergew, 2022; Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C) and few were Ethiopians. French principally used as medium of instruction and the curriculum included that French, English, Amharic, Italian, Arabic, Geez, Mathematics, Science, Physical Training and Sports (Bahru, 2002; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). Due to the substantial need for translators and interpreters at the time, the school mainly emphasized on teaching French, English, and Arabic (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Therefore, the school was essentially a language school (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C).

During Menilek II's reign, Ethiopians were sent abroad for modern education and foreign language acquisition, with a few young scholars also sent for this purpose. The first students among those who had the opportunity to study abroad went to Switzerland and Russia (Alemayehu, 2003 E.C). For instance, Menilek's foreign affairs advisor, Alfred Ilg, a Swiss-born engineer, was accompanied by three young Ethiopians on his vacation voyage to Europe in 1894. These western learners were Gugsu Darge, Afework G/lyesus, and Kitaw Ze'amanu'el (Sergew, 2022). About these students, Alfred Ilg addressed Menilek a letter on October 24, 1894, from Djibouti, which said: 'To His Honor Menilek II, King of Kings of Ethiopia; We arrived safely in Djibouti with *Lij* Gugsu and Kitaw, the sons whom you entrusted to me' (Sergew, 2022). Menilek II also wrote to Alfred Ilg on July 19, 1895, requesting that he encourage these pupils to work hard in their studies and assist them once three of them enrolled in a Switzerland school (Paulos, 2010; Sergew, 2022) at Neuchatel (Kebede, 2014). From the letter, we read a sentence that says, 'ለ[እ]ነ ልጅ ጉግሳ ትምህርት በጣም እንዲጣሩ ትባዝናለህ ብዬ አልጠረጥርኩም (I don't doubt that you will be very active in giving support of education to *Lij* Gugsu and his friends' (Paulos, 2010). On March 31, 1896, Menilek wrote to Ilg again, mentioning these students who had been moved to Italy without the permission of Menilek and Ilg through skip (Paulos, 2010; Sergew, 2022). Early European-educated Ethiopians, including those from Switzerland and Russia, served their country in various fields, with few returning to Ethiopia to apply their skills (Ayalneh et al., 2019; Markakis, 1975).

Although not mentioned much in the modern history of Ethiopia, there are indications that Menilek II opened three more schools outside of Addis Ababa (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Sergew, 2022; Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). The exchange of letters between Menilek II and Qerlos V strengthened the idea. Since the year the government school opened in Addis Ababa, the number of students has been relatively high. Menilek II school alone was not enough. There were also few teachers. Menilek also had the idea of establishing a school outside of Addis Ababa (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C). Therefore, on October 9, 1908, he sent a letter to Patriarch *Abune* Qerlos of Alexandria that read as follows:

The teachers you have sent me in the previous have started their work well. The students have also learned the lesson. But there were many students, and the teachers [who were few in number] were very tired of teaching. [So] I want you to send me ten more teachers. The salary [that teachers can be paid] is found in the letter of our father *Abune* Mathewos [see from it] (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Sergew, 2022).

After the patriarch received the letter with joy, he was involved in selecting teachers and sending them to Ethiopia. Qerlos also wrote an extensive reply letter to Menilek's letter. Hana Salib chose 10 teachers from Egypt and brought 8 of them to Ethiopia. After teachers arrived in Addis Ababa, half were sent to Harar and half to Ankober. The reason they were sent was to establish a school from where they went and to teach (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Sergew, 2022).

Therefore, in this way, the emperor established state-sponsored primary school at Harar in 1908 with the support of *Ras* Mekonnen (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; Pankhurst, 1972; Sergew, 2022). The king also sent an Egyptian Hana Salib as director of Harar School in 1909 (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Thus, Coptic Egyptian new teachers to Ethiopia start to teach students at the new school in Harar. However, the teachers who went to Ankober were not effective. The people were afraid that they would teach our children the culture of a foreign country, so they resisted the Egyptian teachers from teaching them. Therefore, the Coptic teachers who were assigned to Ankober transferred to Dire Dawa and started teaching there (Adejumobi, 2007; Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C). Therefore, in Menilek's reign, in addition to Menilek II School, education was started in the cities of Harar, Ankober, and Dire Dawa⁴, although his ambition to Ankober was failed. As we understand from different letters and the Case of Hana Salib, who was a Coptic Church follower played a significant role for the expansion of modern education in Ethiopia about two decades (Merseae-Hazen, 1999 E.C; The Case of Hana B. Salib, 1928).

The growth of non-governmental schools across the nation was another notable development at this time (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). The French community established schools for Ethiopian students at Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa in late 1908 (Bahru, 2002). After the school served until 1911, it was taken over from the Alliance Française of Addis Ababa, and the Ecole Française officially opened in 1913. Teaching was in French, and Amharic was taught for about an hour a day (Kebede, 2014; Alemayehu & Jon, 2012).

To support the education, non-religious books were recognized as important for learning, and *Mereha Tibebe* (Wisdom Guide), the first printing press since 1905/06 (Sergew, 2022) followed by *Berhanena Selam* (Light and Peace) printing press (Abebe n.d.; Sergew, 2022) were established at the capital during the reign of Menilek. At that time, one of the people who studied abroad was Ato Micha'el Birru who wrote and published the first mathematics book and established the first *A'emro* newspaper in Amharic (Kebede, 2014; Sergew, 2022). With the death of Emperor Menelik in 1913, the expansion of education was temporarily hindered (Sergew, 2022).

Modern education during the dual rule (1916–1930)

The period 1916–1930 in Ethiopian history called dual rule or diarchy (Bahru, 2002). During this period Zewditu was Empress, but *Ras* Teferi dominated the politics. Even if there were other modern schools at this period but Menilek II School was assumed to be the sole one and well-known in the country up until the opening of Teferi Mekonnen School in 1925 (Abir, 1970; Pankhurst, 1972). Albeit the basis for modern education has been established since 1908, it took until 1925 for significant advancements to be made in that direction. More importantly, after Regent Teferi's tour of Europe in 1923 and 1924, the next step and hallmark in Ethiopian education was taken when Teferi opened the school in the capital by bearing his name on the school (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005; Perham, 1948). The school was moderate and larger in size than Menilik II School. The building expense covered by 430000 Maria Theresa Thalers (Kebede, 2014). This school at the beginning contained 250 male students, 100 of them were outside Addis Ababa. The school was incredible for its exceptional laboratory equipment (Perham, 1948). But, as Menilek II School, Teferi Mekonnen School also served the sons of the nobility at the expense of the royal treasury (Markakis, 1975).

Then, *Ras* Teferi established the first government education budget in 1926. That was a special education tax of 6% on all imports and exports to finance and cover the educational program expenses in the country (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). From the education tax the government collected 63,874 Maria Theresa Thalers between 1929 and 1930 (Kebede, 2014).

In 1929, Positive Educational Measurement was adopted in the state. The following proclamation on education was issued by the Empress Zewditu and Regent Teferi:

All those who do not send their sons and daughters to school so that they can learn writing and reading skills which are necessary to identify the good and evils and develop fear of God and the king, will be punished 50 Birr. The money solicited from punishment will be given to the church for the feeding and clothing of the poor... All God fathers [confession of fathers] should advice their religious followersto send their children to school and if they refuse to do so they have to report to local authorities as they have violated the proclamation ... All church leaders in the rural areas apart from their religious preaching should teach reading and writing (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012; Dereje, 2024; Mahiteme-Selassie, 1942 E.C).

The decree aimed to address primary education to all school-age children in Ethiopia, even if it is difficult to implement today (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). The proclamation was to give a secular education that is compatible with church education and to oblige families to send their children in the newly opened secular schools. The decree had some positive impact in Ethiopian secular education. In 1929 and 1930, a primary school associated with St. George's church which served including orphan students and the other schools were built in the capital (Kebede, 2014; Perham, 1948). These schools were French-oriented than Menilek II school because the principal and teachers were chiefly French with few other nationalities (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005; Perham, 1948). English was also the other subordinate medium of instruction. To check the quality of education the government of France examined and certified some primary school students in 1928 and 1929 (Kebede, 2014; Alemayehu & Jon, 2012).

Following the opening of the first school, there was little progress in modern education for three decades (Hagos, 1966; Pankhurst, 1972). At various points in time, other schools were also opened at Dessie, Gore, Dire Dawa, Neqemte, Yirga Alem, Jigjiga, Assebe Teferi, Ambo, Jimma, and Debre Markos (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005; Perham, 1948). Dessie, Dire Dawa, Jigjiga and Neqemte schools were four provincial pioneer government schools built in 1928 and 1929 (Kebede, 2014).

After World War I, missionary schools began to expand in Ethiopia. The Roman Catholic denomination of Lazarist established four schools, two for males in Alitena (Tigray) and Gullu and also, they opened two schools for females in Alitena and Addis Ababa. Medium of instructions in the schools were French and Amharic. Capuchins denomination also opened 14 kindergartens, 24 primary and 7 secondary schools. These schools were scattered in Addis Ababa, provincial towns and small towns of the country (Kebede, 2014).

Lutheran denominations also exerted their effort. Between 1905 and 1924, eight missionary schools were established in Ethiopia by the Swedish Evangelical Mission (Kebede, 2014; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). The largest school was found in the capital that taught religious and secular contents in different subjects. Amharic, *Oromiffa*, English and French are medium of instructions. Swedish Friends of the Bible Mission also opened five schools in Addis Ababa. Among these ones was for female students (Kebede, 2014).

The Seventh Day Adventist opened two schools at Addis Ababa and Addis Alem. Amharic was the sole medium of instruction. Teaching and learning process was secular and religious in content. American Presbyterian Church was latecomer missionary opened the school at Seyyo in Wollega. *Oromiffa* was the lone medium of instruction (Kebede, 2014).

Missionaries opened many schools in Ethiopia based on they had the opportunity since the reign of Menilek II. Therefore, there were also a significant number of missionary schools in the country. But because of opposition from the Orthodox Church and general suspicion of foreigners including missionaries by the people, the missionary schools were not very successful in educating Ethiopians (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). Asheber Gebreheywot explained the attitude of the government at the time: even though the missionary schools were expanding, those who graduated from these schools, compared to those who graduated from the schools opened by Emperor Menilek, were unable to do anything other than simple writing and had no sense of patriotism (Kebede, 2014). Sabotage of the missionary schools themselves for secular education was the other hindrance because their covert and prime objective was proselytization (Bahru, 2002) and conversion of the people to their denomination.

During the dual rule the establishment of the second printing press, Artistic Printing Press helped the expansion of modern education. Since then, organized textbooks, newspapers and other educational materials and works were disseminated. But high cost of printing challenged well dissemination of educational materials (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012).

Modern education during Haile Sellasie I

In the 1920s and 1930s, students were also sent abroad for western education to France, Egypt, Britain, the United States of America, and Switzerland. Around 200 Ethiopians studied abroad through private and government sponsorship before 1935 (Bahru, 2002). Ten of the scholars were females studied in the United States (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Abroad education was part of the policy of the government after 1930 (Perham, 1948). After the coronation of Haile Sellasie I in 1930, the progress of education quickened, relatively the previous decades. The emperor highly sought to improve education for his government service. Haile Sellasie needed the creation of skilled civil service and modern as well as efficient government, so, he gave priority for education (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). The King aimed to transform the nation through education (Sisay, 2016). The educational 'development was virtually in all aspects of education: educational structure, teacher training, educational management and co-operation' (Aweke, 2015). To oversee education, a central Ministry of Education and Fine Arts was established for the first time. The Ministry also got 2% of national treasury revenue in addition to the education tax (Kebede, 2014; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). The emperor appointed Sahle Tsedalu as the first Minister of Education. At the same time, Professor Ernest Work, a black American scholar, proposed an equal six-year primary, secondary, and four-year university education structure in the country, emphasizing teacher training and agricultural education, but faced challenges in implementing the plan (Kebede, 2014).

From Haile Selassie coronation to 1935, seven governmental schools were opened in the main city and eight in the provincial towns. Among these, nearly six years later the opening of Teferi Mekonnen

school, Lycée Haile Selassie I School began its teaching by providing technical and linguistic training to about 100 students in 1930 (Kebede, 2014; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005).

The other school was opened by the name of the emperor wife Menen in 1931 in Addis Ababa for girls, named *Etege Menen School* (Bahru, 1998; Markakis, 1975; Pankhurst, 1972). The school at first included the French-style training of eighty girls, mostly in domestic science (Perham, 1948). In the history of Ethiopia, this was the first girls' school and an effort to introduce gender equity in secular education by giving the girls an equal educational opportunity (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005; Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). Since its establishment, the school has offered both boarding and day classes to female students.

Throughout 1931–1934, Haile Sellassie was busy applying structures that used roads for the future. There was a rapid increase in activities of projects and planning of public services (Marcus, 1994). Thereon, schools were founded in Addis Ababa and various provincial towns by the nobilities at the willingness and direction of the emperor. Among these, Medhane'alem School was intended for Southern lord children (Markakis, 1975) but realized as Orphan School at Addis Ababa (Kebede, 2014; Pankhurst, 1972), in the next year of Haile Sellassie's coronation (Bahru, 2002). It opened its doors as a redeemer boarding school on November 7, 1931, for 85 orphans to pursue academic and vocational training. An architect, *Lij Hailemaryam Gezmu*, was the first director of the school. There were seven other Ethiopian and French teachers at the beginning, and the school lodged about 100 male children free of charge (Pankhurst, 1968).

In 1934, a Teacher Training School and a Boy Scout school were opened. Also, at the same time, an art school (*Academie des Beaux Arts*) started its work, and the school was headed by an Ethiopian painter who had studied in Paris, *Ato Agegnehu Engida* (Kebede, 2014).

In the capital city and provincial towns between 1908 and 1935, there were 21 government schools. In these schools in the time of Italian invasion were 4,200 students (Markakis, 1975; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005).

As we have seen above, the missionaries opened schools in Ethiopia. Due to this, there were a significant number of missionary schools. Until 1935, missionary schools were at least equal in number to the schools sponsored by the government, so it is likely to be about 20 and more because between 1905 and 1924, only the Swedish Evangelical Mission established eight schools in Ethiopia. In contrast, we understand that the number of students enrolled in missionary schools was small. Because missionary schools had roughly 2,000 pupils enrolled by the time of the Italian invasion in 1935 (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). During the Italian invasion, a very small number of students, estimated at 600–700 in government schools in Addis Ababa, got at least a basic education (Levine, 1972; Perham, 1948).

Moreover, the most surprising and gloomy thing is that only about 4200 students were studying in 21 government schools all over Ethiopia (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). If we take it as an average, it means that 200 students were studied at one school. And this is a very small number. Therefore, we understand that the number of students taught by government schools, missionary schools, and the number of students who study abroad was very small, and compared to the population, even if a little dust is scattered on the ocean, it will not make a difference in the water of the ocean. At the time, Ethiopia's modern education did not change literacy of the nation like that of little dust and the ocean analogy.

But the influence of these few schools outside the environs of the school was undeniable and great. The number of people who could read and write had been growing since 1925. A foreigner, Christine Sandford, who lived in Ethiopia at the time, explained that the number of people who could read and write had increased during the same period. It was seen as such, but in 1935, there were very few men, adults, and children who could not read and write using Amharic in the same society, as he commented (Kebede, 2014; Perham, 1948). The other foreigner who read this comment by Christine Sandford again commented that although the literacy rate in 1932 was very high, compared to other countries at the same level of development, it really did not show any progress different from what it had been before. Also, a Swedish missionary named Erickson agreed with this statement and said, 'It is certain that the number of people who can read has increased', and he explained that the number of young people who go to school and learn mostly love the city and return to their villages is extremely small. This result was achieved because King Haile Selassie had a strong desire to bring civilization to Ethiopia before the

Italian invasion and encouraged the rapid spread of education to change society (Kebede, 2014). Moreover, in the capital city Addis Ababa there was wide extension of literacy among youngsters between 1920s and 1935 (Perham, 1948).

The spread of modern education in Ethiopia had two major coupled causes and effects: the training of skilled personnel to staff the growing bureaucracy and the dissemination of ideas of change i.e. modern education produced functionaries and intellectuals. Functionaries educated inside while intellectuals studied abroad. The intellectuals dominated the government service and need all round reforms in Ethiopia (Bahru, 2002; Pankhurst, 1972).

Modern education during italian rule

The invasion of Italy to Ethiopia was the turning point in modern education of Ethiopia (Abir, 1970; Pankhurst, 1972). It brought pre-1935 efforts of modern education to an end and due to many reasons opened bad chapter in the history of Ethiopian modern schooling (Pankhurst, 1972). The Italian invasion stopped the spread of education. All government schools were closed. The closed public schools were mostly converted into boarding schools for Italian children (Kebede, 2014; Pankhurst, 1972). The objective of the fascist Italians of the time was to make many of their citizens come to Ethiopia in their colony, so they believed that they should expand schools not for the people of the country but for their citizens, so they started moving to implement this goal. It was not a matter of concern if Ethiopian children were not educated (Kebede, 2014).

Fascist Italians throughout the occupation prevented Ethiopians from any higher educational opportunity beyond elementary schooling (Levine, 1972). They decided to issue a new educational policy for Ethiopian students to study up to the 4th grade as was done in Eritrea, and not to give them any education beyond the 6th grade (Kebede, 2014; Pankhurst, 1972; Seyoum & Yonas, 2005).

The philosophy of fascist education for 'natives' was further explained by Festa, one of its architects, who told the Third Colonial Congress in April 1937 that 'the school in our Eastern Africa must have an essentially practical aim'. Reiterating his earlier theses he added; the education provided by the existing didactic programmes up to the fourth grade ... is sufficient, in my view, to provide the mass with the specific preparation suitable to the position of the native population and to our needs. The child, after four years of school, is in a position to appreciate the benefits of our civilisation; he can be acquainted with Italy, her glories, and her history, which is needed for him to be an informed propagandist for such benefits among families more or less far away from our educational action (Pankhurst, 1972).

Language issues received some attention during the fascist occupation (Pankhurst, 1972). Before the Italian occupation, the main language of instruction for the lower grades was Amharic, and after the occupation, according to the new Italian educational policy, students were required to use the local and Italy languages. Also, in the areas where there was a Muslim community, all schools decided to use Arabic in addition to the local languages, and the governors of the areas were authorized to use other languages of instruction when they needed more (Kebede, 2014; Pankhurst, 1972). This Italian education policy was in line with the international law that children should be educated in their mother tongue. But the Italians used many languages for teaching to facilitate the divide-and-rule policy. Perhaps the legacy of the sense of division in the country is the result of the fact that the Italians have been dividing and teaching hate in such numerous languages (Kebede, 2014; Pankhurst, 1972). Perhaps the feeling of division in the country until now is also due to the fact that Italians mixed hate taught in the name of modern education through different languages.

Basically, the educational policy of Italy was political. During the occupation, Ethiopian children could not study with Italian children. According to Polson Newman, one of the main aims of the school was to inculcate the loyalty of the students to the Roman Emperor and the Duce. Textbooks were prepared to be politically correct for this purpose (Kebede, 2014; Pankhurst, 1972).

The content of the education was to prepare young men for Italian service, not to provide in-depth education. Englishman George Steer explained that the education that was being given was of very low quality (Kebede, 2014). Schools were opened in the few provincial towns for chauvinistic and militaristic propaganda purposes where there were no former public schools. The teachers were mostly Eritrean priests and monks, but the supervisors were Italians (Pankhurst, 1972). Italians report that the number

of students attending education was very small, and there were many who dropped out and returned home to work as interpreters. Less than 5% of the native soldiers, also called *bandas* (collaborators), who recruited by Italians were literate. During the Italian occupation, education was not widespread in Ethiopia. However, the arrival of Italians in the country and the attempt to teach in the Italian language has led to many Italian words entering Ethiopia (Kebede, 2014). The Italians, during their occupation, tried to teach Ethiopian children by themselves for their own benefit by using the old and newly opened schools.

Fascist Italians seemed to have come with the dream of destroying the educated people in Ethiopia. Even prior to the takeover of Addis Ababa, plans were made to take action against Ethiopian intellectuals. The Duce had ordered the summary execution of Young Ethiopians, who had mostly attended universities in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States (Pankhurst, 1972; Perham, 1948), two days earlier, on May 3, 1936, via telegraph. Rodolfo Graziani, the Italian officer in charge of military operations and later viceroy, succeeded in mitigating the sentence despite strong pressure from the Italian Minister of the Colonies, Alessandro Lessona, for their execution (Pankhurst, 1972). The execution telegraph message was transmitted before the wounding incident of Graziani at Genete-Le'ul palace on 19 February 1937.

Graziani's wounds led to Black Shirts terrorizing Ethiopia, killing 30,000 within three days, targeting educated young intellectuals (Abir, 1970) and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

At the time, the most illustrious among the learned were either executed or slain, while others were sent to prison islands off the coast of Italy. On March 14, the US consul in Addis Ababa reported that 'there seems to be good ground for reports Italian policy aims at the elimination of prominent and educated who are regarded as potential inciters of rebellion against Italian rule. 'Addis Ababa was by no means the only place where repression existed; from Harar, Thomas Wikeley, the British acting consul, reported that 'all natives who can speak French or English are being arrested and removed to Mogadishu or elsewhere' (Pankhurst, 1972).

The mass massacred and the shutdown of schools by fascists created a generation gap in Ethiopia. Ethiopia's educational system was shut down, and the Ethiopian people's access to meaningful education was terminated between 1936 and 1941, when Italy occupied Ethiopia. Furthermore, educated Ethiopian men and women were ruthlessly hunted down and slaughtered by the fascists. Sylvia Pankhurst claimed that 75 percent of the young intellectuals and graduates were killed (Hagos, 1966; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). The invasion of Italy and its mass murder created generation gap in general for Ethiopia and breakdown the bridge of transition from traditional education to modern education.

The fascists in their occupational years purposely decided to employ Italian Roman Catholic missionaries in an effort to eliminate non-Italian Catholics and other missionary denominations. They clearly ordered many proselytizer denominations to leave the country to achieve their huge plan of the missionary work of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia. Italians were also muscularly opposed abroad education of Ethiopians, even in Italy (Pankhurst, 1972). The opposition of Ethiopian abroad education directly and the expulsion of these missionaries indirectly injured Ethiopian education because missionary schools also have their share for the expansion of education in the nation.

The five-year fascist occupation period was characterized by political, military and chauvinism propaganda. In the last years of their rule Italian East Africa was in fact almost educationally failed and faced crisis in many directions. The failures and bankrupts of Italian East Africa educational policy (Pankhurst, 1972) closed Ethiopian schools. Due to this they contributed little to Ethiopian modern education.

Challenges of modern education in Ethiopia from the beginning to 1941

Modern education in Ethiopia has faced challenges and problems since its inception (Dereje, 2024; Sisay, 2016). Among these challenges, ever since the missionary school opened in 1905, there have been protests and resistance from the Orthodox Church clergy (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005) and fanatic nobility (Dereje, 2024). The opposition and resistance were understandable. After surviving several centuries of isolation and peril, the church had grown rigid. It turned its back and discovered that a great deal of its authority and direction could be found in antiquated stories and records, some of which were dubious. Moreover, the medieval social structure, which encompassed tribute, land ownership, and slavery deeply embedded the wealth and secular resistance of its clergy. It was inevitable that

the clergy would be suspicious of reform, education, and foreign innovations. Substantial suspicions for historical reasons were several Roman Catholic Missionaries by connecting them to the 16th and 17th centuries (Perham, 1948). Therefore, it is necessary to explain the importance of modern education to religious people and institutions and do awareness work to them.

Since the establishment of government schools in Ethiopia, only the children of aristocrats have attended these institutions (Markakis, 1975). This practice continued for a long time and prevented education from spreading in the country. Because most of the commoners were afraid to mix their children with the children of the nobility and educate them. The image and misconception created by the beginning of education in the country by the children of nobles have made the majority of Ethiopians think that it is the princes and nobles who can educate their children. So, they could not dare to send their children to school. This situation is one of the obstacles and challenges to the spread and development of modern education in Ethiopia.

From the very beginning until 1941, the medium of instruction was in European languages, principally French⁵, except when the Italians tried to teach in the native language for their own evil purposes deliberately to generate disunity and animosity among the various ethnic and religious groups in the nation (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012; Sisay, 2016). During the colonial era, education in Sub-Saharan African states prioritized certain principles, with missionaries teaching most students and learning a foreign language as a highly prized value (Tekeste, 2006). Even if Ethiopia was not really colonized, from the beginning, in Ethiopia, the medium of instruction was the language of Europeans, like in the countries that were colonized. Medium of instructions were mainly French and English. Not only foreign language of instruction, but also the curriculum until 1935 was taken from France. So, the French curricula and ideology highly influenced the Ethiopian educational system without understanding the Ethiopian reality (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). Teaching Ethiopian elementary students in French and English, which they do not know, was one of the reasons that made the education ineffective. Thus, Ethiopia is diverse in language and culture, it is important to address education through these diverse languages. The pedagogical principle suggests that teaching in one's mother tongue enhances children's understanding and learning speed, thereby connecting their knowledge with their immediate environment. 'This help to maintain cultural continuity, traditional medicine, knowledge of conflict resolution, keeping identity....so far the ultimate social purpose of curriculum and education is preservation and transmission of cultural heritage to the succeeding generation' (Sisay, 2016).

In the long history of Ethiopia, education was under the leadership of the Church and Mosque that was taught. But traditional institutions did not directly give rise to modern schools (Aweke, 2015). The Ethiopian curricula that existed until 1941 did not include or consider Ethiopia's traditional institutions and indigenous knowledge, society, economy, and culture (Ayalneh et al., 2019). In fact; some contents were in conflict with the existing knowledge, culture, and religion of Ethiopia. This has made modern education not widely accepted in Ethiopia and not spread easily. Therefore, it is necessary to include the existing and indigenous knowledge that was given by the Church and Mosque in the modern curriculum.

When the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1935, they planned to destroy the educated Ethiopians. The Duce ordered the summary execution of Young Ethiopians, educated in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East, before the occupation of Addis Ababa in 1936 (Pankhurst, 1972). The Italians aimed at the elimination of prominent and educated Ethiopians who are regarded as potential inciters of rebellion against Italian rule (Pankhurst, 1972). So, the Italians killed their targets of educated people at different times of the night.

In particular, following the wounding of Marshal Graziani on February 19, 1937, the Black Shirts soldiers of the Italian fascist mercilessly killed 75 percent of the educated men and women of Ethiopia (Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005; Perham, 1948). The fascist slaughter that followed on February 21 and 23, 1937, was primarily responsible for the killing of educated Ethiopians. Many of the most prominent among them were killed or executed, while others were sent to prison camps and penal islands off the coast of Italy (Pankhurst, 1972). Targeting and killing those who studied abroad in Addis Ababa and other provinces continued until 1940 (Pankhurst, 1972; Perham, 1948). This fact that the Italians hunted educated Ethiopians as a target during their occupation greatly damaged the development of modern education. Not only did it damage education, but the massacre caused a generation gap among the educated people. Modern education, which had already begun to flourish

in the country, was buried in full bloom by the invasion of Italy. It had to be hard during restoration to start after modern education was completely dark. As a result, the survivals of the execution estimated about 125 men who studied abroad were remnants to support the restored Ethiopia in 1941 (Perham, 1948).

Generally, the 1935–1936 Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia greatly impeded the country's educational advancement. Ethiopia's educational progress suffered a major and lasting setback as a result of the war's damage and aftermath. The educated few were either slaughtered or joined the nation's guerrilla fighters as part of a patriotic resistance movement when schools were either closed or used as military camps (Dereje, 2024).

After returning home, several Ethiopians with Western education experienced a mild sense of dissatisfaction with domestic circumstances (Perham, 1948). 'Due to the country's economic level it is clear that, Ethiopian students hope learning to over through their poverty and then help their poor parents.' They thought they were entitled to certain jobs and wages; therefore, they expected to be awarded such things. Even though the majority of them were able to secure worthwhile jobs in government agencies, some in the railroad industry, and other European businesses, the jobs and salaries of some of them were depressing and dissatisfying, and the majority of them were understandably critical of the nation's regressive elements. Occasionally let them down since they were unable to maintain the European quality of living to which they had grown used. While some of them were depressed and dissatisfied, the majority of them were understandably critical of the nation's regressive elements. While the Emperor himself was not prepared to anger the older men, they looked to him to expedite his reforms and to make better use of their own services. The younger men set up a reform platform and planned to organize a Young Ethiopian Movement before the Italian 1935–1936 war broke out (Perham, 1948). Therefore, the fact that scholars who have studied abroad have had complaints related to low salaries, positions, and reform issues has damaged Ethiopian modern education. This is because the academics were complaining, and it was preventing them from teaching and working hard in other non-academic sectors. To serve his/her country properly, any educated person does, in fact, demand a good salary and wage. The nation is entitled to pay. Teachers and trainers in particular should receive higher pay in order to strengthen Ethiopia's educational system.

Since schools were small in number that challenged and hindered the elimination of illiteracy and expansion of modern education in Ethiopia. In 1935 there were only 21 government schools with 4200 pupils (Markakis, 1975; Otto Harrassowitz GmbH and Co. KG, W, 2005). Comparatively before Italian occupation, a large number of Ethiopians attended on these government-run schools and foreign religious missionary educational institutions for their primary education, though missionary schools never played a significant role in Ethiopia as they were in colonial Africa (Levine, 1972). Besides small number of schools in the country, sabotage of missionary schools was the other challenge of modern education expansion and fruitfulness. However, schools in Ethiopia are insufficient for people today, and more should be opened in both rural and urban areas. Schools should be checked to ensure they teach secular education, because when missionary schools and government schools were opened in Ethiopia in the 20th century, there was opposition due to the 17th century Orthodox-Catholic theological conflict. Therefore, in the existing Ethiopian context, government or NGO schools should teach secular content.

The other challenge of modern education from early to 1941 was the obsessive focus on language teaching rather than universal knowledge, science, and technology (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Ethiopian schools were basically language teaching intensives to produce translators and interpreters for temporal benefits of students. Even, during Italian occupation students' dropout was high due to the substantial need of temporal benefits of translators and interpreters (Pankhurst, 1972). Therefore, the Ethiopian schools from the foundation of modern education in 1905 (Markakis, 1975) to liberation from Italian occupation in 1941 mainly emphasized the teaching of French, English, Arabic, Geez, Italian, and Amharic languages instead of scientific knowledge. Thus, mastery of these languages was the goal of education (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005; Alemayehu & Jon, 2012).

Margery Perham strongly criticized the Ethiopian educational systems for its' ignorance of females in her wonderful book 'The Government of Ethiopia' (Perham, 1948). Until 1931 Ethiopian women did not have any educational opportunity. For the first time in Ethiopia, school for girl named after the emperor wife, *Etege Mennen* was opened as Mennen primary school at Addis Ababa lately in 1931 (Bahru, 1998;

Perham, 1948). Since women comprises half of the society, gender inclusiveness in education is very important to transform the state. So, *Etege Menen School* established inclusively to deliver equal educational chances for women and to endorse gender equality in the sector of educational access (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). However, not only until 1941, but until to-date, the educational process of Ethiopia has not made gender equity. Yet, as already stated, gender inclusiveness in education is very important. Accordingly, by formulating an inclusive educational policy for women, it is to make women use their equal access to education and opportunities (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). This should be done so that education will bring about a positive change in the country.

Likewise, educational institutions for boys and girls were separated from the beginning of modern education in Ethiopia into the 1950s and 1960s; women and men were educated separately until the end of the 1940s (Perham, 1948). It is appropriate to condemn this outdated way of thinking. Although co-education is unacceptable in Ethiopia at the most junior stage, girls' education is seen as being at least as vital as boys'. It is somewhat surprising that even missionary schools were established with separate facilities for boys and girls (Kebede, 2014).

From the very beginning to 1941, the educational system had not paid enough attention to technical-vocational training. Ethiopian education is focused on recitation and imitation. Scoring a good result out of 100 for the student to answer the questions asked by the teacher, who is only knowledge-oriented. Inattention may be due to low societal esteem and the perception that the cost is higher than academic education (Seyoum & Yonas, 2005). Thus, production related courses and schools as well as training centres were rare (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012). The focus should shift from knowledge-oriented approaches to practical vocational-technical training, science and technology schooling, and problem-solving skills to enhance overall learning experiences. "Shortage of skilled manpower, lack of quality textbooks preparation ... spatial coverage of education, lack of consistency in the implementation of educational reforms and scarcity of budget" were also challenges for Ethiopian educational system in the development of Ethiopian modern education.

Education in general was in trouble in Ethiopia before 1941. It evolved after independence from the Italian occupation (Tekeste, 2006).

Conclusions

Traditional education in Ethiopia has been in the hands of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Scholars for about two millennia and correspondingly in the hands of clerics (sheikhs) since 11th century for the Muslim community. However, a number of young Ethiopians have been sent abroad to further studies by European missionaries and Ethiopian Emperors since the middle of the nineteenth century (Sergew, 2022). Particularly, after the battle of Adwa, in an effort to modernize the nation, Emperor Menilek II established the first government-sponsored Menelik II School at Addis Ababa in 1908. Emperor Haile Sellasie continued and expanded on this initiative, sending several hundred young men and women to study abroad and establishing different schools in Addis Ababa and provincial towns.

But beyond the church education ideology, Ethiopian modern education lacked any other dimension. For an extended period of time, rote memorization as a concept and philosophical foundation of education has been strongly exhibited in Ethiopia's modern education. Conversely, the goals and content of education are determined by the sociopolitical interests of Ethiopian rulers (Aweke, 2015) and Western ideology from its inception to 1941. However, modernizing the nation by imitating the western language, culture, history, tradition, and lifestyle was a plan doomed to failure, and on the contrary, it resulted in identity loss (Aweke, 2015).

Generally, modern education in Ethiopia was in trouble from its foundation to the liberation of the state in 1941 from Italian occupation. That is why Ethiopia's modern education could not be as effective and fruitful as expected. In addition to being short-lived, Ethiopia's modern education had accessibility, relevance, and quality problems (Sisay, 2016). In particular, the poor quality of education causes damage to institutions that widely use the education sector and the resources available from the sector. On the contrary, the nation's universal political and financial advancement is mainly reliant on an educated staff; hitherto, one of the basic limitations to educational development is a deprived economy (Alemayehu & Jon, 2012).

Ethiopia's modern education development to 1941 serves as a model for the current period, but it has not yet been achieved in the country. Even today, Ethiopian adult literates aged 15 and above who can read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life may make up half the percentage (World Bank Open Data, 2024). Education is crucial for universal development, and Ethiopia should invest in it. The government and other stakeholders should collaborate to promote education, utilizing available opportunities.

To conclude, this research paper examines the history of modern education in Ethiopia from 1905 to 1941, analyzing its development and challenges. The study focuses on the roles of missionary, government-sponsored, and Italian-run schools, using primary and secondary sources. Significant obstacles included resistance from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, limited access for the general population, and the devastating impact of the Italian occupation. The author argues that understanding these historical obstacles is crucial for informing contemporary educational policies and practices in Ethiopia, emphasizing the need for inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and a curriculum that integrates indigenous knowledge with modern concepts.

Notes

1. I italicized all Amharic or local terms for the sake of this article, and sometimes I write literal meanings of these terms in brackets or following commas.
2. Ethiopia maintains two educational systems. The traditional system is rooted in Christianity and Islam. Christian education at the primary level is often conducted by clergy in the vicinity of places of worship. Higher education, with emphasis on traditional Christian dogma, is still run by most major centres of worship, the most prominent being monasteries in the northern and northwestern parts of the country. Graduation from these centres leads to a position within the priesthood and church hierarchy (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015).
3. For the sake of this article, I have used modern education and formal education interchangeably to avoid or at least to mitigate redundancy. Modern education is imported from abroad, and it was an innovation to Ethiopia in the early twentieth century.
4. Sergew Hable-Sellase claims that Dessie was the other modern school to establish under Menilek II's reign just before Dire Dawa's school.
5. The deliberate choice of French language, which, until the Italian invasion, was the second tongue of Emperor Haile Sellase and most of the older educated men.

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