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NON-FORMAL AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA;*
LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. Methodology	1
III. Non Formal Distance Education in Africa: An Overview	1
Non-Formal and Distance Education Potential	2
Why non-formal Distance Education?	4
What do we know about non-formal and Distance Education in Africa?	4
Some Examples of Non-formal distance education Programmes.....	5
IV. The Current Status of Non-Formal Distance Education in Ethiopia	8
Historical background	8
Economic Context	11
Objectives of NFE in Ethiopia	12
Functional Aspects of NFDE: Basic Literacy	13
Materials for Non-formal Distance Education	14
Correspondence Education	15
Coverage	16
Curriculum, Examination and Certification	20
Community Skills Training Centres (CSTCs)	21
Non-formal Training Centres	22

Evening Programmes	22
Summer In-service Training	24
Training of Agricultural Extension Workers	24
V. Policy Implications and Recommendations	25
VI. Conclusions	26
VII. Bibliography.....	27
VIII. Abbreviations	33

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1994 Educational and Training Policy of Ethiopia identifies relevance, quality, accessibility and equity as the most critical factors affecting educational development in the country. Also, "Inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teachers, shortage of books and other teaching materials, all indicate the low quality of education provided".¹ Gross enrolments ratios at the primary level are below 22 per cent while high rates of illiteracy continue unabated. Educational opportunities at the second level and for technical and vocational training are concentrated in a few urban areas. Likewise, tertiary institutions, which are found in only a few regions, are congested and faced with serious problems of human and financial resources. The primary objective of this report is to review the status of **Non-Formal and Distance Education (NFDE)** in Ethiopia in order to ascertain the extent to which it is contributing to the overall achievement of the national educational goals of Ethiopia. Towards this end, the report is organised into six sections including this introduction. Part two briefly outlines the methodology used for data collection; part three presents an overview of non-formal distance education in Africa; part four is an analysis of the status of NFDE in Ethiopia; part five addresses policy implications and recommendations; while part six summarises and concludes the report.

II. Methodology

The data reported here were obtained from the following sources: central and branch offices of the Ministries of education; Information; Agriculture; Health and Labour and Social Affairs; International and National Non-governmental organisations, religious bodies and other agencies involved in non-formal and distance education in Ethiopia. Valuable information was obtained from interviews and discussions with a number of government officials and individual researchers working in the NFDE sector. Officials of the University of Addis Ababa and the Economic Commission for Africa provided access to their libraries from which we obtained important historical information on the evolution of NFDE in Ethiopia. The report also benefited greatly from materials and insights obtained from a two week course organised by International Extension College in collaboration with London University Institute of Education in which the author had participated.

1.1. Non Formal Distance Education in Africa: An Overview

The first two decades of African independence witnessed a tremendous amount of effort into the development of education. Heavy overall investments in physical, human and financial resources were allocated to the sector. The achievements in the educational development of this period are exemplified by the fact that "adult literacy, estimated at about 9 per cent in 1960, increased to 45 per cent by the mid-1980s. Primary enrolment increased by an average annual rate of 7 per cent between 1960 and 1980 while enrolments at secondary and tertiary levels

¹ Education and Training Policy Addis Ababa, April, 1994, Transitional Government of Ethiopia. Quoted From Rethinking Education in Ethiopia (Tekeste Negash. 1996:93)

expanded even more rapidly, growing at 12.4 and 14.9 per cent respectively" (ECA, 1995: 197). Unfortunately, the ensuing benefits have not been commensurate with the enormous cost incurred. Inherited weaknesses from the colonial policy, greatly exacerbated by unprecedented demographic increases and severe cuts in capital and recurrent expenditures, have left strong imprints on the status of education and the African countries' attempts at reform and expansion in the 1980s and 1990s. According to a UNESCO (1990) estimate, the literacy rate for the African region of 59.1 per cent in 1980, was estimated at 52.7 per cent in 1990 and projected to decline to 40.3 per cent by the end of the millennium. In addition, data indicate two other critical points: one, that gender gaps in African education are some of the worst in the world² (UNESCO, 1995) and two, that the deceleration and deterioration in African educational system has been worst at the primary level.

Non-formal and Distance Education Potential

Despite the precipitous decline in African education sector, NFDE, with its orientation towards life-long learning, have remained relatively peripheral to education policy formulation and development in Africa. The sector is characterised by a wide spectrum of an untidy melange of educational activities ranging from courses in in-service training for teachers, family planning, food and nutrition, agricultural extension, basic literacy and numeracy, vocational training, to domestic science and carpentry. In most countries, there is little or no attention paid to the development of science and technology.

In Africa, as else where, a great deal of conceptual confusion exists as to the precise meaning of the terms non-formal and distance education. However, as Simkins (1995) points out, a common thread underlies the increasing popularity of NFDE in the sense that it is, to some degree, set in antithesis to the currently dominant model of education delivery which concentrates on the pre-career education and training of relatively young people, primarily through the formal educational system. Be that as it may, non-formal education, for the purpose of this report, is defined, following Dodd (1996:2) and Simkins (loc. cit.: 34) as:

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1. See for example, World Education Report, 1995, Paris. This entire report is devoted to an analysis of world gender gaps in education.
 2. ECA, 'Gender disparities in Formal Education in Africa' in Economic and Social Survey of Africa, United Nations, Addis Ababa.
 3. Teriba, O. and Ndongko, T. 'Gender Equity and Female Participation in Formal education in Africa: A Review of Socio-economic and Institutional Factors' in African Economic and Social Review, vol. 1 Nos. 1-2, June and December, 1995.

any organised educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and objectives". The activities or programmes may or may not have curricula, examinations and certificates.

"But they are organised: they do not happen by chance; students join with a specific goal and know that to succeed they must pursue that goal for a significant period of time"

On the other hand, distance education is defined as "any organised learning activity in which a significant proportion of the teaching and learning takes place with the teachers and the learners at-a-distance from each other". In other words, separation in time and space is the defining characteristic of distance education. Correspondence education is the best example of distance education.

The priority in formal education in Africa has hinged on individual national development aspirations based on formal schooling as the principal, or indeed, the only means of achieving socio-economic development. Consequently, we have erroneously painted formal education as being inexorably development oriented forgetting that in real terms education for development involves both the formal and non-formal routes. As Baranshamaje (n.d.: 1) points out, "If sub-Saharan Africa wishes to participate in the knowledge-intensive, global economy, it must be able to produce large numbers of scientifically and technologically-literate, innovation receptive, highly adaptable, and problem solving minded people with predisposition to **lifelong learning**." Also, in sub-Saharan Africa, the problem is not only that conventional educational systems are not affordable but that they are irrelevant and frequently alienating to many of those they purport to serve³. To this extent, and at the current level of Africa's socio-economic development, large-scale provision of education must, perforce, rely on alternative and complementary mechanism of educational delivery. Non-formal and distance education and teaching, grounded, as they are, on cheaper modes of educational delivery, via economies of mass production, offer some of these possibilities.

The inability of governments to provide basic education for all was reiterated by the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, when it was stated, *inter alia*, that:

³ Sheffield J. and Diejomaoh. V.P. Nonformal Education in African Development, African American Institute, New York, (1972).

Ordonez, 'More of the Same will not be Enough', (1995), Dodds, The Use of Distance Learning in Non-formal Education, (1996) and Dodd and Mayo, Distance Education for Development: Promise and Performance, (1997); among others.

To serve the basic learning needs of all requires more than a recommitment to basic education as it now exists. What is needed is an "expanded vision" that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices. (Article 2, WDEFA, 1990:44)

Why non-formal Distance Education?

As already indicated, the major attraction to NFDE is the fact that if properly planned and executed, it should be **much cheaper** than conventional education. Dodd and Inquai (1988) argue, for instance, that the cost per student pursuing secondary level equivalent, in programmes with a minimum enrolment of at least 10,000 students, is much cheaper than in-school secondary level students. Studies carried out in Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania, and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, support the cost effectiveness of NFDE. In a study on Zambia, for instance, Perraton estimates "that the cost per student at a supervised study centre is between about a quarter and a twentieth of the cost at regular secondary school". A recent report by the World Bank (1992:20), on Distance Education in Anglophone Africa, points out that despite the fact that cost information is not readily available, what little there is indicates that NFDE is significantly cheaper than formal education. Data from Malawi College of Distance Education indicated that "the recurrent cost per student was less than one-fifth of the cost per student in a regular school ...". Another study on Malawi Correspondence College reports similar findings, where the total cost (recurrent and capital) per student at a supervised study centre is said to be approximately 18 per cent of the cost of a secondary school student.

At the tertiary level, colleges and universities devoted exclusively to distance education can accommodate a much larger number of students than conventional colleges and universities. For instance, Ramhamhaeng University (RU) in Thailand, which is an exclusively distance education institution, has a total enrolment of over 300,000 students. RU has a strong faculty of science covering practically **all branches of sciences** except medicine. Other faculties include, law, business administration, humanities, education, political science and economics. RU offers Bachelor's, Masters and doctoral degrees in all the subjects above.

What do we know about non-formal and Distance Education in Africa?

Despite the fact that many African countries have used non-formal and distance education to cover a wide variety of educational programmes, there is an extreme paucity of data on this sector, especially regarding such important issues as: the policy environment; the context; the extent to which new technologies are being employed or contemplated; cost effectiveness; constraints; rural/urban gaps; gender issues in NFDE; and the like. The scanty data that exist indicate that radio campaigns, coupled with other relevant media for public education, have been used depending on the problem peculiar to the country in question. Thus, literacy, refugees, adults seeking accreditation, nomadic education, immunisation, oral rehydration therapy, etc., have been successfully employed in the non-formal sector using distance education strategies.

Francophone Africa has successfully coordinated the use of distance education in the non-formal sector through the pan- Africa organisation **Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social (INADES-formation)** based in Cote D'ivoire. INADES was founded in 1962 following a number of resolutions at a conference organised by Catholic Bishops from

Francophone countries. The basic idea was to use distance teaching methods to reach, in particular, rural farmers in order to improve agricultural practices and productivity, thereby increasing food security.

Ministries of education, agriculture and health, in practically all African countries, have successfully used non-formal distance education methods, sometimes referring to them as development support communication, to reach a vast number of their populace in the non-formal distance education sector.

Some Examples of Non-formal distance education Programmes

MAURITIUS: The Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) was set up in 1972 as a multi-purpose institution to cater to "a wide range of media-based projects, ranging from improved secondary courses, through vocational training to out-of- school non-formal education" (Dodds and Mayo, 1995: 11). At the outset, it was agreed that MCA would experiment with NFE for the most educationally disadvantaged members of society with limited employment prospects. Towards this end, two projects of non-formal education were initiated. The first targeted teenage girls meeting weekly in social welfare centres where they were being taught embroidery and domestic science. The aim was to give new dimensions to the domestic science course through a TV series in Creole (Pidgin English) highlighting simple scientific facts of nutrition, hygiene common diseases, physical fitness, human reproduction, and family planning. The series was supplemented with weekly pamphlets (i.e. correspondence texts) in simple French. The second project was the rural homestead improvement course developed for adult village study groups. The aim was to stimulate interest and informed discussion on specific rural improvement skills. The Distance education delivery system comprised radio forums, television programmes and correspondence texts in Creole and French.

The most ambitious programme of non-formal education undertaken by the MCA during this period was on the health of the mother and child - an integrated programme of non-formal education called 'La protection maternelle et infantile'. The aim of the project was to sensitise people about the special needs of pregnant women, mothers with small children, as well as young children themselves. The Distance education strategies were: (i) a series of TV/radio programmes (ii); booklets, posters, slides, tapes as support material; and (iii); face-to-face sessions and discussion groups. The project was designed to demonstrate the usefulness of a multi-media approach to NFDE in addressing such important issues as, for example, maternal and child health, with a view to reducing maternal and infant mortality and high fertility rates. Mauritius's low levels of fertility have been attributed to her aggressive campaign to eradicate illiteracy in the country.⁶

Cote D'ivoire *: A major catalyst for NFDE in Cote D'ivoire, as in many other Francophone countries of West Africa, is, as already indicated, Institut Africain pour le Developpement Economic et Social (INADES-FORMATION). Their NFDE programmes are primarily directed towards farmers, government extension workers and Non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NFDE activities in Cote D'ivoire are financed by international and local NGOs in collaboration with the Ivorian government. The coverage includes problems related to agricultural production including extension workers, the management of small-scale businesses, training of trainers, among others. The most common distance education methods used are: correspondence tuition to groups and individuals; radio series and audio cassettes; occasional seminars printed booklets and pamphlets which are highly illustrated; self-study and group study conducted by extension agents.

KENYA: Two projects on non-formal education using distance education have received measured success. These are: (i) The Foundation Course for Literacy in Adult Education established in 1980 and (ii), the Training Project for Health Workers also established in 1980. According to Holmberg (1985), the Foundation course for literacy in Adult Education took account of the fact that the literacy teachers operated in a varied environment, ranging from modern type living to nomadic existence, and covering a wide spectrum of ethnic groups in Kenya. The Distance teaching course in this sector covers subjects like philosophy and psychology of adult education, methods of teaching adults, various aspects of socio-economic development, curriculum development, evaluation and kiswahili. Another interesting distance education programme in the non-formal sector has been developed for para-medical staff and nurses operating in remote rural areas who have to undertake a number of clinical tasks which would otherwise be assigned to doctors. The content of the course covers such issues as health worker continuing education and training, primary and community health care, common diseases, family planning, environmental health etc. (Dodds, 1996:9). A variety of other distance education activities are carried out by the Department of Distance Studies at the College of Education and External Studies of University of Nairobi, as well as the Ministry of Education. In-service courses for primary schoolteachers have achieved impressive results, training to date, approximately 20,000 primary school teachers. Correspondence courses supplemented by radio lessons and face-to-face tuition are the major media packages Kinyanjui, (1992:117-122).

ZAMBIA: In 1978, the Mass Education unit (MEU) of the Zambian co-operative College was established with financial assistance from the Swedish International Development Authority. Focus was on adults and adolescents seeking accreditation and on adult basic non-formal education. Junior secondary refresher courses in English and Mathematics as well as 'Mass' courses in primary health care and agriculture were taught. Correspondence courses, audiocassettes and regular face-to-face meetings at study centres with study groups were the primary distance education strategies. The programme has continued to receive support from

4. The material on this case study is primarily derived from Tony Dodd's research on The Use of Distance Learning in Non-formal Education

international agencies and Namibian government which earlier on had used the project to train SWAPO refugees during their independence struggles.

GHANA: The Ministry of Education and University of Ghana's Institute of Adult Education have been involved in the non-formal sector of Education through its training programmes for adults seeking secondary school qualification and enrichment programmes since the 1960s. Political education and agricultural education have been addressed using distance education strategies, notably the correspondence texts, and face-to-face contact session; with occasional radio programmes especially the radio farm and rural forum programmes.

UGANDA: Makerere University Centre for Continuing Education pioneered non-formal education for workers as far back as 1968. Focus has been mainly on accreditation at the secondary level and teacher training. Agriculture and health issues have also been among subject offered. Correspondence text, radio programmes and face-to-face meetings have been the major distance education strategies.

SOUTH AFRICA: NFDE has a long history in South Africa dating back to the 1920s. According to Dodd, it was here that the first alternative model of distance education at the university level began to emerge. In 1946 it "became the first university in the world to teach its degree courses exclusively by distance educational methods". The University of South Africa (UNISA), and the South Africa distance education organisation, the SACHED TRUST are the two leading NFDE institutions in the country. UNISA has provided degree programmes through distance education to many black South African and non-citizens denied opportunity for regular degree programmes during the apartheid days. Correspondence remains dominant supplemented by radio and audio cassettes, TV and video, slides and films and more recently, computer assisted learning programmes. Outside this framework, there has been little attention, in the past, given to the potential of NFDE. Given the dissonance between demand and South Africa's capacity to provide formal education, NFDE is likely to receive greater attention in South Africa than has hitherto been the case.

NIGERIA: The importance of non-formal education in Nigeria started gaining momentum in the early 1960s. Mass literacy campaigns were the main focus of the various ministries of education at the state and federal level. In the Northern region, Radio Kaduna offered radio broadcasts to complement face-to-face contacts initiated by the Extension services unit of the then Advanced colleges based in Kaduna and Zaria. These were later to merge to become Ahmadu Bello University. Agriculture and political education received priority attention. Later, literacy on a National scale became the major focus of non-formal education. NFDE has been utilised for campaigns on issues like green revolution (for agriculture), oral rehydration therapy (ORT) for young children, Extended Programmes on immunisation (EPI), and nomadic education. Most Nigerian universities have continuing education departments offering one form of degree programme or another. University of Lagos for example offers degrees in the sciences, education and business administration.

Today, most Nigerian Universities have one form of Distance Non-formal Education variously termed continuing or adult education. Most non-formal education programmes have used radio, programmes TV slots, flip charts, slides, and occasional face-to-face-contract sessions as major distance education strategies to reach mass audiences.

IV. The Current Status of Non-formal Distance Education in Ethiopia

Historical background

In Ethiopia, non-formal distance education is normally referred to as adult education because it caters mostly to the adult population. This form of education can be traced back to the early 20th century of Emperor Menelik and Zewditu's proclamations of "Let all learn." In 1944, Emperor Haile Selassie's Government instituted an education policy under the title Memorandum on Education Policy. This memorandum incorporated non-formal teaching methods complementing the formal school system (Caulk, 1975: 7). In 1955, on the Emperor's coronation a national policy was initiated to provide free and compulsory education to enable illiterate adults aged 50 and above to become literate. The policy urged all organisations to promote the achievement of literacy and compelled teachers in traditional schools and the clergy to become involved in teaching adults. The then Ministry of Education and Fine Arts was given the responsibility of running literacy programs (Sendek Alamachin, Hidar 6, 1948 E.C.).

A National Literacy Council was officially established to co-ordinate literacy programmes and the adult literacy project being implemented by UNESCO/UNDP. In 1957, a Ministry of Community Development was established to promote socio-economic development. To support this objective the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with USAID and UNESCO, instituted special teacher education centres at Debre Birhan and Majete to train teachers for elementary and adult education. At the grassroots level, community development agents were charged with the task of promoting development programmes in literacy and numeracy. The programme was to be implemented by a team of five men and two women for each woreda (district). Trained village level workers from the Awassa Community Development Centre were assigned to some 20,000 peasants per Development District.

Self-help projects and youth clubs were encouraged at NFE units known as Community Development Centres. Thus, the idea of community schools for basic education and rural development contributed to a nation-wide strategy designed to reach the rural people through non-formal arrangements. Community development programmes sponsored by these centres addressed issues pertaining to health and sanitation, agricultural extension, food and nutrition, cooking, sewing and handicraft, the cottage industry, and vegetable growing. The Ethiopian Women Welfare Association (EWWA), established in 1941, also participated in NFE efforts by providing literacy and skill training programmes in handicrafts for low income women. Despite EWWA's efforts to extend such services to women in the outer districts, the largest participation of women remained mostly in Addis Ababa and other larger cities in Ethiopia. Another

organisation. Berhaneh Zere New Institute, an evening school, was established in 1948 by the Government to upgrade the skills of adults working in the capital city. The Ethiopian Teachers Association assisted in promoting evening classes in Behaneh Zere New Institute.

NGOs and missionary organisations such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Mekaneyesus Protestant Church and the Radio Voice of the Gospel, played an important role in promoting non-formal distance education in the country. In addition to the emphasis on the acquisition of skills in literacy and numeracy, many organisations offered opportunities for secretarial training, dressmaking and recreational programmes in sports and physical education. Because many of these programmes had European and American orientations, they were curtailed during the period of the Derg regime of 1974-1991.

During the first (1957-1961) and the second (1968-1973) Five Year National Development Plans, formal education in Ethiopia, as elsewhere in Africa, received a great deal of attention, as evidenced by the gradual weakening of the national community school movement. However, in 1961 the Addis Ababa conference of African Ministers of Education sent shock waves to the Ethiopian Government by declaring the nation's educational status as unsatisfactory even by African standards. This development created the stage for recognising the potential for literacy campaigns to promote non-formal distance education and Universal Primary Education (UPE). It also prompted the Emperor to convene a team of education experts with the specific aim of reviewing the status of education in Ethiopia. It was within this framework that the famous Education Sector Review (ESR) was launched in 1972. The review had a Task Force on non-formal education but the whole process was occulted by the 1974 revolution.

Subsequently, the Derg Regime launched the National Literacy Campaign (NLC) in 1979 aiming to: (1) eradicate illiteracy in 10 years or by the end of 1988; (2) facilitate learning in theoretical and scientific subjects via the achievement of basic literacy; (3) develop skills for effective participation in the affairs of the learners' life; and (4) lay the ground for continuing education (Department of Adult Education, 1980: 4). This was an ambitious programme based on national mobilisation through extensive campaigning. Thus, the National Literacy Campaign Co-ordinating Committee (NLCCC) was established to lead the programme at the central level. The committee was comprised of government agencies, mass organisations and professional associations, and chaired by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Similar committees were set up at the regional, district and rural level. While the National and Regional Committees were responsible for formulating policy and mobilising resources, the committees at the local level were responsible for registering illiterates, arranging classes, keeping records and awarding certificates for the nationally designed non-formal basic education.

According to the national committee, 9,400 reading centres were established (NLCCC, 1989: 44). A total of 22 rounds were organised between July 1976 and February 1990 (EMIS, 1994: 5). As many as 56,000 campaigners were involved in eradicating illiteracy for a period of 2 years through what came to be known as "National Work Campaign for Development Through Co-operation" (Mammo Kebede, 1990: 4).

In 1974, the rate of illiteracy in Ethiopia was 93%. By 1984, this figure had reportedly dropped to 46%. As a result of this remarkable achievement, Ethiopia won the United Nation's 1980 International Reading Association Literacy Prize (Thomas, 1990: 385). The spectacular achievements of the NLC, are indicated by tables 1 and 2 below which present data obtained from the EMIS section of the Ministry of Education.

Table 1: Table: 1 Achievements of Literacy Program Between July 1979-February, 1990
Literacy Centres of the 22 Rounds

Round	Centres	Round	Centre
1	34559	12	4380
2	18536	13	19311
3	11048	14	90659
4	10440	15	16028
5	27638	16	21570
6	30253	17	21606
7	18845	18	23955
8	23726	19	23989
9	23030	20	23621
10	24488	21	20167
11	18053	22	15613

Source: EMIS, 1994; 5

Since the change of government in 1991, Ethiopia has undergone extensive changes. Among the most important have been the redefinition of the country's political ideology grounded in federalism and democratisation. The government favours regionalisation/ decentralisation and regional boundaries have been reorganised along ethnic lines. Currently, the country has 9 Regional states that are responsible for, among other factors, the collection and allocation of revenue. Some of the changes have had profound implications for non-formal

distance education in Ethiopia. For instance, previously the Adult Education Department was a relatively important Department within the Ministry of Education with a staff of 150 individuals. However, consequent to the decentralisation, the Department has been reduced to a mere panel of four, indicating that non-formal distance education is no longer considered an important dimension of educational development in this country.

New responsibilities have been assigned to the MOE. Retraining and staffing of the newly created positions are a great challenge to the MOE and the Regional Education Bureau. Both formal and non-formal distance educational programmes face financial difficulties with NFDE being particularly affected by the acute shortage of professional staff. The country has no training facilities for professionals for NFDE. According to the education sector review of USAID-Ethiopia in 1993, administrative staff at the various levels must grow by nearly 1500 individuals in order to staff the newly created positions.

Within the context of decentralisation, regions are responsible for policy formulation, curriculum design, project development, placement of schools, hiring of teachers, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, et cetera. Most of the personnel lack the capacity to carry out many of these functions. For NFDE to credibly complement efforts of the formal education sector, significant investment in resources for the development of this sector will be needed.

Economic Context

In Ethiopia more than 85% of the population lives in rural areas. Any basic educational activity must, perforce, have an agricultural orientation. In particular, attention to food production and other critical environmental issues is required. For instance, the threat of famine is constant in the rural areas since famines set in periodically with catastrophic effects. Government and non-government agencies, aware of the recurrent nature of the problem, have increased awareness and designed relief strategies. Yet, very little attention is given to devising modalities on how education can help the rural populations respond to and protect themselves from the enormous destruction and dislocations caused by frequent famine.

Non-formal distance education programmes can be used effectively in these communities to help them understand, for instance, the symbiotic relationship between environmental degradation and famine and how this interaction can be avoided to ensure food security among other things. In addition, Rural NFDE can be used to increase awareness and understanding of better farming methods to enhance the status of nutrition levels and other related health issues.

In a recent study, Tekeste Negash (1996:11), expresses scepticism regarding the contribution of Ethiopia's formal education to development. Negash argues that "...it is morally wrong and economically unjustified to invest the nation's scarce resource on the formal education system whose contribution to the development is at best tenuous and at worst irrelevant." He contends that the continued expansion of the formal education system may not contribute to

development at all. First, He argues the formal system is urban-biased and second, the graduates of the formal system have little chance of securing formal employment. Since 85% of the population lives in rural areas and is dependent on agriculture, the measures that the government takes to mobilise the rural population will determine, to a large extent, the pace and pattern of development.

Objectives of NFE in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the stated objectives of non-formal education programmes are currently geared towards the achievement of five major goals including: (1) ensuring learners get relevant knowledge that frees them from natural disasters; (2) ensuring learners obtain skills that improve the socioeconomic and cultural quality of their lives; (3) raising participatory skill levels such that individuals take an active role in the development process; (4) increasing vocational and technical skills to improve productivity; and (5) liberating the learners from illiteracy. To achieve these objectives, a number of educational activities have been organised. NFDE activities that are fully operational in Ethiopia include: programmes to ensure basic literacy; programmes in community skills training; agricultural extension and farmers' training centres; evening classes for all educational levels; non-formal skill training centres; and summer in-service programmes. In addition, there are various fragmented programmes that address issues such as agricultural extension and farmer training, health, nutrition and family planning. Distance education, in the context of NFE, has been demonstrated to have the potential to catalyse the expansion of educational opportunities in a flexible and cost-effective manner.

According to Tekeste Negash (1996: 73) the Ethiopian Non-formal education programme consists of seven components that can be grouped under three categories

- A. Adult literacy initiatives
- B. Community development education
 - basic development education
 - community skills training centres (CSTCs)
 - community based education pilot projects
- C. Continuing education
 - distance education
 - evening education programmes.

The major partners in non-formal distance education are the Ministry of Education (including the regional, zonal and district offices), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Non-government organisations and private investors in Non-formal Training. Among the NGOs, the Institute of International Co-

operation of the German Adult Education Association (IIZ/DVV) is one of the most active. In Co-operation with the MOE IIZ/DVV promotes programmes and institutions for adult and non-formal education under the major theme of "Support for Adult and Non-formal Education in Ethiopia."

Functional Aspects of NFDE: Basic Literacy

The National Literacy Campaign (NLC) was launched in 1979. It was organised centrally and the programme was designed to run in rounds. Between 1979 and 1989, a total of 20 million adults received certificates for achieving basic literacy in reading and writing. However, regarding the general rate of literacy in the country, the figures differ widely. For example, in 1990, the literacy rate was reported to be 77.2 per cent, compared to 55 per cent in 1993 (Tekeste Negash, 1996:73). The most recent figures released by the Central Statistics Agency (CSA, 1995/96) indicate that the literacy rate is only 32.8%

The table below shows the rate of participation in literacy programmes as reported by Non-formal Education Panel of the MOE.

Table 2: Participants of Literacy Program

Year	Participants		
	M	F	Total
1992/93	76990	44997	121987
1993/94	86053	49139	135192
1994/95	193253	92041	255294
1995/96	216672	112384	329056
1996/97	33075	13422	45997
	606043	261983	887526

Source: Compiled Educational Abstracts, Records and Newsletters of the NFE Panel, MOE, 1997.

Instruction in literacy programmes is given in the various Ethiopian languages. By 1996 a total of 15 Ethiopian languages were used to run the programme. The use of so many local languages has been criticised by a study conducted by USAID and UNDP on the grounds of efficiency. The major weaknesses of literacy programmes in Ethiopia are: (1) the lack of trained staff in NFDE capable of designing, administering, and evaluating programmes at all levels of the educational system; (2) the lack of qualified staff to teach

and run skills-training courses; (3) little or no formally allocated budget for the programmes; and (4) the lack of trained human resources for curriculum execution. The idea of teaching and learning in the local language first gained currency during the previous military government. As the various reports of workshops of NFE reveal, there are currently 12 indigenous and one foreign language that are used in instruction, that is, Afar, Amharic, Awigna, Agewigna, Anuak, Nuer, Tigrigna, Oromiffa, Sidama, Wolaita, Kefa, Shekicho and English.

To address some of the problems cited above, the NFE panel of the MOE has prepared a "writers Manual for Basic Education", the first of its kind since NFE introduced in this country. This manual is designed to assist authors of teaching and reading materials for students.

Materials for Non-formal Distance Education

Non-formal distance education has three primary modes of delivery: printed materials; media and brief face-to-face instruction. To date in Ethiopia, as elsewhere in developing countries, printed materials remain the most common mode of delivery and are much more familiar with students of NFDE. The table below indicates the quantity of materials given to the-learners.

Table 3: Learning Materials Distributed

Items	Number
Beginner's books	34,717,204
Post literacy books	16,692,264
Total	51,409,468
Chalk (in gross)	1,748,169
Blackboards (in number)	227,647

Source:- EM is 1994'5

Correspondence Education

In Ethiopia, correspondence⁵ education started approximately fifty years ago. Initially, there was no national/regional distance education institution and most correspondence courses undertaken by Ethiopians were administered by foreign institutions. British correspondence schools were preferred and more popular because they prepared students for the London Matriculation which was later replaced by the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE). Gradually, the need to run an organised correspondence education programme was deemed important by the MOE which signed an agreement with the then Haile Selassie I University to develop secondary school (9-12 grades) correspondence courses. The primary beneficiaries of this agreement were teachers of lower grades. According to Fassil Asfaw (1964), "... further education through correspondence and a parallel improvement in the salary scale of teachers acted as an incentive and helped to improve the quality of teaching. The programme, however, did not go far because it lacked motivated leadership. (Distance Education Division, 1997: 1).

In the early 1950s, the Point Four program of USAID, attached to the MOE, produced printed materials to offer correspondence courses to school teachers in English, Maths and Sciences. Again, due to shortages in financial and human resources, the arrangement was not sustainable. Similarly, efforts to provide correspondence courses in Biology and Chemistry for public health officers who hoped to get admission to the medical schools did not succeed (Solomon Inquai, 1997). Most of the initial efforts were carried out on an ad hoc basis and largely unorganised. In 1970, the MOE created an Extension Division which was renamed **Distance Education Unit of the Mass media Department**. Today, this unit is still functional providing secondary-school-level correspondence education to learners such as unqualified teachers and school dropouts as well as learners in national defence, the police force and the merchant class. The Educational Mass Media, a Unit in the Ministry of Education, assists both correspondence learning and enriches the formal school curriculum through 11 regional-level transmitting stations. The origin of mass media education in Ethiopia goes back to the early 1950s when the former Ministry of Education and Fine Arts established an audio-visual centre in co-operation with USAID. The main purpose of the centre was to provide schools and development agencies with photographs, films, charts and posters. This centre was latter strengthened when the Ethiopian Television broadcasting was launched in 1964. Later, the then MOE used facilities of the Ministry of Information to provide TV instruction in 1965 to high schools located in the capital city.

⁵ According to Holmberg (1967:9), correspondence implies that two or more parties are in contact with one another in writing. Correspondence teaching refers to a course of study in which the student and the teacher are in regular contact with one another, normally by writing.

The attempt to reinforce the formal curriculum through radio programs was started in 1971. Today, both TV and radio programmes have been renamed **Department of Educational Mass Media Agency (EMA)**. Today, EMA's objectives are, amongst others, to improve, develop, and implement the new school curriculum, introduce new and modern teaching methods, extend vocational training programmes and enhance the skills of limited professionals.

The distance education division relies on EMA to provide instruction to both teachers and learners. While the teachers address pedagogical and psychological issues, the distance correspondents learn Amharic, English and biology and other subjects. The table below indicates the coverage of TV and Radio Programmes as reported by the official newsletter of EMA. It covers the years 1988 -1989.

Table 4: Coverage of Educational Mass-media

Media	Schools	Students
Radio	7254	2669531
TV	302	176076

Source:- EMA, 1989, p.12.

The major collaborators of the EMA are mass organisations, development agencies, international organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations

The government subsidises the distance education division of Ethiopia, a non-profit organisation. It charges its students a nominal fee to cover the expenses of course writers, tutors, stationary and postal services (Hilderbrand, 1997: 18). This amounts to a total of 143 Ethiopian Birr per learner per annum (equivalent to 20 US dollars in 1997) for five compulsory subjects.

Coverage

Most distance learning correspondents are urban. Because of the lack of transportation and communication facilities, correspondence education in Ethiopia reaches only a limited number of people. Thus, the rural-urban gap characteristics of the formal school system are also observed in correspondence education. The table below indicates that the rate of participation of female learners was insignificant.

Table 5: Registered Correspondence Learners (1979-1997)

Year	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
1979-1983	325	15	340
1984-1988	359	14	373
1989-1993	222	10	232
1994-1997	240	26	266
Total	1146	65	1211

Source: EMIS, Education Annual Abstract of 1993/94, Feb. 1995, p.15

The ratio of male to female learners in distance education is 5:1, that is, 575 males to 116 females. Table 6 also shows the participation of learners by gender in the year 1996.

Table 6: Enrolment by Gender - 1996

Gender	Enrollment	Percentage
Male	1146	94.6%
Female	65	5.4%
Total	1211	100.0%

Source: Education Mass Media Statistical Records, 1997.

According to data obtained from the Distance Education Panel of the MOE, there are about six categories of registered participants in distance education. The table below indicates the qualification of the staff of distance education panel of the MOE.

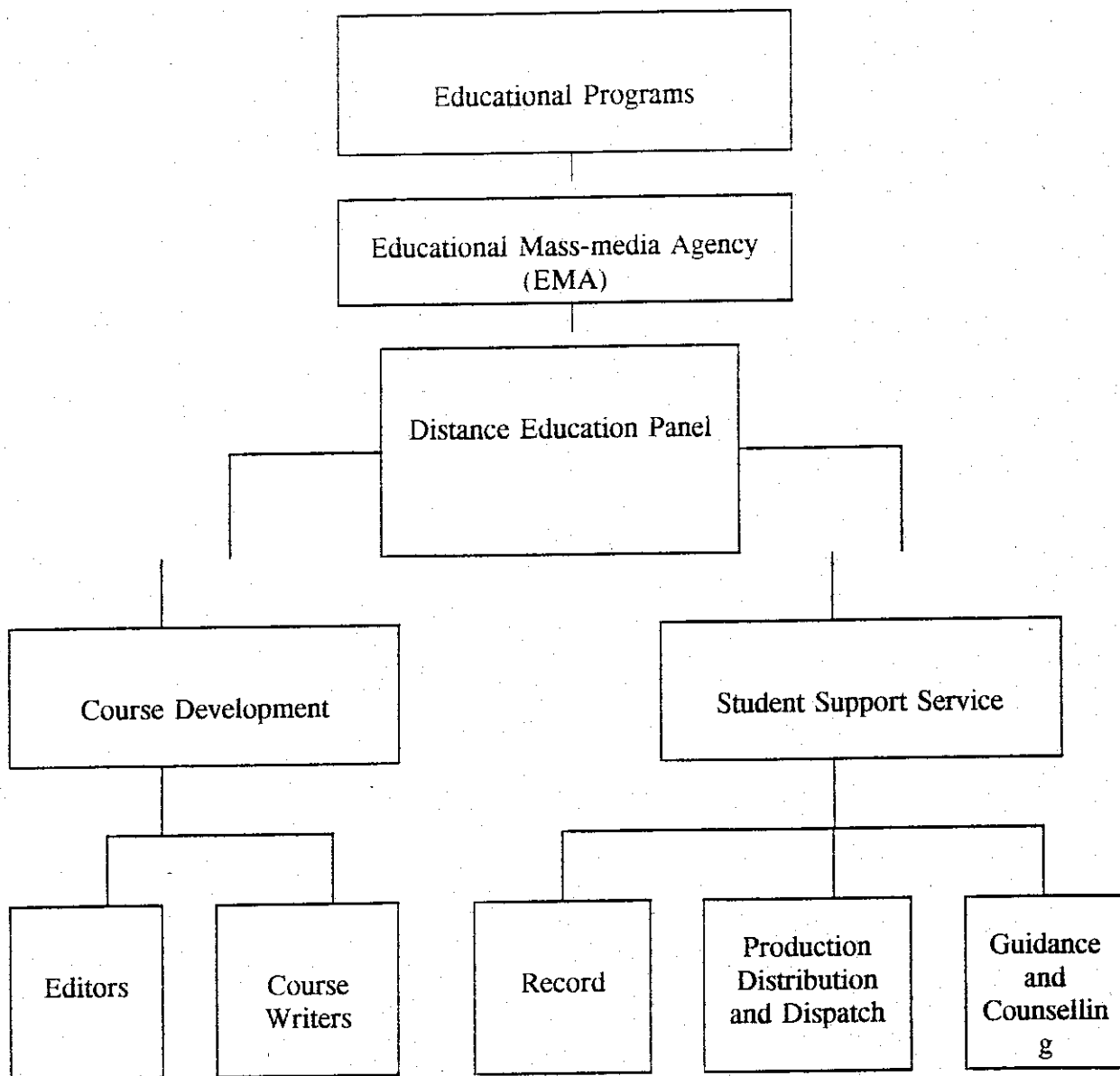
Table 7: Qualification of the Staff of Distance Education Panel

Term of Employment	Qualification					
	MA/ NSc.	BA/ BSc.	College Diploma (2 years)	Grade 12	Below Grade 12	Total
Permanent	-	9	5	13	4	31
Contract (tutors)	4	31	-	-	-	31

Source: MOE, Distance Education Panel Statistical Records.

Interviews with the officials of the distance education panel of the MOE, identified several major problems faced by DEP. First, the division is not yet familiar with enabling technology such as faxing, email and others. Second, there is no Internet service or telephone correspondence and radio instead of TV broadcast is used for the purpose of distance learning. Third, branch offices were not opened in different regions. Fourth, the public is not aware that learning is possible from a distance. Fifth, the panel is not functioning as an independent unit in running its programmes. Sixth, turnover of trained personnel is high and there is an inadequate budget. In the future, the Distance Education Panel plans organisational expansion, assembly of school radio sets, manpower recruitment and training, expansion of programme production and the organisation of centres for media use.

Figure 5: Organisational Structure of Distance Education Panel



Source:- Distance Education Panel.

As shown in the above figure, the distance education panel of Ethiopia has two major divisions: the academic and student support sections. The planning, design and development of instructional materials are the responsibility of the academic section. This section is headed by the chief editor and consists of eight subject editors.

The other section, the student support section, is responsible for course production, advertisement, admission of students, dispatching of instructional materials, the provision of tutorial and counselling support, organising occasional face-to-face teaching, conducting and marking exams, and keeping students records (DEP, 1996: 10). Course designers are employed on a contract basis from among experienced university teachers.

Curriculum, Examination and Certification

One of the main features of NFDE education is its flexibility. For example, the duration of a particular course of study depends upon the pace of the individual learner. Students may present themselves for examinations whenever they are ready without time limit. The schedule for registration, examination, etc. is flexible to minimise inconveniences to both the learners and the distance education department. The tutors in the distance learning programme are responsible for guiding the students and grading exam papers. There is no special curriculum for correspondence students. The correspondence learners use the formal school curriculum. Upon the request of the learners, two supervised examinations are given in each course. The regional, and district education offices and secondary schools are used to serve as centres for examinations. After successfully completing the required courses, students receive their certificates. The certificates are officially recognised by government, private employees and for further education. Table 14 shows a sample comparison of the efficiency level of the two systems for four consecutive years.

Table 8: Efficiency Level of Correspondence Education

Year	Conventional Secondary Schools			Correspondence Education of the Second Level		
	Sat for Exams	Passed	%	Sat for Exams	Passed	%
1978/79	-	-	-	7	5	71
1979/80	52686	16318	31	21	18	90
1980/81	75523	15333	20	48	46	96
1981/82	81592	16371	20	135	135	100

Source:- Desta Alabo, 1989: 69.

Due to low levels of economic development in Ethiopia, new technologies are not yet in use in NFDE. Even relatively traditional technologies such as telephone, television and computer networks which have been in use for longer periods in more advanced economies of the West, are out of reach for most NFDE learners in Ethiopia. This fact explains, to a large extent, why NFDE has made little headway in Ethiopia.

Skills training is the second most important component of NFDE programmes. The major partners of this program are the MOE, MOA, MOH, NGOs and private investors. The target groups of the skill training programmes are the rural peasants, secondary school leavers, schooldropouts and individuals working in the small-scale sector.

Community Skills Training Centres (CSTCs)

CSTCs are residential centres offering three to six month courses in basic education and handicraft skills (metal works, leather works, weaving, carpet making, pottery, knitting, etc.). The training courses are ordinarily offered for 6 hours a day and are neither grade nor certificate oriented. Many of the co-ordinators of the CSTCs are graduates of the former two-year training program of the Adult Education Department of Bahir Dar Teachers College. This was the only institution training the co-ordinators of CSTCs. Unfortunately, this training unit discontinued its program. Today there is no formal training program in non-formal and adult education. Trainers at CSTCs are employed by the MOE on a contract basis and there continues to be a shortage of qualified and capable trainers in certain fields (e.g. knitting, metal work, leather).

A national community skills training movement was initiated in 1976 with about 400 residential CSTCs established with the aim of facilitating rural development. Almost one CSTC was established in each district and trainees were recruited from among the Peasants Associations (PAs). Upon completion of a course, trainees were in turn to train others. By the end of 1990, the CSTCs had trained a total of 189,313 adults of whom 33,126 were women (Tekeste Negash, 1996: 74). Many of the CSTCs, however, had to discontinue their training because of the civil war. For instance, between 1989 and 1991, 75% of the original 400 CSTCs were destroyed, vandalised or rendered non-functional during the last days of the civil war and its immediate aftermath (Abebe Giday, 1996: 4). During the transition period, some rehabilitation work was carried out but almost all CSTCs need revitalisation in line with the existing socio-economic and political context. Their mission needs to be restated with the current rural oriented development programmes in mind. These centres have the potential to serve in the training of front-line workers who are community agents in the promotion of agricultural development in general and non-formal distance education in particular.

These CSTCs should be revived in order to upgrade indigenous skills, introduce relevant and new skills and technologies, raise the general consciousness and active participation of rural communities and co-ordinate the multi-sectorial development efforts in and by the rural community.

The CSTCs face several major problems though. First, the objectives and mission of CSTCs are not clearly specified vis a vis the multifaceted rural development goals and needs. Second, there is a lack of core staff consisting of centre co-ordinators, teachers, vocational training instructors and support staff. Third, centres lack financial and physical resources such as manuals, guides, tools, etc.

Non-formal Training Centres

Organised non-formal training programs in Ethiopia are classified into two groups. The first group consists of sponsored pre-service training ordinarily offered by governmental, private enterprise or NGOs. The second group is comprised of on-the-job training programs for employees in various ministries and other organisations. The first category of programmes, which is now growing fast in major urban centres like Addis Ababa, intends to prepare secondary school leavers both for self-employment and wage employment.

Currently, there are more than 50 non-formal training centres that fall into the first category. The specific training areas include home-economics, beverage processing, sewing and embroidery, mechanics and car driving, shoe making, carpentry, metal works, weaving, carpet making, masonry electric house wiring, brush making, and leather works. Non-formal training institutions in and around Addis Ababa are run by a number of agencies and are mostly uncoordinated without clear objectives.

NFDE Training Centres are hindered by the fact that many privately owned institutions are not well equipped for the training they offer. For example, trainers require further training, out-dated machines are used in many centres and there is little or no off-campus field training. Nonetheless, training programmes at these centres are characterised by strong features relative to the formal educational system. Specifically, trainees are better motivated, the curriculum is geared toward producing specialists and is more responsive to community needs and trainees are well prepared for employment, their most pressing need.

Evening Programmes

Evening Programs in Ethiopia, often referred to as extension programs, are run by the formal schools/colleges and universities which have access to human resources and government institutions such as the banks and telecommunications facilities. Moreover, these evening programs are not universally free. Recent statistics obtained for the years 1989 through 1990, indicate that 3 per cent of the primary, 7 per cent of the junior and 15 percent of the senior secondary students were enrolled in the evening programs in the urban areas (Tekeste Negash, 1996). No complete and/or accurate data are available for the number of participants.

The data gathered from the official EMIS section of the MOE show that a total of 10 institutions of higher learning are running extension classes at the undergraduate diploma and degree levels. Table 16 shows the coverage of extension program in the 10 higher learning institutions of Ethiopia in the year 1994/95 academic year.

Table 9: Evening Students at Institution of Higher Learning, 1994/95

Institution	Enrolment		
	Male	Female	Total
Addis Ababa University (including all its colleges and faculties)	5541	1846	7387
Awassa College of Agriculture	281	86	367
Bahir Dar Teachers College	789	255	1044
Alemaya University	509	117	626
Ambo Agriculture College	132	26	158
Bahir Dar Polytechnic	249	53	302
Jimma College of Agriculture	139	37	176
Kotebe College of Teacher Education	483	711	1694
Addis Ababa College of Commerce	1321	1025	2346
Mekele Business College	388	230	618
Total	10332	4386	14718

Source: EMIS, MOE, 1996.

During the period, all the institutions of higher learning including those that do not have extension programs had a total enrolment of 15,248 in their formal programs. Compared to the extension enrolment of the same year, the evening-program institutions of higher learning doubled their regular service by providing an opportunity to those individuals who do not have access to a formal education. Unfortunately, these programs operate only in urban centres where many of the colleges are located. For example, Addis Ababa University, compared to all other institutions of higher learning outside the city of Addis Ababa, had an evening enrolment twice that of these institutions combined.

Summer In-service Training

Summer-in-service training, organised by the MOE, provides further professional upgrading courses for teachers at primary and secondary levels and educational administrators. In 1994/95, a total of 1,978 first degree and diploma level students were enrolled in three colleges that were running either teacher training or related programs. According to information obtained from the MOE, the summer in-service program is to be strengthened in line with the new education policy and the structural changes introduced in the primary and secondary schools.

Training of Agricultural Extension Workers

In Ethiopia, agricultural extension services, which ceased to operate in the rural areas more than 3 decades ago, have been recently revived. Accordingly, the MOE has different centres in different regions to train agricultural extension workers. The co-ordinator of the training program of the MOA, indicated that there are five training centres for training agricultural extension agents. These are: (1) Agarfa All Purpose Peasant Training Centre; (2) Bekoje Peasant Training Centre; (3) Ardayata Yekatit 25 Co-operative Institution; (4) Menagesha Suppa Forestry Training Centre; and (5) Woreta Peasants' Training Centre. These training centres admit secondary school leavers for non-formal training programs in health education, nutrition, home economics, afforestation, the utilisation of fertilisers, the use of pesticides and herbicides, co-operatives organisation and farm management, the use of improved seeds, soil conservation, health and family planning and the use of technology. The courses are designed to offer practical training and are two to nine months in duration. The table below indicates the training capacity of these centres which ranges between 30 and 2000.

Table 10: The Training Capacity of the Five Training Centres

Training Centre	Capacity	Duration of Training
1. Agarfa	2000	9 months
2. Ardayata	250	9 months
3. Bekoji	80	9 months
4. Menagesha	30	2 months
5. Woreta	DNA	9 months

Source: The Agricultural Extension Section.

Currently, in rural development programming, emphasis is placed on agricultural extension programs by the MOA and Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG2000). These programs are to be vigorously implemented to achieve self-sufficiency and food security (MOA, 1993: 13). The nation-wide non-formal training of extension workers is geared to achieve two major goals: the provision of technical and material support to farmers and increased agricultural production through trials, demonstrations and capacity building.

V. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Coherent NFDE education policy and political commitment from the highest level is an absolute imperative if NFDE is to gain currency in Ethiopia. As Coles (1987) points out, lack of clear national policy is a major impediment to the development of NFDE in developing countries. Political commitment and sustained budgetary allocations are needed to change people's perception of NFDE as an inferior mode of educational delivery.

To the extent that over 85 per cent of Ethiopians live in the rural areas, the government must develop modalities to get NFDE to rural communities. Towards this end, cheaper technologies must be utilised. Extensive radio forums, for instance, have been shown to be extremely helpful in reaching isolated populations. Above all, NFDE must go beyond traditional provision of basic literacy and numeracy, agricultural extension, domestic science, in-service training for teachers, etc., to introducing science and technology in its curricula. This is imperative if the country is to achieve long-term socio-economic development.

In June 1996 the country organised a national workshop to develop a strategy for NFE in Ethiopia. Also, Regional bureaux are now in the process of formulating their NFE strategies. This is certainly a step in the right direction indicating that NFDE in Ethiopia may receive the attention it deserves. To flourish however, non-formal distance education in Ethiopia must have good management and institutional leadership backed by a relentless political commitment to create learning opportunities for all members of society. In addition, NFDE must be grounded in economies of scale to be cost effective. National and international partners in the NFDE sector must work with government and local institutions to create frameworks that support standards of good practice and eliminate duplication in an area characterised by extreme scarcity of resources. Finally, these programmes must secure consistent budgetary allocations - especially from Ethiopian Government and donor agencies - to compensate staff, maintain physical infrastructure, develop teaching materials and gain access to the latest technologies.

To increase the level of participation in NFDE, Ethiopia could greatly expand the scope of NFDE by using churches and mosques. Currently and in the past, these institutions have been extensively used in achieving basic literacy and numeracy. The need for educational planners in Ethiopia to revisit their paradigms of educational delivery in order to harmonise them with Ethiopia's long-term development strategy is urgent. For instance, an expanded vision of NFDE must go beyond the acquisition of basic skills of numeracy. An adequate NFDE program requires financial support. In Ethiopia a number of Ministries have the responsibility for financing non-formal programs. And yet, all the programs in the education sector are financed by the MOE.

Currently, the non-formal sector does not feature significantly in the national education budget: An indication of the low priority accorded by the government. High level political commitment is needed in order to facilitate a more conducive policy environment without NFDE can not gain grounds in Ethiopia.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Non-formal distance education is yet to gain currency in Ethiopia. At the policy level, NFDE does not seem to be conceived as a credible and viable complement or alternative strategy to formal education, despite the fact that Ethiopia has one of the lowest school enrolment ratios in the world. Lack of attention to NFDE is exemplified by the fact that: (1) the Department formerly dealing with NFE in the MOE has been reduced to a small panel of about 5 people; (2) NFDE is handled in an *ad hoc* manner with few human and financial resources; (3) there is no coherent policy regarding the development of NFDE in the country; (4) there is no co-ordination among the various organisations and NGOs dealing with NFDE; and (5) most of the structures dealing with NFDE are concentrated in a few large urban enclaves with little effort to reach the rural communities where over 85 per cent of the population lives. In the past the government used NFDE structures to promote the achievement of basic literacy and numeracy. Consequently, to many Ethiopians, NFDE is thought to be synonymous with these skills. But more significantly, a large number of people in the education field, who can be instrumental in policy formulation and implementation, have little or no knowledge of the difference between the formal and the non-formal education delivery systems. In addition, the study concludes that in the past NFDE in Ethiopia was not development oriented. Rather, it was used either for missionary purposes, that is to spread Christianity or Islam, or for ideological indoctrination. Finally, the report indicates two other critical points: (1), that as in many other African countries, NFDE in Ethiopia lacks firm political commitment and conducive policy environment and (2), that the organisational structure of NFDE does not take cognisance of the symbiotic relationship between science and technology and the long-term socio-economic development of the country.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AED	Adult Education Department.
CSTC	Community Skills Training Centre.
DEP	Distance Education Panel.
EFA	Education for All.
EMIS	Education Management Information System.
ESLCE	Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination.
ESR	Education Sector Review.
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front.
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio.
LDC	Least Developed Country.
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture.
MOE	Ministry of Education.
MOH	Ministry of Health.
MOI	Ministry of Information.
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-government Organization.
NLC	National Literacy Campaign.
NLCCC	National Literacy Campaign Coordinating Committee.
PHRD	Policy of Human Resource Development.
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program.
UNDP	United Nations Development Program.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development.
UPE	Universal Primary Education.