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## The Diversification of Curriculum Contents and Learning Experiences in Primary School Textbooks in Post-1991 Ethiopia: The Experiences of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which primary school textbooks' contents and learning experiences have been diversified to the regional context of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State level to reflect the political, social, economic, historical, cultural life and environmental conditions. In the study, content analysis was conducted on 8 student textbooks selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. An interview was employed to collect data taking contents, activities, exercises, projects, and illustrations as a focus of the analysis. The collected data were classified as general when they reflect experiences outside of the regional state, but as regional/local when they were found closer and familiar to the learner and reflecting the immediate environment and related to the region. The level of diversifications of the contents and learning experiences were quantitatively analyzed using frequency count and percentages. Interviews were made with the regional level textbook writers and editors and analyzed qualitatively using narration. The content analysis on the first cycle textbooks showed that they were diversified and made to reflect the regional state's reality while the second cycle textbooks emphasized universally established subject matter contents and learning experiences focusing more on the logical structures of the subjects than using contents and learning experiences from the regional state. However, the contents and learning experiences of the first-generation textbooks were diversified while the second-generation textbooks for the second cycle focused more on country-wide shared contents and learning experiences. The study concluded by recommending that as diversification accommodates differences, it must be further strengthened.*

**Keywords:** *content analysis, contents, curriculum diversification, learning experiences*

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## **Introduction**

### *Background of the Study*

Diversification of students' textbook contents and learning experiences through contribution, additive, transformation, and actions (Banks and Banks, 2001) has been in practice since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such practices normally address the demands of the locality and the needs of the learner. The supply of textbooks plays critical roles in maintaining education quality and effectiveness. The textbooks provide a solid basis for children's learning and a means for gaining information and knowledge (UNESCO, 2009). Furthermore, the document further elaborates that students' textbooks also provide differentiated education that addresses the needs of the learner and the demands of society.

Currently, primary schools in Ethiopia, (grades 1-8) are expected to offer their education mostly using locally prepared curriculum materials with the mother tongue languages with the textbooks prepared by the Regional State's Education Bureau (UNESCO, 2006/07; MoE, 2002). The practice began in the transition period (1991-1995) and further strengthened and continued after the launching of the Education and Training Policy (ETP) in April 1994 (TGE, 1994a). Such a practice in post-1991 Ethiopia helped the regional states and the two city administrations to have their localized primary school curriculum.

It is reported that the practice helped young children learn through their mother tongue and made learning easier than it was before (Dereje, 2010). By 1995/1996 academic year, six mother tongue languages in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), namely, Sidamigna, Dawroigna, Hadigna, Wolaytigna, Kefichogna, and Gediogna including Amharic were in use as media of instruction in the primary schools of the Regional State (Lemma, 1996). By 2013/14, the number has increased to 24 (SNNPRS Education Bureau, 2013/14).

The decentralization of the education management and the division of the roles to prepare primary schools' curriculum at the regional state level (UNESCO, 2006/07) initially encouraged the regional state to prepare regional state's students' textbooks for the primary schools in the mother tongues. It was done based on the syllabi prepared by the Ministry of Education in the middle of the 1990s (MoE, 2002). At the beginning of the practice, the primary schools of the first cycle (grades 1-4), had subjects being integrated and organized on self-contained classroom arrangements (MoE, 2002).

Children attending the first cycle (grades 1-4) are expected to learn to read, write, calculate and understand their environment. Any attempt to provide them with more than those basic skills is considered as counter-productive as their young minds would be strained to absorb more than these basic subjects. Thus, in the first cycle of primary education, children learn reading, writing, arithmetic, personal hygiene, and environmental awareness. It was believed that anything more than these would indeed tax their mental capacity and their disposition as children (MoE, 2002:123). The students' classroom assessments were made to focus on students' learning and the assessment is practiced continuously. Thus, the children in the lower classes, from grade one to grade three, get automatic promotion based on continuous assessment results (TGE, 1994b).

Though it is a new practice in Ethiopia, the preparation of the primary school curriculum, students' textbooks, and teachers' guides (grades 1 to 8) are the responsibilities of the Regional Education Bureaus (UNESCO, 2006/07). As a matter of practice, the Ministry of Education is required to assist the region when requested. Despite the presence of clearly set roles, the Ministry of Education at the center prepared the subject syllabi and the other curricular materials, tried them out in sample schools at the experimental phase, where teachers, regional education bureau personnel, directors, and pertinent educators participated in the evaluation of the curricular materials of the Transition Period (MoE, 2002; Dereje, 2010; GoE, 2008).

After 1996, the regional government (SNNPRS) further strengthened the preparation of the students' textbooks for most of the primary school subjects, except English and Amharic, including teachers' guides for use in the region until the recent takeover of the role of the textbook preparation for the second cycle primary schools by the Federal Ministry of Education. The regional state's practice, which is taken as a good beginning and seen as the manifestation of the decentralization practice in the democratization process, made educators and citizens of the regional state question why such 're-centralization' activities are needed.

Classroom discussions on the course Curriculum Design and Development, specifically on decentralization of the education practice and localizing the school curriculum with graduate program students in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, at the College of Education of Addis Ababa University students repeatedly raise and reveal the recent practice as a case. The Federal Ministry of Education took the preparation of the curriculum including the textbook preparation after the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) (GoE, 2008).

Despite the presence of such heated discussions among students and the professionals in the regional state, there are no research reports on any of such curricular issues including the diversification of the curriculum through student textbooks' contents and activities, projects, and illustrations, which were prepared at the regional and federal levels. Thus, researching the nature of contents and learning experiences of the primary school textbooks prepared at the two generations of the textbook preparation seems timely and important to fill the knowledge gap. Thus, it is believed that the research findings would make the stakeholders get evidence-based information on the practice. It also makes other interested individuals and/ or institutions conduct further research on the issue whose ultimate goal would be to trigger efforts at reshaping the contents and learning experiences of the primary school textbooks for the benefit of the learner.

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*The Problem*

The curriculum is prepared as a means to achieve the desired behavioral changes set in the Education and Training Policy objectives. The textbooks are part of the curriculum that serves as a means to help students bring about the desired changes in behavior or to develop the competencies expected. Diversification of curriculum contents and learning experiences (activities and methods of teaching) is possible for the individual or groups as long as the results are predetermined and retained. Thus, it is possible to diversify the contents and learning experiences at the regional, zonal, district, or school level to meet the needs of the learner and the demands of the society. Contents and learning experiences are the means to develop the mental, social, emotional, moral, and aesthetic developments of the learner, but not an end by themselves (Davies, 1976; Marsh, 2009). The diversification of the education service delivery through the provision of multicultural education in the country is encouraging. The attempts to consider the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender, religion, special needs, and other differences are immense. However, there is not enough research report on the level of diversification of the contents and learning experiences in the textbooks for the primary schools in the regional state.

Thus, conducting a comprehensive study on the ways by which the regional state prepares the primary school textbooks making use of local contents and learning experiences would help policymakers, school community members, sponsors, donors, partners, parents, students, textbooks writers and editors, and other regional state's sector offices to share the good experiences. It also adds relevant information and technical skills on the nature, scope, and opportunities of textbook preparations for the primary schools without overlooking the federal level education objectives and contents developed centrally. It is hoped that the outcomes of the study would serve as sources of information for research communities and institutions. Hence, it is with this understanding that the researcher investigated how the contents, activities, exercises, projects, and illustrations suggested in the

textbooks are diversified and, or open to be diversified to the local features, schools, the learner, and concrete realities of the regional state.

### *The objective of the Study*

The objective of the study is to examine the extent to which the student textbooks incorporated diversified contents and learning experiences to make the curricular materials relevant and appropriate to the learner and the local community of the primary schools of the regional state.

### *Research Questions of the Study*

- To what extent the contents and learning experiences (activities aspects) of the primary school subjects are made to reflect the regional physical/natural and social environments
- How appropriate and relevant the contents and learning experiences (activities aspects) of the primary school subjects are to the learner and local community of the region
- Determine whether there are any differences between those textbooks prepared by the Regional State Education Bureau and those prepared by the commissioned textbook writers at the Federal Ministry of Education
- Assess how the textbook preparation by the Federal Ministry of Education has influenced the nature of the textbooks and the regional education professionals

### *Operational Definitions of Terms*

*Activities:* tasks that demand students to do them either individually or in groups being derived from each unit based on the lesson objectives, which are measured by the extent of engaging students in the process and time required outside of the classroom sessions.

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*Curriculum contents:* elements of a subject matter such as facts, main ideas, concepts, principles, laws and theories, procedures, techniques, experiences, etc., that are selected as a means to achieve the intended instructional objectives.

*Diversification:* the adaptations/ possibilities of adjustments to make on the curriculum contents, activities, methods, materials, and assessment mechanisms to fit the diverse groups of learners and the demands of the local communities.

*Exercises:* those tasks given to students, which help students apply, drill, practice, or perform on what they have learned for stabilization/consolidation

*First Generation Textbooks:* textbooks written in 2003/4 and 2005/06 at the Regional State

*Illustrations:* hand-drawn pictures, graphs, charts, photographs, and maps of different types that help students visualize the process, or the phenomena presented textually.

*Learning experiences:* the different opportunities such as the activities and methods of teaching, which the curriculum offers to the teacher to guide and the learner to act or react to acquire the desired changes in behavior.

*Practical activities:* are tasks that demand students to do experiments/ practical activities using locally available resources.

*Projects:* tasks that are set for paired or larger groups of students to be done outside of the classrooms in a specified time to be submitted and presented to classmates

*Second Generation Textbooks*: textbooks written in 2011/12 both at the Regional State (for the first cycle) and Federal Ministry of Education (for second cycle subjects) and are in use at the Regional State's schools

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### *The Selection of Contents and Learning Experiences for Curriculum Development*

Curriculum planners consider a large number of variables and work much to accommodate the differences of the learner and meet the demands of the local community. Mostly, curriculum diversification relies on the contents and learning experiences selected and instructional resources applied. Contents help the learner in the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills, habits, attitudes, values, etc. (Davies, 1976). They are vehicles for the development of the learners' intellectual and physical abilities and skills as well as value systems. Thus, they serve as tools to develop physical, mental, social, emotional, ethical, and aesthetic qualities (Davies, 1976, Taba, 1962).

The selection of contents from the cultural values of the society is essential for they are the means of their survival. The cultural values provide chances to learn skills, rules of conduct, and aesthetic principles comprising what the specific social groups have learned about the world, the ways of using them, and of improving its qualities (Abebe, 1991).

Under normal circumstances, the commonly used criteria for the selection of contents in curriculum development include validity and significance of the subject matter; considering the appropriate balance between scope and depth; appropriateness to learners' needs and interests; the durability of the subject matter (the test of survival); a logical relationship of the content to main ideas and basic concepts; learnability of the content and its capacity to interact with other subjects; and the contribution to the development of the society (McNeil, 1996;



Pratt, 1980; Tanner and Tanner, 1980; Taba, 1962). Thus, in every discipline and each subject, there are plenty of alternative contents, which can be taught to achieve the same educational/instructional objectives.

Similarly, technically speaking, learning experiences are the other means or tools that can be used to achieve predetermined educational objectives. They are opportunities that are planned and guided by the school/ institution including societal experiences in the institutions/schools, observable conditions about the nature of the school community, the relationships between students and teachers, variations arising from individual differences and levels of readiness that are accessible to the learner (Tyler, 1949; Wheeler, 1967; Pratt, 1980; Tanner and Tanner, 1980).

In a nutshell, learning experiences help in answering the question, “How do students acquire the desired changes in behavior?” This shows that there is no other possibility to bring about the desired change in behavior without the learner’s involvement in some kinds of activities through different learning experiences. The actions and reactions of the learner determine what they learn (Pratt, 1980). Therefore, curriculum planners need to select those activities that serve as the means to acquire the desired changes in behavior.

In general, the activities in students' textbooks as learning experiences are expected to allow the practices of the behaviors, which are suggested in the objectives; express what the learner believes that he/she is expected to know; sometimes self-activating type; foster intimate face-to-face relationships within small groups and be at least as varied as the objectives they represent. They should also be continuing and consistent; be based on socially accepted values of the current society; very effective and efficient; not be limited to classrooms and involve the total behavioral development of the learner. The contribution to the all-round development of the individual and the feasibility to accomplishment are the essential criteria for the selection of the learning

experiences as taught by authorities in the field (Tyler, 1949; Taba, 1962; Lawton, 1975; Doll, 1974; Davies, 1976; Tanner and Tanner, 1980; Pratt, 1980).

In addition to selection, arranging the activities in sequential order plays an important role. Thus, in sequencing the activities, recognition of individual differences and the diversification of the activities to fit different learners at the grades, comprehensibility of the activities, use of resources from the locality (materials...), flexibility, linkage to life, provision of different assessment mechanisms, maintaining the balance between the national and international standards in the field, the nature of the suggested instructional materials, experiments, used pictures, the adequacy of the activities to the group, compliance to the competence set in the syllabus are essential criteria for the diversification (Lawton, 1975; Doll, 1974; Davies, 1976).

Practically, student textbooks in the diversified curriculum are expected to reflect the concrete conditions, cultural values of the students' community, and the socio-economic activities and lives of the beneficiaries. The textbooks' contents and learning experiences can be diversified through the integration of any of the four dimensions; namely, contribution, additive, transformation, and actions. They further elaborated that the contributions approach focuses on heroes and heroines, holidays, and discrete cultural elements, etc. that are celebrated occasionally, while the additive approach, considers the contents, lessons, and units to be added to the school curriculum without changing its structure. This latter dimension involves appending content, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic structure (Banks and Banks (2001).

Similarly, the contents can either be integrated or transformed where the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable the students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Through such practices, it can be designed to help students learn how knowledge is constructed. In the action

approach, students make decisions on important personal, social, and civic problems and take actions to help solve the problems. These all approaches have been used to integrate contents to the school curriculum in multicultural societies and diversify the contents to achieve the commonly set educational objectives (Banks and Banks, 2001).

Learning experiences, as means to diversify the lessons make students learn through what they can sense and do easily (Abebe, 1991; Tanner and Tanner, 1980). There can be plenty of activities that can lead to the achievement of one or more objective(s) at a time as there are many ways to reach the same point or destination in life. Similarly, a single activity may help in achieving more objectives as a single objective can be achieved by many activities. It is this latter experience that gives opportunity to diversify the learning experiences and achieve the same and common goals. The following few paragraphs indicate what has been done in Ethiopian education to diversify the education service through multicultural education.

#### *Research Reports on Curriculum Diversification of Education in the Ethiopian Context*

The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy states that the cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, and other related dimensions of diversity are among the top priority areas of attention. The policy recommends the inclusion of diversity issues that cultivate mutual respect, tolerance, living in harmony, equality, liberty, justice, and moral values that serve much in building a pluralistic society (Tariku and Gara, 2016). These authors further noted that diversity is everything that makes people different from each other, which includes issues of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, ability, age, religious belief, or political conviction. It aims at promoting equality and diversity in schools, considering the challenging negative attitudes amongst students, avoiding stereotypes in curricular resources and examples, setting clear rules regarding how people treat each other, and treating all students and staff equally and fairly.

A study by Debela (2020) showed that diversity in education in the country required reforming the structural, procedural, substantive, and evaluative tenets of the educational enterprise to reflect the social, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic pluralism of a given society. The investigation by Tariku and Gara, (2016) on four major diversity dimensions; ethnicity, language, gender, and religion showed that some of the major diversity dimensions are articulated while other dimensions are missing.

Yonatan Tesfaye (2008) conducted a study on decentralization practices of Ethiopia and South Africa and forwarded that diversifying the citizens' education in ways that help them identify and communicate their identity and heritage, their distinct values and interests, and their vision of future destiny as a political unit is highly required. He further strengthened his argument by stating that modern states organize citizen education based on the nation-building approach and use this as a means of safeguarding national unity and as an instrument for national objective attainments.

The Federal Ministry of Education's (MoE, 2002) report indicates that

The new curriculum, in addition to creating enough room for regional states and their respective nations, nationalities, and peoples to design content and objectives of their primary education relevant to their context, enables them to make mother tongue as a medium of instruction at this level. Teaching children with their mother tongue in primary schools and making them learn with it reinforces their identity and to be proud of their culture and become self-confident and proud citizens. Such self-confidence coupled with the acquisition of knowledge and skill through schooling makes the production of capable and productive citizens possible.

Diversification of education through multicultural education as a new practice opened an opportunity for Ethiopian nations, nationalities, and peoples to promote their history, culture, and identity consistent with their

democratic unity (Girma and Raysarkar, 2017). Studies conducted by Zelalem (2008) and Yirgalem, (2017) made analysis and explored the competence of primary school teachers to implement the diversified curriculum focusing on dimensions of their awareness, knowledge, attitude, and skills to diversify the contents of primary school textbooks to their classroom conditions. The study findings showed that most of the teachers lacked the required multicultural competence and need to examine their values, knowledge, and teaching practices about diversity to avoid biased multicultural education.

Multicultural education as a deliberate process designed to teach learners to recognize, accept, and appreciate cultural, ethnic, social class, religious, gender differences, and learners provides an education that leads the learner towards the ideals of justice, equality, and democracy (Manning and Baruth, 1996 as cited in Debela, 2020). The study findings revealed that respondents were highly aware of multicultural education, but the diversified education was not implemented because of lack of skills, knowledge, negative attitude, and discrimination based on prejudices, ethnocentrism, politics, and religion.

Ethiopia as a country of culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse society (McCabe, 2004 as cited in Bezabih, 2019) has been working on ways that promote diversity within unity. As a result, attempts have been made to incorporate practices that maintain diversity at all levels of political, economic, and social aspects of policy direction (Gay, 1994; Alemayehu, 2010). Normally, knowledge about pluralism is seen as a necessary condition for respecting, appreciating, valuing and celebrating diversity. Regarding this, Debela (2020) noted the need for having diversified multicultural education for students in Ethiopia and directing schools towards the cultural enrichment of all students; ensuring cultural diversity as facts of life in a pluralistic society, and revealing cultural diversity as valuable experience.

Alemayehu (2010) conducted a study to investigate the integration of various cultural practices and the absence of biases, stereotyping, and

stereotyped roles in second-cycle primary schools in Amhara Regional State. The finding showed that the region's second cycle primary level social science textbooks reflected multiculturalism including the cultural heritage of various ethnic, religions, residence, heritages, gender, economic and occupational roles. He identified certain biases and stereotyping and stereotyped roles in gender, economic and occupational roles.

As Ethiopia is a home of different linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups, the FDRE Constitution (FDRE, 1995), stipulates that every ethnic/ linguistic group has the right to develop its outlook customs, values, and beliefs, which makes one different from the others. Although Ethiopians have a lot more cultural experiences in common; there are also important differences among them that have resulted in certain diversity, which is an issue of paramount importance in schools (Manning & Baruth, 1996 as cited in Debela, 2020). However, it is reported that lack of knowledge, skills, positive attitude toward the importance of diversification/ multicultural education, shortage of instructional materials (books, magazines, a newspaper) from a multicultural perspective, and ideological views based on prejudices, and ethnocentrism have been found as the main challenges in its implementation. Less attention from the concerned bodies and inappropriate teaching methods of teachers contributed to the low implementation of diversified education to the diverse groups in the school (Manning & Baruth, 1996 as cited in Debela, 2020; Ambissa, 2014).

### **The Research Method**

In this study, a descriptive case study method with concurrent mixed methods research approach was employed. A mixed-methods approach helps to look at the theoretical and practical levels giving opportunities for in-depth investigations through concurrent data collection, analysis, and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time and complementing each other (Creswell, 2012; Onwuegbuzie and

Johnson, 2006). Specifically, content analysis of conceptual type and interview were used as tools in the study. Conceptual content analysis (Wilson, 2011; Mayring, 2014) is chosen for it involves counting and quantifying the presence of the identified components of the contents and learning experiences in textbooks. The interview was used for it allows getting in-depth information on how and why the textbooks have been prepared at different times by different authorities.

The concurrent mixed methods research approach is used to examine the extent to which the contents and activities are made to reflect the local experiences and to fit the learner and societal economic and social contexts. Practically, a mixed-methods approach is used for it provides an advantage over either qualitative or quantitative research methods used separately. It also helps to overcome the limitations of either the qualitative or quantitative approaches that could be created when used independently (Creswell, 2012; Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002).

#### *Sources of Data*

The sources used for the study were students' textbooks prepared at different times and other accessible and available documents from the Regional Education Bureau, and sample Zones and Special Woredas, and the Federal Ministry of Education were used. In addition, Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Process Main Performer and Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Subject Performer and Cluster Supervisors were used. The textbook writers and editors who have been working for the Regional State Education Bureau and experts at the Federal Ministry of Education were consulted to give their opinion on the textbooks' preparations in the country.

#### *Sampling Procedures and Samples*

The students at the primary schools were made to learn 8 subjects in both the first and second cycles of the primary grades (1-8) (MOE, 1995). The subjects for the first cycle were composed of languages (Mother

tongue, Amharic, and English), Mathematics, Environmental Science, and Aesthetics (Physical Education, Music and Art) were offered for 29-31 periods with six student textbooks, where Aesthetics having only one textbook in an integrated form for each grade. The same document shows that the subjects taught at the second cycle grades were eight subjects (Languages (3), Mathematics, Natural Science (Integrated for grades 5 &6), Biology, Chemistry, and Physics for grades 7 & 8 being taught for 35 periods in each grade in a week. They all have textbooks of their own. It was from the 14 students' textbooks, eight (57.14 %) samples were selected for the study.

First, the students' textbooks were stratified as the first and second cycle textbooks of two generations. Accordingly, Environmental Science for grades 1-4 as well as Natural /integrated Science for grades 5-8, were selected. As a result, eight textbooks were selected from the two generations (four from each) of students' textbooks. Then, data were collected by the researcher based on self-constructed four items based on the literature reviews made and support gained from colleagues who were involved in validating the instruments. The content analysis was made on eight textbooks (four from each generation and each cycle). Then, the selection of samples from the first-generation textbooks was done using the availability sampling technique for they were found only in the open market places of old books in Hawassa city. As a matter of chance, grades 1 and 2 Environmental Science textbooks of 2004/5 and 2005/6 and grades 6 and 7 Social Studies textbooks of 2004/05 were found in the market and were selected using the availability sampling technique. Those textbooks of the second generation, which have been written by commissioned writers by the Federal Ministry of Education were textbooks of grades 3, and 4 for Environmental Science, and grades 5 and 6 textbooks for Integrated Science of 2011/12. They were selected using a random sampling technique.

At the regional state level, one Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Core Process Main Performer and one Curriculum and Educational Materials Supply Subject Performers were selected using



purposive and three cluster supervisors were selected using availability sampling techniques for they were at work while the data were collected from the Regional State Education Bureau. Six textbook writers and two editors were selected using the snowball sampling technique. Two Directors (one of them the former director) and two experts from the Curriculum Development and Implementation Core Process Directorate and two Heads of the former Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR) at the central level were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques respectively.

#### *Instruments of Data Collection*

The checklist for the content analysis data collection was constructed by the researcher based on the literature review made. The items were set in four categories focusing on the contents, activities, exercises, questions, projects, and review questions and illustrations. The items were checked and validated by colleagues from the department of curriculum and instruction. After modification, the instrument was used to collect data from the sample textbooks. Of the types of content analysis, the conceptual type was selected for it is instrumental to describe the nature of contents and selected categories of the content analysis. It is used because it helps to describe what has been manifested in what frequency/ magnitude in the textbooks (Amare, 1998).

The finalized items were used to collect and classify the contents and other components as regional/local or general. A coding scheme was set to code the contents of the textbook units and subunits as regional/local or general if the themes of the contents of the topics reflect the economic, social, historical, political, cultural, environmental, ethnic groups, geographic, demographic, etc. issues of the region, it is classified as regional, or local. Similarly, the contents and activities questions, projects, and illustrations are categorized as general when the themes are commonly shared and applicable to the country or elsewhere outside the region. To this effect, the preset categories and

themes were used to go through the selected students' textbooks and to collect data on both the content areas and the activity aspects of the textbooks set for grades 1-8. The researcher coded the textbook contents of each unit on a separate paper/sheet as regional, or general. Then, the coded data on the items were transferred to a data sheet with frequencies and percentages. For the purpose of analysis, the data were organized in comprehensive tables for quantitative analysis and interpretation.

Interview as a tool provides opportunities to conduct an in-depth investigation and helps to extend further questions based on responses of the respondent (Creswell, 2003; Berg, 2009). Best and Kahn (2003) also write that interview is the instrument that gives a chance to the interviewee to explain more explicitly what he/she knows and feels about the issue. Self-constructed and peer validated semi-structured interview guides for the different sample groups were prepared and used to collect qualitative data from the selected interviewees. Accordingly, seven semi-structured interview items were constructed for regional officials, cluster supervisors, textbook writers, and content editors. Five semi-structured interview items were prepared for CDICPD Directors and the experts of the Federal Ministry of Education. It was semi-structured to give them a chance to give their opinion flexibly and to extend further questions by the interviewer if there is the need for further information. All the items were set based on the literature reviews made and their appropriateness to collect the qualitative data.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

The data collections were made after the first-generation textbooks from the open markets of Hawassa city and those second-generation textbooks, whose copies were available electronically from the Regional Education Bureau. Accordingly, the eight sample textbooks were read sequentially to check and to determine the extent to which the contents, activities, illustrations, projects, exercises, etc were made to reflect regional or general features and life activities.

The interviews were conducted with each of the samples at the regional state professionals (13 in number) and six samples central/ federal level officials and experts individually at their working places and at the time they felt convenient. Each interview took an average of 40 minutes to one hour. In the entire interview notes were taken by the researcher for the respondents were not willing to be tape-recorded. Finally, the interview responses were written and coded using themes and categorized making the results ready for analysis and interpretation along with the content analysis.

#### *Methods of Data Analysis*

In the analysis, the data on the textbooks were divided into the primary first and second cycles. Accordingly, the contents, exercises, projects, and review questions, activities, and illustrations were classified as diversified/ open to diversification depending on the local variation or fixed as general. Thus, each of the contents, exercises, projects, and review questions, activities, and illustrations were manually recorded quantified, and analyzed quantitatively using frequency counts and percentages. As the textbooks' data were collected unit by unit categorizing each text's contents, activities, questions and exercises, and illustrations as regional or general, the analysis was done on each unit and the whole of sampled textbooks. It was done to show how many of the contents and other components are general or diversified/ open to being diversified further to the regional conditions and the learner.

Comparisons are made on the level of diversifications/openness of the components to diversification in the two generations of students' textbooks to the local conditions and the learner. Finally, analysis of data is conducted to identify and determine the influences of the takeover of preparing the textbooks by the commissioned textbook writers and editors at the Federal Ministry of Education. The interview results were analyzed thematically and presented along with the quantitative data as they were appropriate and used to elaborate and /or triangulate the

findings of the study. The scanty information secured from the official documents was used to supplement the findings.

### **Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Data**

#### *Analysis of Data and Discussion on the Results of the First Generation of Students' Textbooks (2003/4 and 2005/06)*

It is learned that the students' textbook preparation at the Regional level began with the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1995. After the founding conference of the Regional Government with the provision of the Federal Constitution and the Regional State's Constitution, the former five separate regions formed the SNNPRS (Asefa, 2006). The Regional State's Council, making its seat at Hawassa established the Region's Education Bureau as its executive body to carry out all education and training activities of the region. Accordingly, it was since 2003/4 (1996 E.C) that the first generation of textbooks of the region has been prepared and distributed to schools within the region. The regional education bureau began preparing the primary school textbooks in Amharic and the mother tongues. Still today, it is difficult to write textbooks for the 56 nations, nationalities, and peoples of the regional state. This made the regional state to continue the use of Amharic in many Zones and Woredas in the first cycle grades (1-4) and to use English for the second cycle subjects and grades (5-8).

**Table 1: First Generation Students' Textbooks, 2004/05**

S.No	Textbook	Content, N &%	Questions, Exercise... N &%	Activities N &%	Illustrations N &%
1	Env. Science, grade 1, PP.154, units 3	Gen. None	Gen.97 (31%)	Gen. 21(10.4%)	Gen. No
2	Environmental Science, grade 2, PP.190, units 4	Spec. All Gen. None	Spec.216 (69%) Gen.169 (36.27%)	Spec. 180(89.6%) Gen. 0(0%)	Spec.140 (100%) Gen. 0(0%)
3	Social Studies, grade 6, PP. 94, units 4	Spec. All Gen. None	Spec.297 (63.73%) Gen. 56(86.15%)	Spec. 303 (100) Gen. 75(94.94%)	Spec.153 (100%) Gen.47 (100%)
4	Social Studies, grade 7, PP. 93, units 5	Spec. All Gen. All	Spec.9 (13.85%) Gen. 91(96.86%)	Spec.4 (5.06%) Gen116 (93.55%)	Spec. 0(0%) Gen.36 (94.74%)
		Spec. None	Spec. 3(3.19%)	Spec.8 (6.45%)	Spec. 2(5.26%)

**Key:** gen= general; spec= specific

1. *Environmental Science Student's Textbook for Grade 1: 154 Pages, 3 units; published in 2004/5*

The first unit of the student's textbook dealt with the issue of human beings and its life. In this first unit, 11 sub-titles appeared on 65 pages and almost all issues (contents) (100 %) were related to the learners' immediate environment. The unit had 127 questions. As per the count made through the pages, 53 (41.7 %) of the questions were general and 74 (58.3 %) were specific /localized questions that help the learner engage in generating ideas and make use of those experiences acquired from the student's locality. The unit had practical activities and exercises that were related to the locality. The illustrations were made to reflect the region's social, economic, and cultural life of the people. Along with these, 50 questions were set as part of the revision exercises at the end of the unit that is grouped in parts based on those ideas discussed in the unit. All the questions maintained the proportions of the contents presented and elaborated in the unit.

The second unit with 39 pages focused on the issue of family and had very limited texts. The contents of the unit were highly local and 90% of them were related to the learners' immediate social environment. It had 108 questions, of which 30 (27.8 %) were general and 78 (72.2 %) were very specific and highly localized. The unit had 18 practical activities, 52 exercise questions, and 20 revision questions. These all maintained the proportions of the contents presented and elaborated in the unit. The illustrations presented were 27 and all were focused on local experiences and related to the region in one way or another. The third unit dealt with the learners' school and its surrounding. The contents of the unit, 90% were localized. The unit had 78 questions, of which 14 (17.9%) were general and 64 (82.1%) were diversified. There were 61 questions for exercise, of which 21 (34.4%) were general and 40 (65.6%) were very specific to the region. The illustrations included 50 (100%) localized events and processes and were very specific, which make the written message very clear to the learner. The interview with one of the education bureau made showed that 'it was done by the school teachers who were here and they did it well.' The textbooks writers told the interviewer that 'though I had no earlier experience in writing textbooks for schools, I did it with the help of friends and the content editor.'

As it is presented above, the topics covered very precise questions and what was close to the learner, which gradually moved to the next physical and social environment. The contents and the activities in the textbooks were all presented at intervals and were used to generate ideas from the learner at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of each unit. The questions and practical activities were set in ways that involve the learner mentally, physically, and emotionally when they come in close contact with each other and the external environment. Thus, the textbook was written based on the syllabi prepared at the center and it maintained the sequence of the logical structures of the subject matter in environmental science. It was hoped that it would help the learner to be good observers of the environment and to make an analysis of the interdependences of family members. The interview made with the expert (Respondent H) and textbook writer (Respondent D) showed that the textbook writers were

assisted to 'write the textbooks in ways that reflect the concrete conditions and the nature of the learner'. The textbook's contents and activities were found either being mostly diversified or made open to diversifying the contents and activities to the specific conditions of the locality and schools.

*2. Environmental Science, Student's Textbook for Grade 2: 190 pages, 4 units; published by the SNNPR Education Bureau in 2005/06*

Unit one dealt with the human being and its life. It is the continuation of the topics of grade one and it was made to have 3 sub-topics written on 65 pages. The first part of the unit presented issues of the natural environment while the second part focused on the learners' social environment. All of the contents of the subject presented were made to focus on regional issues. The unit had general and specific questions that can be used to generate ideas from students. The questions of this unit were 196, of which 75 (38.3%) were general that can be used in any other regions or places in the country. But the remaining 121 (61.7%) were regional, or local, and specific that help students use their experiences and local knowledge to respond. In the unit, 98 questions were presented for exercise. There were 44 illustrations, and all of them were local. All the practical activities were made to reflect local features proposing the utilization of local resources.

Unit two focused on the natural environment focusing on observation and making study. In this unit, the contents were presented in an interactive manner, where there were 141 questions, of which 70 (49.6%) were general and 71(50.4%) were specific and adapted. The unit had 68 illustrations, 15 practical activities, and 117 questions for exercise purposes. As can be seen from the above data and analysis, most of the activities, illustrations, and questions for the exercises are diversified and are set in ways that make students' learning easy and clear concerning what they observed in the environment. Unit three is on the social environment, where all the unit's contents were made to focus on and provide information about the social environment in which the students

were living. There were 33 questions, of which 5 (15.2%) were general while 28 (84.8%) were specific and highly localized. The unit had 47 revision exercise questions, 11 illustrations, and 3 practical activities. Here too, all the contents of the text, the activities and exercises were localized and contextualized.

Unit four was on observation and making a study about the social environment. All the contents were adapted/ localized. There were 96 questions, of which 19 (19.8%) were general questions while 77 (80.2%) were very specific and localized focusing on the economic, social, historical, and other features of the region. They demanded the learner respond to the questions using their observations and experiences. In addition to this, there were 12 exercise questions, 30 localized illustrations, a figure, and 2 practical activities. All were focused on the students' immediate environment. The interview result with the expert at the region reported that 'the textbook writers were told to make the contents and the various components open to diversifying for schools' consumptions' (Respondent A).

As it is presented above, most of the exercises, activities, questions, and illustrations of the Environmental Science textbooks were made open to consider the conditions around each school and were expected to reflect the local reality of the region. Thus, they were made to provide opportunities for the learner to discover their immediate environment and learn easily. They were set to make the lessons understandable and clear. Most of the tasks were local. Thus, one can see that the Environmental Science grade 2 textbook was significantly adapted to the localities and exposed students to their immediate environment.

*3. Social Studies, Student's Textbook for Grade 6: 94 pages, 4 units; in English; published in 2004/05 by SNNPRS Education Bureau*

It is one of the first-generation textbooks written by commissioned writers for the second cycle (Grades 5-8) schools in the English language. Unit one dealt with the natural environment of the Earth- starting the



discussion about the Universe, Solar System, and the Planets. The unit had well-organized and elaborated text about the topic- the Earth in general but had very limited exercises, only 3 in number, where the first and the second exercises had 4 activities each and the third had 11 questions making a total of 19 questions. The activities were only 5 in number, of which one is general and four (80%) of them being very specific and localized. Unit two was about world population growth and evolution of mankind having five subtitles, and very limited figures. The unit provided information on general issues of Ethiopia where there was no single fact, or idea on the regional state, the SNNPRS. There was no single activity or an illustration given, even though it was possible to use activities and illustrations on many of the sub-issues discussed.

The third unit was on the world economy and human resource utilization. The issues presented were all general and the activities set were 6 in number and none of them was on the local features. The illustrations and questions were not on the regional issues. The fourth unit was on the League of Nations and UN organizations. The facts, ideas, and explanations made were very general and there were no ideas about the region in the unit. The textbook had no adapted issues.

The questions and practical activities were very general and common to others in the country and focused on content transfer. As can be seen from the above data, there were no contents on local issues or questions that demand students to relate what was set to the local conditions. The illustrations were very general. The summary of the interview with the region's two curriculum professionals showed that 'as the grade increases, the writers were told to meet national and international standards and make students share common experiences'

*4. Social Studies, Student's Textbook for Grade 7: 93 pages, 5 units; published by SNNPRS Education Bureau in 2004/05*

The first unit focuses on map reading where no content was made to reflect the features of the region. All dealt with map reading skills in very

general terms. No questions or tasks were set on mapping. The second unit was on the natural environment of the Earth. In this unit, facts about Mount Guge (4200 meter high) found in Gamo Goffa Zone was presented. Topographic map of SNNPRS where Lakes Abaya, Hawassa, Chamo, and Rudolf as well as the big rivers such as Omo, Gibe, Gojeb, Akobo, Segan, Bilatie, and Weito were located. The irrigation practices around Hawassa, hydroelectric power generation at Gibe River were mentioned. Almost all issues treated were on the SNNPRS's features, but no activities were set on local issues.

Unit three was on the early development of the human being, where issues of the region, such as the Omo River Valley and Hawassa basins, Konso and Gardula natural and historical sites were discussed on the topic along with other facts, ideas, and evidences of general nature. Of the four language families, the students were asked to classify their mother tongue into one of the four language groups. Finally, the textbook showed the classification of the four language families as Cushitic families that include Hadiya, Kembata, Sidama and Gedeo; Semitic families - Gurage; Omotic families - Dawro, Konta, Keffa, Goffa, Wolita, Gamo and Basketo; and the Nilotic families with no detailed list but mentioning those at the boundary in the South and West of the region. In this unit, the students were asked to identify the religions of the people in the region and it focused on local issues, which were close to the learner.

Unit four was on the relationship between economic development and population growth. The unit dealt with the distribution of the industrial regions of the world, science and technology, and other issues of development. No attempt was made to present any such relationships either on Ethiopia or on the SNNPR. Unit five was on human and democratic rights. In this unit "The Human and Democratic Rights" issues were generally treated and no idea was presented either on Ethiopia, or the region. No activity was given, where it was possible to do more and make students learn about the issue on local/regional and national levels.

The textbook for the grade focused on general matters. However, the writers had attempted to mention the region's population classification into the linguistic groups. They presented about the water bodies, mountains, irrigation seasons, and hydroelectric power generation in the region. The textbook treated observable things about the region and made attention to the diversity issue. However, as the grade level increases, the contents were made more on general matters than on local or regional issues. The number of activities and practical activities also decreased as one goes up over the grade levels. The interview with the regional professionals and textbook writers showed that 'it was done more general to meet standards and make the learners competitive nationally'

*The Revised Syllabi and Textbooks' Preparations: Analysis and Discussion on the Results of the Second Generation of Students' Textbooks*

The revisions of the syllabi were made at the Federal Ministry of Education with the representatives of the Regional Education Bureau to fit the curriculum at all school levels to the GEQIP plan of action (GoE, 2008). Accordingly, the syllabi of the different school subjects were revised as per the requirements of the GEQIP plan of action, and the textbooks were written based on the new curriculum framework of Ethiopian schools (MoE, 2012/13, Syllabus for Chemistry, grades 7). As it is documented in the syllabus, the major focuses of the curriculum revision to make the contents load appropriate to the period allotment; and the content difficulties appropriate to the grade level; to give more emphasis to active learning approaches; to integrate agricultural and technology; to reduce unnecessary repetition of contents; to improve the logical order of the content organization, and to organize contents around competencies for learning and continuous assessment. The syllabi revisions were made for all subjects and grades by those representatives invited and the result was reported to the Federal Ministry of Education. The objectives and Minimum Learning Competencies (MLC) for the units' contents are listed in detail.

### *Analysis on the Data of the Newly Prepared Students' Textbooks*

As has been mentioned above, the students' textbooks preparations for the primary schools' grades 1 to 4 were done at the regional level. The Zones and Special Woredas translated the Amharic versions into the mother tongues. In the SNNPNRS, 24 languages were in use as media of instruction in some of the Zones

and Special Woredas. The details of the data on each sample textbook are presented, analyzed, and interpreted hereunder.

**Table 2: Second Generation Students' Textbooks, 2011/12**

S.No	Textbook	Content, N &%	Questions, Exercise... N &%	Activities N &%	Illustrations N &%
1	<i>Environmental Science, grade 3. PP. 218, 4 units</i>	Gen. None	Gen. 248 (85.81%)	Gen5 (15.15%)	Gen. 269(56.52%)
		Spec. All	Spec.41 (14.19%)	Spec.28 (84.85%)	Spec.20 (43.48%)
2	<i>Environmental Studies, Grade 4, pp.218, 4 units.</i>	Gen. None	Gen. 190(94.06%)	Gen. 18(51.43%)	Gen. 62(81.11%)
		Spec. All	Spec. 12(5.94%)	Spec. 17(48.57%)	Spec. 10(13.89%)
3	<i>Integrated Science, grade 5, PP.182, 6 units</i>	Gen. ALL	Gen.301 (88.79%)	Gen. 49(54.44%)	Gen.85 (89.47%)
		Spec. None	Spec. 38 (11.21%)	Spec. 41(45.56%)	Spec.10 (10.53%)
4	<i>Integrated Science, grade 6, PP.224, 6 units</i>	Gen. ALL	Gen. 211(99.06%)	Gen. 63(67.02%)	Gen. 70(88.61%)
		Spec. None	Spec. 2(0.94%)	Spec. 31(32.98%)	Spec. 9(11.39%)

1. *Environmental Science, Student's Textbook for Grade 3; 218 pages, 4 units; published in 2011/12*

The contents of the textbook are the continuation of the contents of the preceding grade. The first unit is about food and food security, where issues of food, cleanness, rest time, recreation, and issues of environmental health are presented. The contents focused on local issues. The second unit is about the natural environment of the students focusing on issues such as soil, water, air, forest, energy, force, temperature, light, machines, and sound.

As can be seen from the contents of the unit, the issues raised are of Natural Science (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) and sixty-two (95.4%) of the content areas of the unit are general and 11 (73.3%) of the activities are made to be specific and very interactive. Unit three is about activities in the community such as crop production, plants, harmful insects and the control mechanisms, beekeeping, and industrial production. Sixty-one (85.9%) of the questions, exercises, and review questions, and 13 (86.7%) of the illustrations are general. Unit four is about the region, its location, the rivers, mountains, lakes, the flag, the song, and the regional state's administrative structures. Nine (90 %) of the activities are contextualized activities and 5(50%) of the illustrations are about the region.

In general, the textbook has 33 activities, (15.15% and 84.85 % open for diversifications), 289 illustrations (56.52% general and (43.48%) open for diversifications), and 289 questions, exercises, and review questions, of which 85.81 % are general and 14.19% of them are open for diversifications respectively. The information suggests that almost all the contents of the four units of the textbook are written on the region's features and are made to reflect the local conditions in one way or another. In the textbook, explanations are given on the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and administrative conditions of the region. This implies that the adaptation of the curriculum has been made while writing the contents and activities of the textbook.

The summary of the interviews made with the regional professionals, textbook writers, and content editors about the recent textbooks prepared

by the commissioned writers at the regional state level show that the contents and activities set in the textbook are more of regional nature. Most of the activities, exercises, end-of-unit questions, projects, and illustrations are more localized. More of the components are open for diversification and making them relevant to the learner and responsive to the local demands. (Respondent, A, H & T).

*2. Environmental Science, Student's Textbook for Grade 4- 218 pages, 4 units, published in 2011/12*

The textbook has four units and begins with the human body and elaborates issues of food and digestion and health issues in unit one. The remaining units are on the natural environment, population, and the social environment where the high-level emphasis was given to the region's population composition and settlement areas, the historical sites and the famous Konso terracing practices, written heritages, calendar, dancing, dressing, marriage, funeral ceremonies, greetings, weaving, Ethiopian patriots in sports, arts, literature, and science.

The first unit covers issues of the human body where the contents are presented using standardized issues on the human body but adapted to the learner by using questions, exercises, review questions, activities, and illustrations. For instance, in-unit one has 5 activities, and 72 (93.5 %) in-text questions, exercises, and review questions, and 11(73.3 %) illustrations are set to support the learner and to participate actively to bring about the desired changes in behavior. Unit two is on the students' natural environment where the contents are very much adapted to the learner. However, most of the questions, exercises, and review questions, that is, 67 (95.7 %) in number and 23(98 %) of the set illustrations are general elaborating common contents and tasks.

The third and the fourth units are on Ethiopia and the students' social environment, respectively. The information on Ethiopia is general while the issues on the students' physical and social environments elaborate the local issues that are found within the region. The textbook has 46

(95.8%) two questions and three practical activities on Ethiopia, and 9 illustrations on the same issues in a general manner. Only seven questions, exercises, and review questions are presented under unit four while 10(58.8%) of the activities of the unit are general. Nineteen (82.6%) of the illustrations are general and only four are related to the regional state's conditions in unit four.

The in-text questions demand students to forward ideas, which they know and help students learn from others. In addition to this, the students are required to make use of local materials to do simple local experiments. The illustrations are made to elaborate the texts using local features and clarify the tissues under treatment. In the textbook, the economic activities, transportation services, local technologies, and their level of applications are presented. The textbook's contents are derived from the regional features. Thus, the textbook's contents and activities are open for diversification and to be used according to each school's reality reflecting the local conditions and making students' learning easy.

In general, though the contents of the textbook were more on the regional state, 190 (94.06%) of the questions and exercises, 18(51.43%) of the activities, and 62(81.11%) of the illustrations focused on general conditions compared to the material's openness to diversification in the implementation process. The interview with the textbook writer (Respondent D) and content editors (Respondents J and T) responded that "the textbook is better prepared than the earlier generation for the writers and editors got text preparation experiences". These indicate that the textbook is prepared with improved skills and experience.

### *3. Integrated Science, Student's Textbook for Grade 5- 182 pages, 6 units; published in 2011/12*

The textbook is prepared by federally commissioned textbook writers who were by chance working in the region. The textbook has a larger body of contents in the form of explanation than the other sample textbooks reviewed from the level. The contents in the textbooks are

focused mainly on the subject matter content areas. But the questions raised at different points in the textbook demand the application of the issues to the students' local areas. The textbook has further strengthened experiences learned from the earlier textbooks' preparation. There are several practical activities in each unit. These activities demand students to collect data from the local area through fieldwork. This exposes the learner to actual life outside of the school, which Tyler (1949) categorized as contemporary life outside of the school, and serves which is one of the sources of educational objectives for curriculum planning.

The practical activities demand the students to make use of locally available resources to do the activities. For instance, the first unit has 11 (42.3%) local /specific and 15 (57.7%) general activities that demand the students to go out and do the tasks in their immediate environment. Unit 2 has 6 (35.3%) activities, 11(64.7%) practical activities, projects, and group works, all of which are demanding either direct involvement in the practices or acquiring experiences from the surrounding areas through observation and reporting to the class. The same pattern has been followed in the subsequent units.

Unit three focuses on plants, where 10 (58.8%) practical activities, other activities, and group projects are incorporated as localized tasks, and 7 (41.2%) general activities demand the students to use locally available materials and equipment. All these indicate that the lessons are made to reflect on the local features. Unit 4 presents explanations on animals where 7(46.7%) specific and 8 (53.3 %) general practical activities, other activities, and projects are given, respectively. They all give chances to work in groups or individually in the surrounding areas. These would make students relate, or apply the theoretical knowledge into practice under concrete conditions. All the tasks are set to demand the use of locally available materials and equipment at all times. These, in turn, would make students feel that all that they learn in school are useful and are related to what they observe in their surrounding. These in turn



motivate the students to see issues against their immediate environment and their life application.

Unit five is on human body and health issues, whose contents are general for they are common for all students where ever they are taught and are commonly shared issues. But a look into the contents and their explanations show that they are closer to the learner through suggested methods of presentations. The interactive nature of the presentation would lead to discussions and make the contents be related to what the learner senses in his/her daily life. So it cannot be remote from what they know or should have known about themselves and the environmental health of the surrounding. In the unit, there are 8(61.5 %) general and 5 (38.5 %) specific practical activities, other activities, and one project work. The tasks demand students to discuss on, go out of school and collect data, analyze and present the results to the teacher and their classmates. Unit six is on Earth, which presents general contents with 26 general questions, practical activities, activities, and project work being supported by 17(100 %) general illustrations.

The interview made with the federal level education officials and experts showed that the second cycle textbooks preparation was done at the federal level with certain administrative participation of the regional state with the aim of maintaining quality textbooks and meeting the national standard and using the financial resources secured from donors and loans from international financial institutions. The interviewees felt that it might have offended the regional state's experts for it has taken some of their rights to do their curriculum.

In general, 301(88.79 %) questions and exercises, 49(54.44 %) activities, and 85(89.47 %) illustrations are made to focus on general and common features of the country. Though the contents of the textbook are general, the presentations demanded the teachers handle them in ways that would reflect the local features. There are suggestions to make the contents relevant to the students' life through practical activities, questions, and illustrations. The practices seem appropriate to the

maturity level of most of the students. The interview made with those writers and editors who were involved in the writing and editing of the second generation students' textbook told the researcher that they have used their teaching experiences and the skills acquired in the earlier preparations of similar textbooks in the region while preparing the latter textbook (Respondents B & J). This shows that the Federal Ministry of Education has taken its role with the view of maintaining national standards rather than giving the required support as it is set in the federal documents.

*4. Integrated Science, Student's Textbook for Grade 6 - 224 pages, 6 units, published by the SNNPR Education Bureau in 2011/12*

The textbook was prepared based on the Revised Syllabus for the subject and written in English. It provides content for reading and it has a large number of questions and activities at the beginning of each topic throughout the text to help teachers ask and generate ideas from the learner. The topics of the subject for the grade level are the continuation of grade 5, but with different sub-titles. The criterion of continuity of contents in subject syllabus organization seems applied. The contents are general and are focused on commonly shared ideas focusing on those universally considered contents of the subject matter. The activities, projects, and practical activities are set in ways that invite diversification of the content to the nature of the learner using locally available resources and environmental inputs.

Accordingly, the first unit is on air and has 12 contextualized activities and projects while unit two is on water and has 36 general activities. Unit one has 23 general questions, exercises, and review questions while unit two has 36 general questions. Most of the illustrations of both units are general. Unit three is on plants and has 20 (90.9 %) general and only 2(9.1 %) localized activities. Unit four deals with animals and has 10(83.3 %) general and 2(16.7 %) specific activities. Unit five is on the human body and has 9(75 %) general and 3(25 %) specific activities. Unit six is about the Earth and has 7(100 %) general activities. The interview with

the federal officials and experts showed that it was done with the same motive.

In general, the textbook focused on universally considered subject matter contents and the questions, exercises, and end of unit review questions, 211 (99.06 %) are general while only two (0.94 %) dealt with local issues. Concerning the activities, 63 (67.02 %) are general while the remaining are left to be used being localized/ diversified. Seventy (88.61 %) of illustrations are made to focus on general features and common features of the country.

The Regional Education Bureau's Annual report showed that the takeover of the role of the textbook preparation created a delay of the textbook printing and distribution of the textbooks to the schools, in addition, to make the experiences detached from the region's features for the writers did not get evidences from the regional state.

### *Major Findings*

Based on the sources of data, samples selected and instruments used to collect, and methods employed to analyze the data, the following are the major findings of the study. Accordingly, the activities, questions, projects, and the end-of-unit review questions in the first-generation textbooks were set in ways that demand students to engage in group discussions, data collection, analyses, and presentation of results to their classmates and the teacher. The activities and projects set had diversified contents and learning experiences and the lessons were open to being made relevant and appropriate to the learner by the teacher. In addition to this, the group activities were set in ways that provide opportunities for students to learn how to work and live together. The writers used locally available and accessible resources and made students get to know about their immediate surroundings and to see what they learned had relation to day-to-day life. The preparation practice also contributed to the skill development of the textbook writers and editors of the regional state.

The textbooks prepared based on the revised syllabi at the regional level (grades 1 to 4) helped the writers to reflect regional conditions. Accordingly, the textbooks on Environmental Science for the first cycle seem to have made the education of school children relevant and appropriate. But the textbooks for grades 5 and 6 are made to emphasize more on general science contents with little local issues. However, the learning experiences such as the activities, projects and practical activities, etc. are made to focus on the students' immediate environment. These gave them opportunities to make the theoretical knowledge more applicable at the local level and more relevant to the life of the learner.

The interviews with the textbook writers and editors, (Respondent B, D & W) also suggested that the textbook writers' and editors' cooperative work at the regional level made the textbooks more interactive and helped them to adjust and use local experiences. However, the recent takeover of the preparations of textbooks for the second cycle subjects by the Federal Ministry of Education made the region to be dependent on the Federal Ministry of Education and eventually to fail to discharge the region's duties and to exercise its right of preparing the primary school subject syllabi and curriculum materials of its own.

The comparison made between the textbooks prepared at the regional level with those prepared at the federal level showed that the earlier textbooks and the first cycle textbooks of the second generation have been made to reflect local conditions and used local evidences to write examples and tasks better than those prepared for the second cycle at the Federal level. Besides, several textbook writers and editors in the region had opportunities to learn how to prepare textbooks and teachers' guides. They had developed experiences, which helped some of them to compete in the bids set at the national level and won to write textbooks in the second generation of textbook preparation (for instance to write textbooks for Integrated Science grades 5 and 6).

Though there are variations in the decentralization of educational service deliveries in general and curriculum planning practices in particular, the recent takeover of the curriculum revision and textbook preparation of most of the second cycle primary school subjects by the Federal Ministry of Education to satisfy the requirements of the GEQIP action plan (Respondents M & D) has been taken as an action contrary to the division of roles set both in the transitional government and in the early years of the establishment of the Federal government of the country. Officially, the Ministry of Education has gone beyond the duty of supporting the regional governments in the curriculum materials preparations (UNESCO, 2006/07). The interview made with the regional education of officials, especially with the curriculum development experts and the textbooks writers and editors showed that the recent practice has a negative influence on the enhancement of the democratization process and it is considered as a replacement of the regional state as it has been practiced in recent years.

### **Conclusions**

The content analysis made on the sample textbooks and the interviews made with key informants indicated that the two generations of textbooks prepared for the first cycle subjects have been open to having diversified contents and learning experiences. Accordingly, most of the contents and learning experiences were derived from the regional state's political, economic, social, historical, cultural, environmental, and other conditions comprehensively. Thus, contents and learning experiences have been diversified to meet the preset educational objectives of the regional state and the country through the textbooks prepared at the regional level. The diversification of contents and learning experiences are found to be the most important means to achieve the preset educational objectives. This shows that diversifying contents and activities based on concrete conditions of the localities and based on common objectives set centrally cannot be threats to national integrity.

The textbooks, which have been prepared for the second cycle subjects at the regional level in both the first and second generations have extensively used the region's local features and evidences from the various institutions. However, the recently prepared textbooks for the second cycle at the Federal Ministry of Education through the commissioned textbook writers are made more to focus on subject matters' hard facts, ideas, concepts, and other structures and are less relevant to the learners of the region. Hence, the recent syllabi revision and textbooks preparation for the second cycle of primary school subjects for the region made the curriculum less diversified and adaptable to the local conditions respectively.

### *The Way Forward*

The Federal document and the Constitution of the SNNPRS stipulate that the region has the right to formulate its social and economic plans and implement them (SNNPRS Revised Constitution, 2001). Thus, the development of the syllabi for the primary schools and the preparation of the textbooks, revision, and updating of the curriculum has to be left to the regional state. It is time to balance the roles of the federal and regional governments in curriculum planning for the primary schools' service delivery in a federally established state.

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