

A
Comparison
of
Developing
World
Educational
Systems

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This thesis investigates the strengths and weaknesses of centralized and decentralized unitary government systems with regard to equitable education across domestic regions within countries. Using Costa Rica and Ethiopia as case studies, I examine: a) their level of economic development, b) how public primary education is funded, and c) how public primary curriculum is determined. By looking at education in these three dimensions, I wish to understand how regional language differences and creating a sense of national identity play a role in the unification of an educational system, as well educational equality within a country and within a global market.

*Ethiopia and
Costa Rica*

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Alhumdulilahí Rabbil-Alamín.
Ash-hadu Allah ilaha illallahu,
wa ash-hadu ana Muhammadan
abuduhu wa rasooluhu.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to
my mother, who has supported me
through every up and down, and
encouraged me to always do my best!

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	p 4
Importance of Education.....	p 8
Economic Status.....	p 12
Federalism.....	p 14
Case Study Selection.....	p 16
Objectives.....	p 20
Chapter 1: Country Profiles.....	p 22
<u>Ethiopia</u>	p 23
<i>Historical Foundations and Independence</i>	p 23
<i>National Structural Challenges in Creating a Strong State</i>	p 30
<i>Economic Issues and their Effect on Public Education</i>	p 33
<u>Costa Rica</u>	p 35
<i>Historical Foundations and Independence</i>	p 35
<i>National Structural Challenges in Creating a Strong State</i>	p 40
<i>Economic Issues and their Effect on Public Education</i>	p 43
Chapter 2: Finance and Curricula.....	p 47
<u>Funding Public Education</u>	p 48
<i>Who Funds Primary Education?</i>	p 48
a. The Situation in Ethiopia.....	p 50
b. The Situation in Costa Rica.....	p 52
<i>To What Degree do Governments, International Organizations, and Parents Have a Role in Finance?</i>	p 54
a. The Situation in Ethiopia.....	p 54
b. The Situation in Costa Rica.....	p 57
<u>Curriculum Planning</u>	p 59
<i>How is Curriculum Determined?</i>	p 59
a. The Situation in Ethiopia.....	p 60
b. The Situation in Costa Rica.....	p 63
<i>Standardized Testing</i>	p 65
<i>How does Language Effect Curriculum Setting?</i>	p 67
a. The Situation in Ethiopia.....	p 67
b. The Situation in Costa Rica.....	p 70
<i>What is the Desired End Result of Education?</i>	p 71
<i>Does Curricula Create Better Job Opportunity?</i>	p 73
Conclusion.....	p 76
Bibliography.....	p 82

Introduction

The sun sets on the large open plains of Ethiopia and the noted rainforests of Costa Rica. In both places, children come in from long days of playing imaginary games that propel them into alternate universes, parents return to the luxury and comfort of family time after an intense day of work to make a living, and animals long to rest after their leisure time spent in the sun. Shopkeepers are closing their businesses, the streets and roads start to clear out, and the cities become quiet from the hustle and bustle that defines their days. This is universality, where subtle differences define regions across the world, but more importantly where cultures, values, and principles of human existence link hands in creating the fabric that defines our global community. Let us meet some of the people who occupy these various regions of the world and learn their individual stories in writing our larger story of mankind.

We begin our journey meeting Ermias, an eight-year-old boy living in the Addis Ababa region of Ethiopia, whose capital city is also named Addis Ababa. Having grown up in the city, he has been afforded an opportunity at education that other children in neighboring communities in the region do not have. With a population of nearly 2.863 million inhabitants, shockingly only about 69% of urban children are enrolled in elementary school, and of that amount, only about 35% of students will be eligible to move on to secondary school. Forty-two percent of Ethiopia's population aged fifteen and older is able to read and write the national language—Amharic. Broken down, those statistics amount to about 31.5% of women and 50% of men, as recorded in 2003. The average school life expectancy rate from primary to tertiary education is approximately eight-years-old, showing that most students will not continue schooling past the elementary level.¹

¹ *The World Fact Book: Ethiopia*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2012. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html> (Date accessed: November 2012).

The average unemployment rate for Ethiopia’s young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four is about 25%, and for women that number increases to a rounded 30%, documented in 2006. While the official language of the country is Amharic, Ethiopia is comprised of over ten officially recognized languages—including: Oromigna, Somaligna, and Tigrigna, three of the larger spoken languages outside of the national idiom—and a multitude of smaller linguistic groups. As a result of so many languages unique to specific regions, the government has made efforts for education to be instructed in the official regional language of each ethnic group to accommodate the best learning environments for its students.² Although the people are hard-working and motivated, life can be difficult in Ethiopia, and gaining access to a quality education can be a life-long battle. While Ermias is on the more fortunate end of prospering from living in his city and region, and having the ability to speak the national language, one might wonder what the future holds for him and many of his counterparts based on the statistics.

Crossing the Atlantic Ocean to another region of the world, we find Sol, a ten-year-old girl living in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica populated by another 1.416 million people in the capital alone. Although Sol is not from the most financially well-off family in her community, she does benefit greatly from the Costa Rican lifestyle and education system, considered one the better systems in Central America. The country’s literacy rate is an amazing 94%, represented in a nearly equal percentage for both the male and female populations according to the 2000 consensus. The average school life expectancy for Costa Rican students from primary to tertiary schooling is twelve-years-old, placing Sol among an average opportunity at completing her education after high school. Post-educational opportunities, the unemployment rate for those a bit older than her—aged fifteen to twenty-four—is an average of eleven percent; 9.6% for men

² *The World Fact Book: Ethiopia* (November 2012)

and 13.4% for women noted in 2008. With the official and main language of the country being Spanish, and most residents actively learning English as a second language, there is no real issue when it comes to non-tourist industry opportunity based on linguistic ability, a serious concern that Sol's peers in Ethiopia may face.³ While Costa Rica, like every other place in the world, is far from perfection, it does provide a potentially successful route for Sol provided she takes advantage of what the country has to offer her; however, one must be critical as to whether or not this is the general consensus for the majority of Costa Rican residents.

In both countries and regions of the world, one can find many similarities in the goals that people have for life, the experiences that bring them joy and sadness, and the overall attitude toward education as a means of bettering oneself that seems to be universal. However, we can also find many differences, even within countries regarding the opportunities and life chances that individuals will receive in the field of education. There is not necessarily equality of access to quality education, which is often times linked with the economics of a country, another issue that must be examined in order to fully understand why certain countries are falling behind in the global world as opposed to others. Looking at Ermias and Sol, it is apparent that while their life's desires and ambitions may be the same, some of their peers may be more likely than others to have a better chance of reaching the status they all may hope to achieve, simply because different types of governmental structures and economies lead to different educational experiences.

I start with this story to personalize this issue of education and the disparity apparent within systems and structures, to make you feel a more intimate connection with each of these children, encouraging you to feel motivated to affect change. Far too often we observe the world

³ *The World Fact Book: Costa Rica*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2012.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html> (Date accessed: November 2012).

through apathetic eyes and look at places as just that—masses of land with no real human beings living in them, no personal connections that we foster to any of the inhabitants, and thus no desire to want to help change and improve the lives of others. As a global community, we have grown to accept the images we see on television of poverty, hardship, and lack of opportunity that are faced by many in the world as being “normal.” We become even more pleased with the station of our own lives to have afforded us opportunity that we forget about those who the system has failed and those who have fallen through the cracks. As human beings interlinked with one another, we cannot afford to do this; we cannot afford to give up on one another and allow lives to be shattered while we stand by and watch. Hopefully, this study will give you a renewed energy to serve our world at large.

The question begs to be asked: where do we go from here? What can be done to change the structural inequality that a Sol or an Ermias might face regardless of his/her status or position within his/her communities? Although Ermias and Sol are on the more prosperous sides of their societies within their respective regions, what about the children in these places who do not come from the privileged side of the tracks? How do they gain access to the benefits the world has to offer them and tap into the resources that they are entitled to as human beings? What programs and strategies are their governments putting into place to ensure their success both within their countries and within the world? We can see that different systems of government lead to different educational experiences that may or may not be determined by regional dynamics. As a result there is potential for variation in life chances and outcomes not only globally, but also within countries themselves. These are some of the issues that I am concerned with in regard to equality within education.

Importance of Education

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that education is important. It has often been labeled "the means by which people can advance their status in life economically and personally." It is one of the core issues that every country faces when it comes to building its economy and individual satisfaction of its citizens, as well as preparing its youth for enhancing the country on a global scale. Questions have not been raised as to whether or not countries should be concerned with the issue of structural improvement of educational systems, albeit their specific concerns may differ and implementation may alter from place to place. Due to the status of a given country in economic terms, the foundation of its structural revolution (the route it takes in improving the system of education within a given place) must be designed and outlined for the exact concerns of the region in ensuring success for every citizen regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, ability/disability, and any other contributing factors of discriminatory practices not listed. For example, developing countries tend to focus on improving overall literacy rates, which could take the form of creating a literacy program that is adaptable for each school, but still tackles the issue on a large scale. I will discuss country goals in relation to economic factors in the next section.

Beyond seeing education as a means of personal economic growth and mental satisfaction, it is also important to acknowledge the importance of this issue in a political sense, in that: countries have both *moral* and *economic* incentives for investing in the education of their people. In his book, Investing in Human Capital: A Capital Markets Approach to Student Funding, Miguel Palacios Lleras, discusses these factors by beginning with the moral implications of countries for investing in education. The first reason he provides is that "education serves as a means of transforming everyone's realities within a society into something better," expressing that education provides collective opportunities for success on an

individual, as well as on a large scale.⁴ The second rationale he states is the improvement of life quality through education, meaning that people who are educated tend to be able to do more for themselves, which results in: increased salary, more comfortable lifestyles, and personal control with regard to one's material happiness. Finally, Palacios Lleras points out that education is "commonly cited as a source of stability in modern democracies." This entails two conclusions: 1) that in order for democracies to be successful they must be run by educated leaders and 2) a country's citizenry is enabled to fight for its rights when people are aware of their political voice through having been learned in the laws. It has been witnessed throughout history that countries lead by educated rulers who are elected by the people, and therefore held accountable to the people, do a much better job in ensuring a quality life to its citizenry than those countries lead by selfish and inexperienced rulers who are not interested in the welfare of the lay people. While there are countries who do not want their citizens to be fully informed of the rights that the government may be violating, it is the intention of a democratic process, at least in theory, for these things to take place.⁵

Although moral reasoning for educational investment is critical, we must not oversimplify and overlook the economic interest that countries are also concerned with. Their interest in educational issues is not completely innocent in wanting the best for individuals; there is a larger concern over money and who is going to pay for the population to *not* be educated. In comparison with other countries, competition to the extent that it almost becomes an issue of national security is also involved, given that countries do not want to be vulnerable to foreign attack due to an undereducated population. This type of vulnerability could lead to a possible overtake of a country's government to a stronger, more academically equipped power. This is

⁴ Allen, Kendall. "A Comparison of Education and the Political Economy: Underdeveloped and Developed Countries," 21 November 2011.

⁵ Palacios Lleras, Miguel, Investing in Human Capital: A Market Capital Markets Approach to Student Funding, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Miguel Palacios Lleras, 2004 (p 9).

due to the fact that strong militaries derive from educated individuals who are experts in their fields of weaponry and battle, and thus capable of finding means for overpowering less prepared and unexpected countries.

Palacios Lleras does not fail in outlining the economic values that governments derive from providing quality education to their citizens. He defines the “screening hypothesis” that employers use to assess “the quality of a prospective employee.” Put in more basic terms, when companies are looking to hire individuals for a position, employers look at a potential candidate’s educational history, in example: his/her most current grade point average, the reputation of the schools attended by the candidate, and the levels of education that the candidate has received, along with any degrees to back up his/her credentials. Combining all of these factors, along with recommendations from peers, former coworkers, professors, and community members, employers tend to choose people who have higher levels of education and field experience, combined with positive communal reputation over those who do not. Similarly, people who have obtained college degrees are compensated more for their work than those who have lower levels of education.⁶ This is a result of specialization. Simply put: employers desire employees who are skilled in their fields. Adding to this criteria is the notion that countries who desire to be successful are interested in producing a citizenry that is invested and involved in bettering the country via becoming a healthcare professional, an education provider, or a participant in military to ensure national security.

Palacios Lleras sums up the crux of his argument for countries’ concern with education by citing what he terms the “private and social values” of this issue. He lists two private, personal values of education: “[the first being] the satisfaction an individual derives from the

⁶ Palacios Lleras, Miguel, Investing in Human Capital: A Market Capital Markets Approach to Student Funding, (p 10-12).

mere fact of knowing and understanding the surrounding world [and one's place in it]...[the second as] the increased productivity an individual can achieve thanks to the additional knowledge and understanding required [in one's field of interest]." These values inherently lead to (at least in theory) a happier, healthier life as a result of having increased opportunity at success. The second piece of this argument centers around the social values involved with education, to which he states simply that: "more education translates into higher economic growth" for a given country on a large scale because when the population is able to produce for itself, less products need to be imported into the country and more products are able to be exported out of the country, increasing the given country's economy. Further, "a country's growth is influenced by the education of its people because productivity is one of the main drivers of economic growth".⁷ When societies are educated, people are able to provide for themselves, which takes the pressure off of the government to supply funding, aid, and support services in assisting those who are unemployed or unable to provide for themselves for whatever reason. Similarly, when more of the population is working, the economic status of a country also increases because people are able to reinvest in the economy by buying and selling within the domestic market.

In these ways, education is an aspect of progression that governments should definitely be concerned with, which leads us to the next pieces of this puzzle: determining how economic factors play into educational goals of a given country and understanding the system of federalism with regard to national and regional responsibility in providing education. These two areas will focus on the question of how national and local governments either work together or separately

⁷ Palacios Lleras, Miguel, Investing in Human Capital: A Market Capital Markets Approach to Student Funding, (p 12-13).

in setting standards for educating populations, and in what ways those standards are determined based on a country's economic status in the global market.

Economic Status

As previously mentioned, it is important to evaluate the quality of education and the threats to it through various lenses. So far I have determined why governments should be concerned with the educational advancement of its citizens. I also plan to look at in what ways different levels of government are involved in funding and curriculum planning. However, in this section I will explore how a country's economic status affects the educational goals that it may have. This is important because one must realize that achievement within in countries cannot be based on a single criterion; rather, the specific circumstances of a given country must be looked at and considered on their own in order to really attain whether or not their goals have been met.

In terms of classifying economics, a country generally falls into one of three categories: *less developed* (formerly known as, “the third world”), *developing* (entailing some significant progress being made toward full development), or *developed/advanced* (formerly referred to as, “the first world”). These classifications have been labeled and defined based on the success of industry and governmental stability. As a result, a country's economic category should drive its educational motivations and goals, which differ from one country to the next. In countries deemed to be *less developed*—those with lower Gross Domestic Product relative to most other countries in the world; (these countries tend to have little industry and high dependence on foreign aid, in example, the World Bank)—there is an intense focus on improving overall literacy rates of the citizenry and providing specialized training programs for jobs that will aid in the boosting of the economy.⁸ Literacy rates are the primary concern as opposed to sending

⁸ *Less Developed Country*. Farlex, Inc. 2012. <http://financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Developing+countries> (Date accessed: November 2012).

students to college, because the majority of the population is unable to pass elementary school. If less developed countries are able to increase literacy rates from 20% to 70% of the population that would be considered progress, even though in general terms 70% is not considered to be a high literacy rate.

Developing countries have a slightly different agenda given that they are defined as being “non-industrialized countries, seeking development through industrialization and stronger government support”.⁹ Their educational focuses tend to be driven by eliminating poverty and increasing accessibility to education for all sectors of the population (primarily girls and young women), improving the quality of education received by all students, and decreasing high dropout rates, unemployment data, and early marriage statistics as a result of the visibility of and accessibility to higher education programs.¹⁰ Progress for developing countries may be exemplified in a significant reduction of teen pregnancy, early marriage statistics, and families with over five children because alternate opportunities are available to all citizens, for example: birth control, free/affordable healthcare, and after-school enrichment programs to aid in academic success leading to students staying in school.

Finally, *developed/advanced* countries—determined by their manufacturing and technologically-based as opposed to agriculturally-based economy—are most highly focused on increasing specialization in certain fields, such as: medicine, engineering, and higher education via well-known colleges and universities to obtain tertiary degrees.¹¹ This fact is evident in the heightening number of top ranking colleges and universities housed in countries like the United States, who claims seventeen of the top twenty university slots in the world, and European

⁹ *Developing Country*. Farlex, Inc. 2012. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/developing+country> (Date accessed: November 2012).

¹⁰ *Millennium Developmental Goals*. The World Bank, 2011. <http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/education.html> (Date accessed: November 2012).

¹¹ *Developed Country*. Farlex, Inc. 2012. <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Developed+country> (Date accessed: November 2012).

countries who claim thirty-three of the top one hundred colleges and universities in the global market of higher education according to the “National Bureau of Economic Research Conference Report”.¹²

Where these different types of economically developed countries differ is in two ways: first, their strengths and weakness with regard to how education is prioritized and acted upon; and second, their individual structural needs to accomplish the goals they have set for their countries. This leads to the next area of discussion with regard to piecing together the puzzle of responsibility for quality education. Federalism, the idea that national and local governments must work together to cement a cohesive plan, plays a key role in determining dividing responsibility and allowing creative freedom to the large task of educating a population.

Federalism

A huge aspect of determining the effectiveness of a country and its progress in terms of education is the system of the government with regard to its educational structure. This issue is known as *federalism*. *Federalism* is defined as the distribution of power between a central authority and its constituent units, in example: national governments in relation to local and state governments.¹³ Understanding federalism is important to gauging how the national government interacts with local governments on the issue of education, and to what extent each branch is responsible for the funding and setting of curriculum for students across the country. Often times there are stipulations and expectations set by the national government that local and state governments are in charge of planning and instituting; however, as we will see, this is not always the case. For example, in the United States, while the national government sets standards for determining what students should have learned in a given school year through standardized

¹² Clotfelter, Charles T. “National Bureau of Economic Research Conference Report.” American Universities in a Global Market (2010) (p 205-208).

¹³ *Federalism*, Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2012. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/federalism> (Date accessed: November 2012).

testing, it is left up to the individual states and even local governments to assess how the material covered on the standardized tests should be conveyed to students to ensure their success. This means that state and local governments actually have more control assessing and evaluating the specific needs and demands of their districts, so long as the overall country is able to determine the national progress of all of its public school students.

When it comes to dividing the structure of federalism as applied to democratic societies, there are four terms that need to be clearly defined: *unitary systems*, *federalist systems*, *centralization*, and *decentralization*. This will create the framework for classifying the type of educational structure that a given country falls into both legally and in practice. *Unitary* and *federalist* systems are a legal way of categorizing how a country's constitutional laws and policies will be implemented. *Centralization* and *decentralization* are the actual practices of how those constitutional laws and policies will be divided between the national government and the local governments. *Unitary systems* are defined by the supremacy of the central government and the power it lends to local governments. An example of this type of system would be China, because although local governments have some power, the national government remains the central authority. *Federalist systems* are defined by the shared distribution of power between the central government and its local constituents. An example of this type of system is Canada, because power is divided between the central government and state governments, which work together.

Centralization is a strategy for achieving concentrated or consolidated power and authority within a unitary or federalist system. In contrast, *decentralization* is a strategy where governments identify the desired result, and defining criteria for success and failure, yet choose who will maintain the decision-making authority for a particular project (either the central government or local governments). Many people are an advocate for *decentralization* because: 1)

it can relieve tensions between regions and the central government, 2) regions are given some measure of political autonomy, and 3) the central government is still able to protect citizens from potential regional oppression¹⁴.

Building off of these basic ideas, educational structures can adhere to implementation strategies of *centralization* or *decentralization* within a constitution’s structure of a *unitary* or *federalist* system. This combination of factors has to do with the difference in the *de jure* or “legal” ideals of the constitution in comparison with *de facto* or “actual” circumstances of everyday practice. (See figure 1 for a visual representation of this concept with the countries in question.) Where a country’s constitution or governing document might declare it to be a system of *unitary* or *federalist* makeup, the provinces or regions may or may not follow their own form of *centralization* or *decentralization* within this overarching principle based on practicality. These issues become particularly crucial to discuss when multiple languages exist within a country, simply due to the fact that *de jure* standards are not always feasible.

Figure 1

		De Jure (Constitution)	
		Unitary	Federalist
Centralized		<i>Costa Rica</i>	Few examples
	Decentralized	<i>Ethiopia</i>	<i>Canada</i>

Case Study Selection

Having discussed economic status and structures of federalism, it becomes clear as to why Ethiopia and Costa Rica have been chosen for analysis.

While figure 1 explains the difference in *unitary* and *federalist* systems, the focus of this analysis will be on *centralized* and *decentralized* strategies within a *unitary system* of government, specifically zeroing in on the developing world. From two different regions of the

¹⁴ Feely, Malcolm M. and Edward Rubin, Federalism: Political Identity and Tragic Compromise, (p.44, 54-55, 58).

world, both countries provide a unique circumstance in the realm of economics, language, and how they approach educational issues. While both countries follow a *unitary system* approach to the education field, there are key differences in the economic development and stability of each country, the way in which *centralization* or *decentralization* aid them in the process of distributing funds and planning curriculum, and potential issues along the lines of national versus regional language, that make Ethiopia and Costa Rica different on many lines. These two countries set a diverse foundation to also examine other countries that may fall into similar categories. Looking at the specific needs of *centralized* and *decentralized unitary systems* will help me in determining what strategies and programs may need to be developed in order to continue to help these countries thrive and propel them forward in raising the quality of educational standards for all of their citizens.

Looking more intensely at Ethiopia, the factors that make this country prime for selection are many. First, according to the United Nations statistics, facts, and data, Ethiopia is considered a *less developed* country because its economy is heavily based on agriculture (and not technology or industry), which often suffers from drought and poor cultivation practices. Also, Ethiopia is a territory land-locked between Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, and Sudan, meaning that there is no feasible seaport for trade, making it hard to exchange goods via the Red Sea. Finally, while the Gross Domestic Product is relatively high, the per capita income is ranked one of the lowest in the world, effecting not only the government, but individuals and families as well.¹⁵

The second reason for Ethiopia's being a beneficial example is that its educational structure follows a *decentralized* version of a *unitary system* (see figure 1 for more clarification).

¹⁵ *Ethiopia*, UN-OHRLLS, United Nations 2011 <http://www.unohrlls.org/en/orphan/332/> (Date accessed: November 2012).

This is evident in that both the Ministry of Education and the National Regional State Education Bureaus (located at the national, state, and local levels) are collectively responsible for the policies and guidelines set for general education.¹⁶ In short, what makes Ethiopia's educational structure a *unitary system* is that both the national and local governments are part of a whole working toward a common goal of standardizing public education in Ethiopia. What makes the system *decentralized* is that in obtaining this goal, the national government works with local governments to develop regional strategies, allowing there to be a little more flexibility in achieving standardization.

Lastly, as previously noted, Ethiopia is linguistically diverse housing at least ten different official regional languages among a vast slew of others. This linguistic diversity may be the motivating factor for choosing to decentralize the system, given that decentralization would allow for curriculum to be taught in local regional languages. This is a unique circumstance that Ethiopia faces, where other countries do not necessarily have to think about this. All of these factors make Ethiopia both interesting and unique as a comparison to Costa Rica.

Examining Costa Rica, we find a different, yet equally intriguing set of characteristics that make this country another intellectually stimulating case. To begin with, the United Nations has deemed Costa Rica to be a *developing country* because of its commitment to and success in improving its economic and governmental stability over the years.¹⁷ Often termed the "Sweden of Central America," Costa Rica has been idealized by its neighboring countries for its success in overall development, so much so that immigration—both legal and illegal—has become a major

¹⁶ *The Development of Education: National Report of Ethiopia*, Ethiopian National Agency of UNESCO 2001 <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE/natrap/Ethiopia.pdf> (p 4) (Date accessed: November 2012).

¹⁷ *Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings*, United Nations Statistics Division 2012 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm> (Date accessed: November 2012).

concern for the Costa Rican government.¹⁸ A major motivating factor for this immigration is the poor educational and job opportunities rampant in neighboring countries.

With regard to the educational structure of the country, a *centralized unitary system* prevails—where the national government sets the standards and curriculum for the different provinces of the country. The Ministry of Public Education (Ministerio de Educación Pública) is responsible for the complete administration of the public school system, as well as any licensing for the private sector of education.¹⁹ To simplify, what makes Costa Rica a *unitary system* is that the Ministry of Public Education, at the national level, and provincial governments, on the local level, work together toward unifying the curriculum for public school students throughout the country. What makes Costa Rica’s system *centralized* is that the Ministry of Public Education has the final say on decision-making and implementation strategies without necessarily needing to hear from local governments for their approval.

Thirdly language in Costa Rica is far less complicated than it is in Ethiopia. Costa Rica has a single national language that all residents are fluent in—Spanish—and English is the second most commonly spoken national language for business purposes. Outside of this, other Indigenous languages do exist, but they do not present an issue when it comes to deciding what language education instruction will follow, which is a concern that Ethiopia has to address. The above aspects of the Costa Rican system provide a different set of considerations to compare with Ethiopia, and although both countries are considered to be part of the “developing world,” they are at different stages in their development which also makes for an interesting comparison.

¹⁸ Hawley, Chris, “Costa Rica copes with its own immigration ills,” USA Today, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2010-12-30-foreignimmigration30_ST_N.htm, 12/29/10 (Date accessed: January 2013).

¹⁹ *Educational System* Costa Rica Law 2012 <http://www.costaricalaw.com/Educational-System/> (Date accessed: November 2012).

Objectives

Through examining these two unique countries and evaluating what each brings to the table in terms of federalism, economic classification, and issues of language, I am able to examine broader questions of quality and equality as applied to education and opportunity. In taking Ethiopia and Costa Rica as a framework for tackling larger issues within unitary systems of government, I wish to understand two things: first, how do economic status, funding of education, and curricula planning determine educational equality within a country despite location within said country; and second, how do economic status, funding of education, and curricula planning determine educational success for a country in a global market? I plan to look at these questions along the lines of centralization or decentralization within a unitary system to evaluate the effectiveness of each in achieving these goals of quality and equality of accessibility to education and opportunity enhancement. Of course, given the differences previously mentioned in Ethiopia and Costa Rica, there are many levels on which these questions must be examined and many factors that contribute to the possible answers.

In order to answer these questions, some preliminary work must be done. In chapter one, I will explore the selected countries more in depth, looking at their developmental histories with regard to government and independence, their present-day structural national challenges, and their economic challenges in conjunction with the link to educational challenges. Chapter two will be divided into two sections, one focusing on finance and the other on curricula. In the section of finance, I will discover more surrounding the funding of public education and to what degree states, regional governments, parents, and outsider actors (in example: non-governmental organizations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc.) play a role in finance. In the curricula section of chapter two, I will look at how curriculum is determined, in what way regional languages may factor in, and whether or not having a similar curriculum allows for

greater success within a country. I will also ponder the question of whether or not the purpose of education is to create a national identity or if regional identities are more important. After having explored these subtopics, I will be in a better place to provide possible answers to the questions that interest me most with regard to unitary education systems in the developing world.

Chapter One: Country Profiles

This chapter will provide crucial background information on the countries of interest with regard to their formation and challenges, which will help in determining their present educational status. Discussed in this chapter are: a) the historical, foundational aspects of each respective country with an emphasis on both gaining independence as well as, challenges post-independence; b) the national and structural challenges that have arisen for each country in attempting to create a strong state; and c) the economic issues each country has faced in relation to the monetary challenges and their affects on the success of the public education system. Understanding these components of a given country's overall status will allow us to have a greater appreciation for the country's goals in achieving national success, as well as the obstacles standing in the way of obtaining those goals. Further, acknowledging the struggles that a country's government officials face nationally will place education into context of importance alongside other areas of concern for prioritization. Knowing these areas of concern will provide those outside contributors seeking to invest in a country's growth with a more realistic sense of what issues need to be addressed in order to really aid the country in improving its world status, both economically and educationally.

To highlight some of the main points of Ethiopia's development an emphasis will be placed on: the necessity of the government to determine a viable state structure, the need to create a sense of national identity, and the creation of a strong economy. These aspects of Ethiopia's nationhood will allow it to develop a stronger educational system, because the overall government will be more stable allowing for greater resources to be applied toward strengthening quality education. Costa Rica's development is critical upon other factors, being: its continued push for democratization and its ability to provide a secure state with decreased

illegal immigration. These aspects of nation-building affect education because the lack of a strong democracy and influx of illegal immigrants threatens the rights that citizens have to a quality education. Gaining a handle on these areas of concern will allow education to take a stronger front seat role, because governments will not have to focus their energy on tackling these additional concerns on a daily basis.

Ethiopia

Historical Foundations and Independence

Let us begin our country profiles and background analysis by examining Ethiopia. Largely considered by paleontologists and historians to be one of the oldest civilizations in the world, Ethiopia remains rich in its vast culture, history, and pride. Written and pictorial records discovered by numerous renowned archaeologists have revealed that the civilization's history could possibly have begun up to over 4,000 years ago! Similarly, the skeletal remains of a female hominid approximately twenty-two years of age were discovered by paleontologist, Donald Johanson, in 1974. Located "in a dried up lake bed at Hadar in the Afar Triangle 100 miles northeast of Addis Ababa"—the capital of Ethiopia—the remains date back as far as 3 million years ago, and provide evidence for the continued speculation of the region's being the site for the origination of mankind as we know it.²⁰ Having a history that began arguably prior to most other world civilizations creates an interesting conundrum as to how Ethiopia's politics have placed it where it is today economically and educationally—a civilization part of the "developing world." In theory, as a nation, the country's government has had a longer period of time to experiment with differing systems of governance, as has been the case; however, government officials have not solidified a framework that has been continuously successful in raising the economic and educational status of the country. The situation today reveals that Ethiopia's style

²⁰ Henze, Paul B., Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000 (p 1)

of government has not placed the country globally where it should be, although progress is certainly being made despite however fast-paced or slow-moving the reality.

When it comes to both overall history of the country, as well as its political history, religion has played a large role in both realms. From the beginning of civilization in Ethiopia, the cultural, governmental, educational, and agricultural development of the country have been strongly linked with and fostered not only by the dominant religions present in the region, but also by the less dominant faith traditions practiced.²¹ Ethiopia has deep roots in and ties to all three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and it continues to house adamant followers of the three faiths relatively peacefully.²² Because each religion provides its own moral code of ethics, laws, and regulations for the governance of people and relationships, said practices and values throughout time have laid the foundational principles or “code of ethics” for various empires to govern by. To break this religious influence down a bit further, as it is essential in understanding the present system of Ethiopia’s governance, let us examine in what ways these religions were introduced to the region.

Historically throughout its development, Ethiopia has maintained close ties with the Arabian Peninsula and Arab countries, including: Egypt, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia. This relationship has inevitably influenced the basis for Islam in the region, as well as the food (i.e. wheat, barley, lentils, and teff), system of agriculture, Semitic languages akin to Arabic, livestock (i.e. sheep and goats), trade, and mercantilism.^{23 24} During the Axum Empire, which lasted from approximately 100 to 940 A.D., the religious practices of polytheism shifted toward Christianity, with the later introduction of Islam. Christianity first entered into the Axum Empire

²¹ Marcus, Harold G., A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition, London, England: Regents of the University of California, 2002 (p 4-5)

²² Marcus, Harold G., A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition, (p 7-9)

²³ Marcus, Harold G., A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition, (p 3)

²⁴ Henze, Paul B., Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia, (p 12-16)

around the third century A.D. through the interaction between visiting tradesmen and the local Abyssinian elites. Since the Roman Empire had officially adopted Christianity as its official religion, Ethiopia's close trade ties with the Romans made it predictable that the country would eventually adopt Christianity as its national religion and form of governance, which remains the case in modern, twenty-first century tradition.²⁵ Judaism became powerful when Christians wanted to turn back toward a more traditional form of Christianity, which for them meant what is often identified already as "Judaism;" although others speculate that conversion to Judaism happened as a result of influence from Egyptian and Yemeni Jews in the region who had formed a tribe called, "Beta Israel" with traditions stemming largely from Christian practices.²⁶ Islam, on the other hand, really gained its bearings in the seventh century A.D. when Meccan Muslims fled to Abyssinia from persecution in the Arabian Peninsula. As the power of the Axum Empire grew under its Christian rule, religions like Islam and Judaism came to be seen as a threat, and the empire had to maintain its control as a Christian state by expanding its lands.²⁷ This can arguably be labeled the beginning of Ethiopia's *unitary system* of government in that the central government was being developed with local and regional governments accepting main control coming from the central branch. In many ways, this is still the case in Ethiopia today; while there are multiple religions present that are able to get along, the government remains highly Christianized.

As can be seen in the numerous empires that ruled Ethiopia—including: the Axumite Dynasty, the Dark Ages, the Zagwe Dynasty, the Solomonid Dynasty, and the Derg Empire after the Scramble for Africa and World War II—the link between religion and state rule proved to be

²⁵ Marcus, Harold G., *A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition*, (p 7)

²⁶ Henze, Paul B., *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, (p 54)

²⁷ Marcus, Harold G., *A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition*, (p 10-12)

a strong one.²⁸ Religion was the foundation for which trade was enacted, business was conducted, and social orders were understood. As the functions of the modern state, as we know them today, began to formulate into solid power between national governments and local/regional governments—otherwise known as strategies of *centralization* and *decentralization*, religion continues to be the foundation for which laws are created and national needs are attempted to be met.²⁹

Looking at the more recent history of how Ethiopia was able to avoid becoming a victim of European imperialism in the “Scramble for Africa,” and attain complete sovereignty as a country will set the stage for where Ethiopia is today with regard to world progress. We must first determine the cause for European interest—namely Italian interest—in the region to gather how these forces were overcome. In November 1869 the Suez Canal became opened to the Red Sea, meaning that “for the first time since the era of the Pharaohs,” this body of water could be annexed to the Mediterranean. Access to this body of water, as well as to the Gulf of Aden, immediately sparked interest for European countries—Italy in particular—because it could bring them money through trade. Italy, who would achieve its own national unity and independence in the coming year, began to look beyond its own national borders for growth opportunities in other regions, including Africa and the Mediterranean. In November 1869, an Italian Lazarist priest, Giuseppe Sapeto, purchased the port of Asab. Subsequently declared an “Italian colony” in 1882, the port signified Italy’s growing interest in the region not just for trading interests, but also for imperial governmental control.³⁰

On June 3, 1884 Britain, British-occupied Egypt, and Ethiopia signed the Hewett Treaty, outlining three provisions: 1) that Ethiopia should be restored control of the Bogos area on the

²⁸ Marcus, Harold G., *A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition*, (p 48-49)

²⁹ Marcus, Harold G., *A History of Ethiopia: Updated Edition*, (p 64)

³⁰ Pankhurst, Richard, *The Ethiopians: A History*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. (p 169)

western frontier; 2) that control of Massawa should be given to Ethiopia; and 3) that the treaty bound both the then-reigning monarchs along with their heirs and successors. Although they did sign and agree to the provisions of the treaty, the British made clear that with regard to the Massawa port they promised only, “free transit, ‘under British protection’, for Ethiopian goods.” In reality, the confines set by the treaty were short-lived as the Italians seized Massawa on February 3, 1885 with the support of the British Government who favored Italian expansion along the Red Sea to oppose France from doing so. Not only did the Italians take control of Massawa, but they also seized the adjacent coast in order to instate a blockade that would end weapons supply to the Emperor of Ethiopia, Yohannes.³¹ This series of situations set the backdrop for European presence in the Abyssinian region (consisting of present-day: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia).

What made Ethiopia successful in guarding against the Italians and maintaining the majority of their land was Emperor Yohannes’ use of diplomacy. Where he may not have been the most avid modernizer in the field of technological innovation, he was able to send envoys on diplomatic missions abroad, making him the “first Ethiopian ruler to appoint a foreign consul.”³² Passing leadership to Menilek, Ethiopia continued to strive against Italian invasion and occupation. Emperor Menilek decided to deal with the Italians a bit differently than previous rulers had done. As early as 1875, Emperor Menilek is reported to have had communication with the Italians as a result of their interest in Shawa, another Ethiopian owned territory. On May 21, 1883, a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce was set up between Emperor Menilek, an Italian diplomatic envoy, and Count Pierro Antonelli basically outlining how the two countries would respect one another’s boundaries with regard to the land of Shawa. As Italian interest in Shawa

³¹ Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 170-171)

³² Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 176)

increased as a result of Rear-Admiral Caimi's occupation of Massawa in 1885, former ruler Yohannes (then turned Emperor of the Tigray region) became seen as the major threat to Italian "colonial ambitions." At this point, Italy's policies toward Abyssinia at large became markedly more aggressive and more inclined toward using military force for overtake of the land.³³

Hoping, at least on paper, to reestablish peaceful relations between Ethiopia and Italy, Emperor Menilek and diplomat Antonelli signed a "Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship" on May 2, 1889 in Wechalé, Wallo, which would later be known as "the most controversial agreement between the two countries ever signed." While the treaty itself contained advantageous articles for both parties, the controversy arose when the Italian text and the Amharic text for the treaty differed in some areas, causing Emperor Menilek's signature to allow on paper things that he did not agree to in reality. Italy, on the other hand, took advantage of this misconception by using Europe's "Scramble for Africa" movement to its advantage in having the Italian translation of the treaty pass uncontested in the assembly of European countries meeting. That is to say, that because Europe already had a vested interest in various African countries, it did not matter to them that the treaty's translation was not fully representative of Ethiopian interest. According to the treaty, Italy was allowed to expand its rule of the Red Sea colony extending into the highland district of Hamasén and reaching as far as the villages of Halay, Saganayti, and Asmara, all part of present-day Eritrea—which was given its official name as a territorial region within Ethiopia on January 1, 1890.³⁴

Due to Italy's strengthened military and refusal to abandon the claim that Ethiopia was under its Protectorate, Emperor Menilek officially broke off cordial relations with Italy in early 1893 and completely denounced the Wechalé Treaty in its entirety in February, as well as

³³ Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 179-180)

³⁴ Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 179-186)

notifying other world powers that Ethiopia should no longer be seen as an Italian Protectorate. Realizing by the end of 1894 that it could not achieve “expansionist aims” via negotiations with Menilek or subversion of local chiefs, Italy determined that its goals would have to be obtained through invasion and military force. Not anticipating the effectiveness of the Ethiopian military in opposition to the Italian forces, the Italian military was surprised to have lost 43% of its original fighting power in the battle of Adwa in 1896, leaving Ethiopia victorious. The war came to a halt in October of 1896 with the Peace Treaty of Addis Ababa, forcing Italy to officially recognize Ethiopia’s absolute independence, a long awaited for victory for Ethiopians.³⁵

Recognition of Ethiopia’s sovereignty and independence did not last long for Italy, as the rule under Benito Mussolini refreshed the Italian interest in Africa circa 1922. Under Mussolini, Italy had become more “militaristic and intensely chauvinist,” moving rapidly into a fascist state determined to shift Italian policy from economic to decidedly militaristic penetration. Calling on its citizens to “revenge Adwa” by successfully overtaking Ethiopia the second time around was one of Mussolini’s main goals. Upon the new Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie’s, visit to Rome in 1924, Mussolini expressed his desire to “develop Abyssinia with Italian labour” through his vision of a “great future for Italy in Abyssinia.” As soon as it became apparent to the Italian government that the Ethiopian government had no interest in “any infringement of its sovereignty [,] the Italian fascists turned their thoughts from peaceful pressure to outright war,” leading to the second Ethiopian-Italian war in 1935.³⁶ As a result of the war, Italy did take over the land known as Eritrea (as previously noted) which was formally part of the Abyssinian Empire to form “Italian East Africa;” however, with the beginning of World War II at hand, Italy’s focus immediately shifted toward becoming an Axis ally to Hitler.³⁷ Thus “Italian East

³⁵ Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 188-192)

³⁶ Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 219-220)

³⁷ Pankhurst, Richard, The Ethiopians: A History (p 236-242)

Africa” was short-lived (although Eritrea did become a separate country, highly influenced by Italian language and culture), and power remained in the hands of Ethiopia to fully govern itself, which has been the case, arguably from its beginnings, but certainly into today.

National Structural Challenges in Creating a Strong State

Among Ethiopia’s challenges in creating a strong state are three main areas of concern: the government’s need to determine a functioning state structure, the benefits of creating a singular national identity, and the development of a strong economic system.

As has been seen in the previous section regarding the governance of the country, Ethiopia’s government faces the task of solidifying what type of governmental structure to pursue and pushing forward with that structure. By “structure” I am referring to the form of government, for example: democracy, monarchy, empire, authoritarian dictatorship, etc. Determining the form of government to follow is important in aligning all aspects of the government, which will in turn lead to a stronger overall state. The majority of the systems presented in the previous section were monarchies and empires. In today’s world, those systems simply do not exist (at least not in the same fashion). There are places that still have dictatorial rule or false democracies where the same person/party continues to be “re-elected” for years, sometimes decades, on end. However, Ethiopia has not chosen to follow that path per se. The country currently identifies as a federal republic, consisting of an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. Similarly, over ten parties exist for citizens to choose from and align with politically.³⁸

One issue in this system, however, is that there is almost *too much* fragmentation within the system—a concept that we often do not have to consider, but one that is relevant for

³⁸ *The World Fact Book: Ethiopia*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html> (Date accessed: January 2013).

Ethiopia: *How does one choose a party to align with? How exactly do all of these parties differ from one another, in terms of what they promise to do for the people? Are certain parties aligned with ethnic, linguistic, or regional concerns in mind, as opposed to national concerns? Would it benefit the country to reduce the number of parties that can run for national office by consolidating peoples' concerns? As a result of that shift toward national concerns, should regional governments address the specific issues being faced by particular ethnic groups?* This inability to garner the support of the citizenry for *national* concerns is one that is delaying and hindering the process of creating a strong national state. If everyone is focused on his/her specific region or tribe or linguistic group, then national unity is not being created and internally the country is subject to falling apart. This plays into the larger picture of federalism and the division between the central government's responsibilities and those of local/regional governments. It could be that in creating a national identity "Ethiopian" issues are addressed at the national level and ethnic/tribal concerns are tackled at the local/regional level.

A major concern and task for Ethiopia's government is first to create a national identity and foster a sense of what it means to be an "Ethiopian" within the country itself. Before the national government can address wealth distribution, quality education across regional boundaries, universal healthcare, and other problematic areas, there must first be a leader who can unite the people across their ethnic and linguistic differences to formulate a national identity that will allow everyone to be on the same page with moving Ethiopia forward. This is something that Egypt and Turkey had to do in their formations as states, as well as many other countries under the rule of new leadership and global concern. The role of the national government is to provide resources to *Ethiopians*, not to *Amharas* or *Oromos* or *Tigrays* (ethnic groups throughout the country) specifically, but to citizens at large. Within creating a national identity, the hope would be to also eliminate the discrimination that certain groups may in reality

be facing. The thinking behind this is: *if we are all now “Ethiopians” first and then our ethnic group, then we are all entitled to the same quality access of resources solely based on citizenship and nothing else.*

A second major threat or national challenge in creating a strong state that Ethiopia faces is the lack of government support in providing opportunities for growth and success within the country. What history has shown in other countries’ processes of development has been some type of structural movement. One example of this would be the import-substitution industrialization revolutions that took place throughout Latin America during the mid-1900s. Essentially, the idea was to increase a country’s economy through self-sufficiency rather than dependency on foreign imports. This would happen through increasing industry within a country and supporting local businesses to shift the economy from a globally-based focus to a conscious concentration on domestic growth.³⁹ While it is an economic theory that has been highly debated as to its efficiency and successfulness, it is one way of stimulating a country’s economy internally before focusing externally.

By placing an emphasis on stimulating the economy from within the country, there are other areas of concern that will simultaneously be addressed. Among these areas is that of education. In order to create jobs, there must be skilled workers who can do these jobs, and the only way to create this group of skilled workers is through education investment. Education can take the form of many different paths. For example, schooling and formal institutions are one means of providing instruction to students of all ages, yet vocational training and forms of informal education should not be overlooked. Connecting education with economic development also fosters the idea of having quality education available for all citizens in order to equip

³⁹ *Import Substitution Industrialization*. WebFinance, Inc. 2013
<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/import-substitution-industrialization-ISI.html> (Date accessed: January 2013).

workers with the right set of skills. Schools cannot fail in providing quality education and then in turn expect former students to be successful workers within the country and certainly not in the global market.

Another example of a way that past countries have built up their economies from within is taken from Alexander Gerschenkron's chapter on "Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective," where he suggests that in the absence of private wealth and bank stabilization, a country's government should in turn become more centralized, in order to propel the country forward and pull it out of "backwardness"—characterized by a lack of technological industrialization.⁴⁰ This is to say that as a means of creating the strong state that Ethiopia can benefit from in terms of placing education as a priority among other issues needing to be addressed, the cohesiveness of the national government, particularly in relationship with local and regional governments, needs to be applied in a way that it is not currently being applied. This sense of stronger power vested in the national government would strengthen the state as a whole by creating a solid center.

Economic Issues and their Effect on Public Education

As has been made clear throughout the course of this essay, the Ethiopian government faces many challenges on a daily basis that are negatively impacting the country as whole. One of the major issues faced by the government is the overwhelming presence of visible poverty. According to a non-governmental support agency, Action Aid, of Ethiopia's population of 67 million habitants, about 84% live in rural areas, more than half of the population lives on less than one United States dollar a day, and over 80% of the entire population relies heavily on agricultural livelihood, meaning that poverty is widespread and opportunity is almost a foreign

⁴⁰ Gerschenkron, Alexander, "Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective (1962)," The Political Economy Reader: Markets As Institutions, Ed. Naazneen H. Barma and Steven K. Vogel, New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2008 (p 214-221).

concept. Famine has been commonplace throughout the country's history due to multiple factors, including political, economic, and environmental issues. Such a circumstance has led to a larger issue of "chronic hunger," implying that famine and lack of food are so sparse that more people than not are without sustenance on a daily basis.⁴¹

As a result of such widespread poverty and famine, the Ethiopian government has had to rely heavily on international aid in order to supply food to its citizens. Depending on other countries and international organizations always comes with its set of politics and stipulations, meaning that these organizations can have a say in who they want their monetary aid to support. This has created areas of unequal distribution when it comes to food, money, and subsequently other areas of interest like education, which I will elaborate on momentarily. Similarly, because Ethiopia has undergone much conflict and turmoil within the country between ethnic tribes, as well as issues with neighboring countries, a large portion of the country's national budget has been spent on military funding, which entails that other areas of concern, such as education and healthcare, are getting the short end of the stick.⁴²

Both of these issues with regard to the country's overwhelming poverty—constant famine and military spending—are closely linked with Ethiopia's other problem of funding quality education. First, we see that the government itself is not functioning in a way that is able to support itself economically. Whether this is through a blanket system of tax collection or reworking the national banks and budget, something internally within the government has to happen in order to redistribute wealth amongst the people, as well as redistribute funding to the various parts of government spending that are currently unbalanced. Governments must be concerned with: military, education, healthcare, and welfare programs, to name a few areas, and

⁴¹ *Food and Famine in Ethiopia*, Action Aid Organization, http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/196_1_ethiopia_food.pdf (date accessed: February 2013).

⁴² *Food and Famine in Ethiopia*, Action Aid Organization, http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/196_1_ethiopia_food.pdf (date accessed: February 2013).

if Ethiopia's government is pouring the majority of its resources into its military, it is obvious that other areas are suffering. Secondly, the famine that the country faces on a regular basis is another huge issue. If the government is unable to provide food to its citizens regularly, then there are, in theory, much larger worries to be concerned with than providing quality education; there must first be a population to educate.

It would appear that the country's level of poverty is the main problem facing both the government and its citizens. It is poverty that is keeping Ethiopians from being able to dine at least once a day, poverty that prevents decent healthcare to be provided at little to no cost, and poverty that is impeding upon the creation of a quality public education system. Let us not forget that a good public school consists of many factors, including but not limited to: a properly functioning building, competent teachers, valuable school supplies, and access to resources. All of these aspects of education are expensive and take time, energy, and dedication to implement properly. Perhaps it is not that the Ethiopian government does not care about education investment; on the contrary, it would seem that there are many other areas of concern for the government in providing every citizen, regardless of age, with a quality life, and education, it seems, is on the lower end of the priority list simply because more urgent concerns like famine abolishment are crucial to daily life.

Costa Rica

Historical Foundations and Independence

Approximately three million years ago, the space between the land masses of North and South America bridged together in formation separating the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This new body of land created what are now considered to be the countries of Costa Rica and Panama. Over time, this area became inhabited with peoples of the hunter-gatherer labor force, who crossed the Bering Strait, and continued to move further and further south within the region.

Although there is much debate as to when exactly these inhabitants originated, scientists have proposed, via facts and evidence, that this could have possibly occurred roughly around 30,000 to 12,000 B.C.E. Between 12,000 and 8,000 B.C.E., the earliest human settlements, that would later become “Costa Rica” proper, were established. Centuries later, in 1502, Christopher Columbus made his first landing in the region on his fourth voyage to the Americas, and by 1523, Spanish settlers had imposed their first permanent settlements in the land.⁴³

Something interesting with regard to the makeup of Costa Rica’s racial and ethnic background is the fact that the people originated from within the region itself, thus many Indigenous groups first inhabited the lands prior to the Europeans who came later and brought with them African peoples as slaves. This transformed the cultural makeup of the people that live in the region. Of course, the native inhabitants were not happy with the arrival of the European imperialists and their impositions on the pre-existing culture. Thus, in 1709 Pablo Presbere, the ruler of an Indigenous community in Suinse, led an Indigenous uprising in Talamanca against the Spanish religious regime. The results were not as fruitful as the Indigenous populations would have liked, given that the revolt was suppressed and its leader, Presbere, was executed in Cartago the year following the revolt.⁴⁴ This trend of overlooking Indigenous populations, as well as the African Diaspora populations has been an ongoing problem throughout Latin America, including within Costa Rica. The issue of race and ethnicity linked with class and resources continues to be a problem for many Costa Rican citizens, playing out in many areas of society, including education.

In 1736, Costa Rica’s main city of San Jose was founded; however, it is important to note that independence from Spain had not yet been achieved. In fact, Costa Ricans did not even

⁴³ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, “*Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook*,” *Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean*, Santa Barbara, California: ABC CLIO, 2008 (p295).

⁴⁴ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, “*Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook*,” *Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean*, (p296)

consider the idea of independence from Spain until hearing of the recent independence of neighboring Central American countries via mail. (These Central American countries were at the time fewer than are known today. For example, Mexico and Nicaragua were formed as their own nations, while the remaining territories were officially considered to be part of the “Central American Federation.”) This took place in 1821, when countries like Mexico and Guatemala were obtaining their independence. About two years later, in 1823, the fight for initial independence began. Residents of Cartago, desiring to be allied with the Mexican empire, fought in the Battle of Ochomogo against residents of San Jose, who wanted to separate from Mexico. The result of the battle was victorious triumph for those fighting on the side of San Jose. This meant that San Jose would become the official capital of the Central American Federation. Simultaneously, the Mexican empire was dissolving and thus not creating the previous threat to Costa Rica’s initial founding that was a concern prior to the battle.⁴⁵

In 1824, the Costa Rican government abolished slavery, which meant that no more people of African descent would enter into the country under the auspices of forced, unpaid labor.⁴⁶ Yet, the stigma of blackness in correlation with inferiority was already culturally engrained. Similarly, the looking down upon of Indigenous peoples was also commonplace within society. Although de jure means of discrimination were beginning to become an idea of the past, the de facto effects of years and years of abuse and discrimination based on racial and ethnic background and appearance were already deeply rooted and embedded within the society. As previously mentioned, this is an issue that continues to effect Costa Rican citizens today, because race and class are often intertwined with opportunity or lack thereof, both in the realm of education, as well as in the professional sphere.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, “Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook,” Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p296)

⁴⁶ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, “Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook,” Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p296)

Continuing in the formation of the actual territory of Costa Rica as we know it today, residents living in the northwest region of Guanacaste voted in 1825 to separate from pre-Nicaragua, and annex to the newly forming “Costa Rica.” This boundary formation, along with the initial separation from Mexico (who is now countries away from Costa Rica as we know it) are important in understanding the development of the region, and more specifically the development of Costa Rica.⁴⁷

Two more significant changes occur between 1835 and 1838 that are crucial in Costa Rica’s foundation. In 1835, a small war was fought between the cities of the Central Valley region and the city of San Jose, which San Jose won. The fact that San Jose won this battle was an integral step in consolidating the power of this developing country into a central capital, meaning that this city would continue to be where change occurred, decisions were made, and power was consolidated. The second significant factor in this state formation was Costa Rica’s withdrawal from the Central American Federation in 1838, which was rapidly failing.⁴⁸ This too was important because it was the beginning of Costa Rica defining its boundaries of statehood. Looking back in history, we observe the consolidation of power into this central city of San Jose, the annexation of Guanacaste into what was becoming Costa Rica, and this boundary setting of Costa Rica by officially withdrawing from an already existing federation. All of these steps were integral in shaping both the territorial boundaries and the governance of what would become its own country. Further, these steps were crucial in the beginning stages of developing the unitary system that would later prevail, in that a central city of governance was forming where policies would be derived.

⁴⁷ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, “*Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook*,” Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p296)

⁴⁸ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, “*Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook*,” Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p297)

Of course country development is never an easy task and former dictators from the previously ruling country or territory are never willing to give up land without a fight, which was also the case with Costa Rica. In 1842, General Francisco Morazán of the Central American Federation invaded Costa Rica with the intention of bringing it back into the Federation. Unsuccessful in his endeavors, he was shot and killed in the country's capital of San Jose, and Costa Rica remained independent from the Federation. The next few years ensuing this initial attack served as the real roots for the cohesion of this developing country. In 1848, the "Republic of Costa Rica" was officially proclaimed, marking the first time in history that Costa Rica was to be recognized as its own country with the ability to govern itself. In order to maintain this new found independence, Costa Rica, along with other Central American countries who were gaining independence, fought in the National Campaign between 1856-1857 against William Walker, a North American explorer who came to Nicaragua under the auspices of defeating the civil conflict within the country; in turn, he took advantage of his intervention by naming himself president and creating "his dream of...a slave state to be annexed someday to the United States," something that did not sit well with the Nicaraguans or citizens of neighboring countries.⁴⁹

Eighteen-seventy marked a critical step in establishing governmental power in the country. After decades of chronic political instability, General Tomás Guardia established a military dictatorship, which consequently lasted for twelve years ending with his death in 1882. While dictatorship is generally less favored by populations, it may have been the political push Costa Rica needed to ground its developing institutions. Ironically enough, the dictatorship was successful in reinforcing the rule of law that had been adopted via the new constitution created in 1870, one of its provisions being the abolishment of military rule in Costa Rican politics. In turn,

⁴⁹ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, "*Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook*," Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p297)

the basic institutions desired in the 19th century liberal society were established and maintained through this dictatorship.⁵⁰ This is a success that Costa Rican officials and citizens can be proud of—the early creation of a solid political system that over the years has continued to improve. As we will see in the next section, Costa Rica is doing pretty well in terms of political stability and maintaining good relations with neighboring countries.

The period between 1924 and 1931 showed an awakening in political party formation and understanding state responsibility. Former priest, Jorge Volio, established the Reformist Party in 1924. While the party's existence was short lived, Volio's contributions left an important impact on Costa Rica's "path to social and political reform in the 20th century." Just a few years later, in 1931, under the leadership of Manuel Mora, the Communist Party was founded. Although the party never officially challenged Costa Rica's democratic political institutions, it did prove instrumental in garnering rights and support for workers and laborers, which can be argued was also the beginning of labor unions in the country.⁵¹ All of these aspects of Costa Rica's development and struggle toward independence are important for understanding the status of the country today, which leads us to determining what today's challenges are.

National Structural Challenges in Creating a Strong State

For Costa Rica, the challenges of developing a strong state include: continued progression toward democratization and founding a secure state devoid of unwanted illegal immigration which is often linked with high crime rates.

Since independence the Costa Rican government has had the challenge of creating a democratic state where all citizens feel that their rights are being taken seriously. A beginning point in working toward this goal was the overturning of the last dictator during the civil war.

⁵⁰ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, "Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook," Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p298)

⁵¹ Mitchell, Meg Tyler and Scott Pentzer, "Costa Rica: A Global Studies Handbook," Global Studies: Latin America & The Caribbean, (p299)

Costa Rica experienced its civil war in 1948. It was a struggle between the then-ruler, Calderón, and the general population, with an emphasis on the growing middle class. This group of small-business owners and professionals felt excluded from the political process due to fraud in the electoral system and the corruption of Calderón's regime. The opposition of this group solidified its grievances in two emerging political groups: the Center for the Study of National Problems (CEPN/El Centro) and Democratic Action (in English). Politically speaking, El Centro agreed to many of Calderón's social reforms; however, they did not support the Communist Party's influence on the government or the political and economic corruption that took place. The Democratic Action party, on the other hand, was less impressed with Calderón in general, and envisioned a different, more inviting Costa Rica for the middle class.⁵²

The two groups—El Centro and Democratic Action—joined together to form the Social Democratic Party, “an anti-Communist moderate leftist party” that developed a new identity in 1941.⁵³ In reaction to this and as an attempt at keeping his political power, Calderón introduced a series of social reforms in the hopes of gaining the support of rapidly growing labor unions (who were in essence replacing the former majority of upper class constituency). All of these political tensions under the rule of Calderón faced with the opposition of the general public led to the civil war of 1948. The war ensued as a result of the fraud present in the 1948 election. A candidate running from the National Union Party (PUN) won the election with 10,000 votes; however the National Republican Party (of which Calderón was a part of) voted to annul the victory, forcing government troops to move in on the PUN candidate. The war ended within six weeks, leaving 1,000 to 2,000 casualties and a negotiated settlement.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most relevant outcome of the war was the overcoming of the authoritarian regime in the country. Since the civil war, Costa

⁵² Wilson, Bruce M., Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc., 1998 (p 32-33)

⁵³ Wilson, Bruce M., Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy, (p 32-33)

⁵⁴ Wilson, Bruce M., Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy, (p 34-35)

Rica's government has become increasingly democratic, yet it is still a challenge that the country faces in trying to ensure rights to all of its citizens, which ties in with education as it is a right that it is not equally distributed amongst all citizens, although it should be.

Another of Costa Rica's challenges in creating a strong state is the issue of public security. The ability to provide a "safe and secure domestic environment" that will foster economic growth and diminish crime is an area of concern for the government in stabilizing democratic institutions.⁵⁵ It is easy to determine why public security should be a concern of the government in all scenarios. Costa Rica is one of the few countries in the world that does not have a military system. As a result, the country has had to maintain peaceful relations with neighboring countries, as well as nations around the world. For this reason, it has often been referred to as the "Switzerland" of Latin America because of its position which makes it both land and sea-locked.

The lack of military presence to rely on has placed an added pressure on the internal police department to enforce the laws of the land, especially with regard to illegal immigration primarily from Nicaragua and Panama.⁵⁶ Similarly, there are many poverty stricken communities (highly inhabited by immigrants) where crime is at an all-time high because resources are scarce for non-citizens. The police are unwilling to go into these communities and address the violence for fear of their own lives causing the problem to continue to go unaddressed. The problem of illegal immigration and immigrant communities needing education is always an underlying problem of education. On the one hand, everyone deserves the right to an education regardless of their citizenship status. Yet, on the other hand, it is difficult to account for and provide public

⁵⁵ Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, *U.S. Relations With Costa Rica*, U.S. Department of State Diplomacy in Action, 2013. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2019.htm> (Date accessed: February 2013).

⁵⁶ Fendt, Lindsay, *Costa Rica Acts to Stem Contraband, Illegal Immigration From Nicaragua*, DIÁLOGO, 2013. http://dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/regional_news/2013/02/04/nicaragua-immigration. (Date accessed: February 2013).

resources to people who are not actually citizens. Thus one can speculate that public schools in locations with high illegal immigrant rates accrue the least government-sponsored funding and resources, because the government is not willing to support the education of people who are not actual citizens and who have entered the country via illegal means.

Economic Issues and their Effect on Public Education

One area of economic concern that Costa Rica faces is the desire to become less of a welfare state by encouraging employment opportunities and less bureaucracy. This mentality of the emerging political officials developed in the 1970s in reaction to two changes in the country's economic status: first, the country faced an economic crisis that encouraged reducing the government's role in the economy. Import-substitution industrialization worked wonders in strengthening Costa Rica's domestic market, allowing the country to shift toward free-market programs, which ideally reduced the government's role.

Second, the platform of the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN) shifted from its original goals of welfare expansion to one of bureaucracy reformation and welfare pruning. Although slimming back on resources was the new platform of the government, the economic crises of 1970s and 1980s forced the government to provide more relief avenues that it was willing to support.⁵⁷ Thus the issue still remains a problem today: on the one hand, the Costa Rican government wants to scale back on becoming a welfare state by providing more opportunities for individual success and responsibility; yet on the other hand, the government realizes that there are limited opportunities and government aid must be available to those who are in the most need and lack other options. Finding the balance between providing neither too much nor insufficient support is the main challenge that the government is facing in recent times.

⁵⁷ Wilson, Bruce M., Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy, (p 113)

The idea of becoming less of a welfare state is linked to education in at least two ways: first, if the government wants to take away funding from welfare programs, it should in theory invest more in educational resources to transfer the responsibility of living toward the individual. That is to say, living expenses can only be paid by having a decent job, which can only be obtained with proper schooling and training, which means that if the government refuses to pay for people's living expenses then it must provide adequate educational resources for people to qualify for the jobs that will allow them to provide for themselves. The question is whether or not the resources originally allocated for welfare are now being funneled into education.

The second link that the reduction of the welfare state has with education is the funding of programs outside of public schools, for example: community centers and health resources that encourage young people to stay out of trouble, to make informed decisions, and to stay in school by providing resources to help them with their studies. There are many government run programs that are geared toward continuing learning outside of the classroom and providing students with safe places to go to that will keep them off of the streets. However, if the Costa Rican government is steadily trying to reduce the role of government in these areas, they could be setting themselves up for the exact opposite response that they are looking for: they could end up creating a situation for more people to become dependent on the government due to the lack of support in succeeding in the first place. To elaborate: if the government does not invest in prevention programs on the front end of the spectrum, it will eventually have to invest in programs on the back end to make up for the areas where it failed the people to begin with.

Another aspect of Costa Rica's economy is that it is largely agriculturally based and a considerable amount of resources have been poured into preserving its environment, which

brings in significant funds from tourism.⁵⁸ While this is generally sufficient to maintain Costa Rica's economy, it does of course have its downfalls. Suppose the weather does not allow for crops to be grown at a time that they are normally expected. With the effects of global warming becoming more and more apparent daily, it is a concern that Costa Ricans will have to address if farming seasons do become shorter.

A similar argument can be made for the preservation of rainforests and natural habitats. While there is significant progress being made toward keeping these areas free of human intervention through policy-making, it is not certain that every generation of politicians will maintain the environment as a priority. So how does this relate to education? Well, more and more resources are being poured into educating students on how to preserve the environment, which means that training for tourism is also in high demand. In this way, the economy is doing well, because it is taking a large aspect of its source of wealth accumulation and investing it back into the school system. Thus a cycle is born: educate students about environmental preservation; provide job training for tourism in the environment; use the money accumulated by tourism for the public school system; repeat. This is not as much of a concern as it is a potential solution!

As can be seen, a lot of factors play into the current situation of a country's educational status—its historical foundations, present-day challenges in creating a strong state that maintains education as a priority, and the concerns of its economy are all crucial in understanding where education falls in relation to other concerns of the state. It is also clear to see that while countries may fall into similar categories of governance style, their personal challenges can differ widely and how they attempt to work through those situations will also vary. What might work for Costa Rica may not help Ethiopia, and vice versa; however, it is possible for the two to learn something

⁵⁸ Nelson, Harold D., Costa Rica: A Country Study, Washington, D.C.: United States Government as represented by the Secretary of the Army, 1983 (p 140)

from each other. In the next section I will examine public education funding and curriculum setting in determining how they are linked with the national structural challenges that we explored in this section.

Chapter Two: Finance and Curricula

This chapter explores the realms of funding public education, determining curriculum, and the former's influence on the latter. These two areas—finance and curriculum, are essential in grasping how a country values education and in what ways it needs to improve on educational quality. As mentioned in the previous chapter on country development and challenges, it is often the case that education is placed as a secondary concern for developing countries because other, more urgent issues, such as famine reduction and other basic needs take precedence in overall country development and progress.

With regard to funding public education, I will attempt to answer the following questions: a) who funds primary education; and b) to what degree does the state have a role in finance, as well as regional governments, parents, and outsiders (for example: Non-governmental Organizations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc.)? Answering these questions will set a framework for evaluating the investment that different entities have in the educational process, both in the realm of what they can *add to* education, in the form of curriculum, and in what they can *demand from* the educational system, in terms of outcomes. In other words, the extent to which parents invest financially in their children's education allows them the right to demand a quality education because of the monetary support they are contributing to the cause. Similarly, if the national government allots a reasonable portion of funds to public education, it has the right to expect that students will prosper by their own means, and, in turn, will not need to be dependent on governmental assistance in the long run.

A second concern of this chapter is to examine the ways in which curriculum is determined and how much influence the different entities investing in public education have in this department. The questions that will be tackled in this section are: a) how is curriculum

determined; b) how might regional language issues factor into setting a national curriculum; c) is a purpose of education to create national identity or is regional identity more important; and d) does having a similar curriculum from one province to the next allow for greater career success within a country? These questions give insight into the desired outcome of education—for example: creating a national identity, allowing for greater job opportunity within the country, etc. It also tells us about the world view that a particular country holds in relation to education, nationalism, and the role of the state, meaning that we have insight into what specific regions of the world value, which can help those studying international affairs in approaching differences with greater understanding.

Further, in exploring the aspects of financing primary education and curriculum planning, the role of federalism will be evaluated. Looking at the division of funds between the national and local governments will illustrate the concept of *de facto* versus *de jure* law-making, as discussed in the introductory chapter. To recall, *federalism* is the division of powers between the central government and its local counterparts. The structure within federalism can follow a *centralized system*—where the goal is to achieve a concentrated power in the national government, or a *decentralized system*—where desired results are identified, yet local governments can determine how to achieve those goals separate of the national government. Education funding explores this idea on different levels of implementation.

Funding Public Education

Who Funds Primary Education?

When comparing multiple countries across a single variable, such as education, it is important to consider each country's strengths and weaknesses. Understanding the factors that both Ethiopia and Costa Rica have to deal with in strengthening their educational systems was the purpose of uncovering their historical backgrounds in the previous chapter. From chapter

one, we learned that each country has a different economic standing, which contributes to many of its areas of concern, as well as areas of strength today. For example, in Ethiopia we found that eliminating famine is a major concern that the government faces daily. In the introduction, we also learned that only about 69% of urban students are enrolled in school, less than half of the population is literate in the national language, and the average school life expectancy age is eight-years-old. In Costa Rica we found other results, showing that the country is currently trying to move away from being a welfare state by preventing the causes beforehand that later lead to the necessity of government dependence. The country's statistics highlight a 94% literacy rate, an average school life expectancy of twelve-years-old, and a relatively low unemployment rate of 11%.

Such vastly differing circumstances call for alternate modes of examining which areas are in most need for development. In other words, it would not be fair to issue blanket remarks toward all countries when there are circumstances that cause countries to be in various places. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, we must evaluate countries according to their own standards of progress and success. For that reason, I have chosen to look at primary public education, because it is where learning begins, and strong primary school resources lead to students who are able to excel in higher institutions of learning, which would in turn demand for their existence. In Ethiopia, however, the low literacy rates express that greater funding needs to be devoted toward primary schools rather than trying to build colleges and universities. This simply would not make sense when current statistics show that most students will not make it past the fifth grade. Similarly, it would feed into a larger issue of inequality, in that only wealthy families would have access to higher learning, whereas less financially stable families would continue to suffer the financial burden of supporting children in younger grades. While Costa Rica's prospects look higher in the field of primary education, statistics still show that most

students will not make it past the secondary level of education, which again reveals that college and university creation should not necessarily be at the top of the list for governments when addressing educational demands. That being said, it is logical to look at who funds primary education and in what areas this level of schooling can improve if we are really interested in progress.

a. The Situation in Ethiopia

In 2005, UNICEF and the World Bank created the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) to support governments (such as Ethiopia) who wished to legally make primary education free to all citizens. The initiative itself has three aims: 1) to build a knowledge-based network on school fee abolition policy that can oversee lessons, and support strategies and interventions for keeping education free of charge, 2) to utilize the knowledge and experience gained to aid countries wishing to abolish school fees, and 3) “to facilitate, promote and advance a global policy dialogue on financial barriers to accessing education and building partnerships to ensure a successful environment.”⁵⁹ While Ethiopia has chosen to participate in the initiative by creating a policy that all public schools are free of charge to students, there are many factors that go into creating schools that parents do not have to pay for directly out of pocket. Among the expenses equated with education are: teacher salaries, construction materials, labor, maintenance/repairs, furniture, cleaning, catering, uniforms, school supplies, classroom materials, and transportation, all of which are major concerns for families, particularly in rural areas, as well as for the government if it truly wishes to ease the burden on parents for financing all of these areas.⁶⁰

On the other hand, however, taking the burden off of parents to finance the meat of their children’s education and placing the responsibility into the hands of the government has had

⁵⁹ Oumer, Jeilu, *The challenges of free primary education in Ethiopia*, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001825/182523e.pdf> (Date accessed: February 2013). (p 15)

⁶⁰ Oumer, Jeilu, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001825/182523e.pdf> (p 14)

positive effects on school enrollment rates. Studies have shown that class sizes are increasing, particularly in rural regions, because cost has long been considered a deterrent and a barrier to accessing education. Families no longer have to think about *how many* children they can afford to send to school, and schools have been creating “shifts” so that students can also work for a portion of the day. Similarly, enrollment rates for girls have been on the increase as a result of the government taking over the reins of financing education.⁶¹ At this point, UNICEF and the World Bank are interested in finding ways to offset the additional costs outside of tuition that are associated with education. While many different groups finance primary public education in Ethiopia (which will be discussed more in depth in the next section), the national government is a key contributor.

On the issue of federalism, a deeper question comes into play with Ethiopia. If a large portion of Ethiopia’s funding derives from international aid, then the concept of federalism in Ethiopia is not simply between the national government and local governments; there is an added international entity to discuss. It appears that non-governmental organizations and international service groups are funneling money directly into provinces and regions, which would entail that certain regions may receive more support than other regions. It also means that international aid looks more similar to the aid that local governments should be providing to citizens.

This could create both a positive and a negative situation. On the positive side, Ethiopia’s national government is in need of direct monetary support. If international organizations can come in and distribute wealth to the regions that are most in need, this relieves the national government of some of its burden. Similarly, as has been discussed before, whoever is in the presidential office will direct most of the resources toward his/her tribal group which leads to

⁶¹ Oumer, Jeilu, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001825/182523e.pdf> (p 15)

inequality of distribution between ethnic groups. In theory, international organizations can help adjust this unequal funding by focusing on specific regions and villages.

On the other hand, the presence of international aid organizations can undermine the power of the national government by causing the citizenry to view it as a “largely symbolic office” with little power, because the true power lies in the hands of international agencies. If these organizations coming in are not working in unison with the national government, then they are in actuality working against the national government. Another concern is that if international agencies choose to work with populations that already receive a majority of the benefits, they are in reality reinforcing the inequality that already persists. International organizations have a huge responsibility in assessing their role within federalism and the redistribution of resources.

b. The Situation in Costa Rica

The Costa Rican system for funding primary public education is a little bit different. Funding is overseen by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, whose responsibility it also is to regulate the school system and oversee the national school board at large. Because education has many faculties and areas in need of management, there are several departments within the Ministry geared toward facilitating every area in need of monetary support. (Those areas are previously listed in the section on Ethiopia. Some include: teacher salaries, classroom supplies, and transportation.) Over the years, the amount of money spent by the national government on education has continued to increase, showing the value that the Costa Rican government places on educating its population. Local governments are not required to invest money into the education system; this is seen as the role of the national government which exhibits the centralized nature of the government. Thus, a portion of the revenue from general taxes are allotted toward public education, however, regional taxes are used to fund other public

necessities.⁶² This is a key example of federalism at work! Costa Rica's *centralized unitary system* allows them to make clear de jure distinctions between the roles of the national and local governments in education investment.

Another interesting aspect of the government's ability to devote such a large amount of resources toward education has to do with the country's lack of military presence. Because there is no military, the government is able to transfer the resources that would be spent on military training, weaponry, and other expenditures toward factors contributing to a healthy state, for example: education. This factor is one of the things that has allowed Costa Rica to be an ideal location for emigration to many of its neighbors who are currently (or have in the past been) facing wars. While there are other entities who contribute to the overall funding of public education in Costa Rica, it can be said with certainty that a large portion of the resources come directly from the national government.

In both Ethiopia and Costa Rica, alongside the national governments making major investments in education funding, parents and non-governmental organizations also contribute to the financial aspects of ensuring quality education. Broad issues like education take the willpower of communities to foster. There is an African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." This same concept and idea can be applied to education. It takes the resources of many to provide the foundations for successful educational outcomes. It is not just monetary support that fulfills the needs of students and teachers; it is also the investment of training qualified teachers, the time spent with students outside of the classroom, and the labor that goes into painting the school building and cleaning the yards for students to have clean and healthy

⁶² Education Encyclopedia, *Costa Rica-Administration, Finance, & Educational Research*, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/301/Costa-Rica-ADMINISTRATION-FINANCE-EDUCATIONAL-RESEARCH.html> (Date accessed: February 2013).

environments. All of these entities must be acknowledged in contributing to the small pieces that create the bigger picture of successful schools and students.

To What Degree do Governments, International Organizations, and Parents Have a Role in Finance?

Now that I have established that both Ethiopia's and Costa Rica's national governments are involved in subsidizing education in various manners (including: teacher training and classroom materials), as well as parents and outside organizations, to what degree each of these different entities contributes to education costs is important. This is an important question to answer because it will illustrate the different levels of concern surrounding education, and how much people are willing to put their own resources into spreading knowledge to the entire community, as well as making personal investments in their own children. Education breeds both social and private goals, as mentioned in the introduction about the personal and communal goals of quality schooling. In some ways, education investment shows us what "community" means to citizens in different countries. Educating youth is an investment in the future of a country and the potential that a given place can reach when young minds are stimulated in positive ways.

a. The Situation in Ethiopia

In the case of Ethiopia, several entities contribute consistently to the public education sector. Among them are: the national government, regional governments, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNICEF, the Ethiopian Education Fund, Children of Ethiopia Education Fund, (potentially other non-profit organizations,) and parents, both in money, as well as in services, labor, and kindness. Charting how much value each of these contributions and what percentage of support comes from each group is a rather difficult task in that certain variables, like time, are not easily calculated. For the sake of this analysis, however, I will

attempt to provide as much information as is available in determining the reach of the funds poured into the education pool by different groups.

With the help of the school-fee abolition program, Ethiopia's national government is in the process of applying a new formula for budgeting school costs. The program suggests that the country should aim to devote 20% of its national budget toward education, and of the 20% dedicated to education, 50% of that money should be invested in primary education, since this is where the foundations for learning begin. A reoccurring problem in this equation, however, is the salary of teachers: hiring additional teachers and/or giving teachers a salary raise is difficult to accomplish within the limited budget restraints. Because the Ethiopian government does have other concerns on its plate, much outside support is needed in order to ensure that all areas of concern are covered.⁶³

This is where non-governmental organizations come in. Programs like the Ethiopian Educational Fund select a region of Ethiopia to work with, and provide resources and opportunities to those students in the hopes of creating greater opportunities for success. This particular organization works with the former Kaffa province (now divided between Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regions) to: 1) provide one-year scholarships to students to pay for their books, school supplies, uniforms, and other costs associated with schooling; 2) give after-school tutoring to ensure classroom success; and 3) advocate for additional support and resources for under-served youth in this particular region of the country.⁶⁴ Because the Ethiopian Education Fund is a non-profit organization, all of its financial resources come from donations mostly given by non-Ethiopian residents. Similarly, because the organization currently only works with a specific population within the overall country, it is

⁶³ Oumer, Jeilu, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001825/182523e.pdf> (p 17-18)

⁶⁴ Ethiopian Education Fund, *What We Do*, <http://ethiopianeducationfund.org/about/> (Date accessed: February 2013).

difficult to quantify to what extent their financial contributions make in the grand scheme of education in Ethiopia at large.

Another non-profit organization that contributes to education is the Children of Ethiopia Education Fund, started by Norm and Ruthann Perdue to service the community of Kersa Elala. The goal of this organization is a little different, in that instead of donating money to the public education sector, the organization sponsors children to attend private schools that are less than \$200 a year, but expensive for many Ethiopian families to afford. The organization also maintains a primary focus of sponsoring girls' education, which is something that the national government has not set aside as a specific concern or in need of specialized attention.⁶⁵ Although this organization does not fall into the exact category of adding to public education in the traditional sense, it does do something for the public education sector in a less obvious way: it takes more students out of the public education system, allowing the government to provide better and increased resources to the students who are still enrolled.

If outside organizations are focusing on two things: 1) increasing the enrollment of the female population in schools, and 2) investing in quality private-school education, this alleviates the burden on the Ethiopian government to worry about these things, when, as previously mentioned, it has many other concerns to think about on a daily basis, such as famine elimination. Unfortunately, governments cannot tackle every single issue that every single citizen is facing, which is why non-profit organizations rise into action: to tackle some of the smaller concerns that can be addressed more easily with a concentrated group of people dedicated to a specific cause. By taking students out of the public education system and incorporating them into the private sector, the schools that the government subsidizes can use

⁶⁵ Children of Ethiopia Education Fund, *The History of COEEF...From The Beginning*, <http://www.coeef.org/about.html> (Date accessed: February 2013).

their budget to provide a better quality of education. The money can be used to hire qualified teachers, invest in recent materials, and finance a clean environment. It is the difference in allotting \$50,000 to 15,000 students versus allotting that same amount to 5,000 students; the fewer students, the more resources are able to be devoted to each child.

Finally, parents are another main contributor to public education, in that they pay taxes. However, because Ethiopia is trying to participate in the fee-free schooling, a key aspect of this plan is to eliminate the expense on parents. The issue remains that while tuition for school may be free of charge, financing books and school supplies is still an expense. In order to offset this cost, parents try to contribute to their children's educational experience in other ways. Some examples include: volunteering to paint the classroom walls, helping to fundraise for their children's supplies, and prepare lunches for the class. These are things that cannot be measured in terms of their quantitative input into education; however, they are just as essential in the progress of student learning and development as cash is.

b. The Situation in Costa Rica

For Costa Rica, the breakdown of government finance is more easily determined given that the Ministry of Education is the only national governmental vendor. (Recall that regional governments do not provide funding for public education.) That being said, Costa Rica's national government allocates approximately one fourth of its budget to education. Of that fourth, two-thirds are set aside for primary education. Similarly, about 4% of Costa Rica's Gross National Product is spent on education endeavors, which is much larger than any other Latin American country. The main reason for this is the previously mentioned fact that Costa Rica lacks a national military, therefore allowing the national budget to be spent on other aspects of state development. In 1995, government records listed that education was the second largest industry to receive government funding. It is also listed that the education system employs the most

people, amounting to approximately 28,000 employees. In order to pay everyone fairly and distribute money to the different areas within the education system, the Ministry has several branches, including: the “department of finance, teacher preparation, personnel, and the national library.” Each of the seven provinces also maintains its own school board with local administrators.⁶⁶

Non-profit organizations also give their support to the educational cause in various manners. One of these organizations is la Fundación Acción Joven. The purpose of this organization is to reduce middle school and high school dropout rates by pairing seventh graders and tenth graders with college student mentors to assist them with their studies, check in with them about school and home life, and encourage them to stay in school. The organization has been successful in reducing dropout rates across the country, so much so that neighboring countries are interested in implementing the program domestically. The purpose of la Fundación Acción Joven is to work with the public education school system and state-funded universities, as well as local companies and businesses to resolve the problem of high dropout rates and inequality in general between public and private schools. In this way, state-funded public education is improving with the assistance of non-governmental programs, showing that education is valued by other entities in the country who are dedicated to seeing a successful future for Costa Rica.⁶⁷

Once again, parent contributions cannot be overlooked, although they are not as clearly defined in terms of their specific percentage of contribution. Costa Rican parents are required to pay for books, uniforms, and transportation to and from school, which does rack up a high bill for Costa Rican families by the end of the academic school year. For this reason, many students

⁶⁶ Education Encyclopedia, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/301/Costa-Rica-ADMINISTRATION-FINANCE-EDUCATIONAL-RESEARCH.html>

⁶⁷ Fundación Acción Joven, <http://www.accionjoven.org/aboutus>, (Date accessed: February 2013).

do end up dropping out of school simply to find work to help support their families. Fortunately, with the aid of organizations like la Fundación these rates are steadily decreasing.

Curriculum Planning

This section will look more in depth at the intricacies of curricula planning. I will explore the thinking behind developing a national curriculum, the role of and downfalls to standardized testing, and the ways in which language does or does not pose a problem to creating a national curriculum. Exploring these themes will help me to assess the desired outcomes of education and whether having a national curriculum aids in domestic and international opportunity for educational and career success.

How is Curriculum Determined?

Once schools have been financed, qualified educators hired, and students enrolled, their next concern is determining what students will learn. Public education school systems tend to have a set of core learning objectives that all students within the country and/or region should be able to master by the end of completing their studies. How individual schools may go about teaching these lessons to students can range in a variety of ways. This connects to the idea of federalism once again, because centralized systems may require all schools in the country to teach lessons in the same manner, as is the case in Costa Rica, whereas decentralized systems may allow for greater individualization in lesson planning so long as core objectives are met, as can be seen in Ethiopia. This is an important difference because it illustrates varying means of attaining the same goal: to make sure that students are learned in a certain curriculum. This is type of de facto strategy implementation is one of the factors that make Ethiopia's and Costa Rica's school systems different in how they go about meeting national educational goals. In order for national governments to assess whether districts are successful in relaying information

to students, there must be some of type of evaluation to ensure quality education. This evaluation process will be discussed in the next subtopic.

Another reason that understanding curriculum determination is important ties in with its reflection of the influence of those entities donating resources to education. The money invested into education from various entities allows groups to have some power in determining what students will learn. For example, if the national government allocates the most resources to education it would also have the most say in what students will be taught. Another example of this is the power that parents who invest in private school education have. They are able to demand quality and sufficient resources for their children because they are making a huge financial investment into their children's education. Similarly, when non-governmental organizations make investments in specific causes, for example, female education, there are certain social interests that are being applied as well. Taking into account curriculum influence through financial investment, I will explore how curriculum is determined in Ethiopia and Costa Rica given their systems of decentralization and centralization respectively.

a. The Situation in Ethiopia

According to the Education Sector Development study in Ethiopia, when it comes to creating curriculum Ethiopian officials are interested in gearing educational outcomes and strategies toward answering the following questions: *do student learning outcomes prepare students for the workforce and future livelihood concerns? Are educational subjects and themes relevant to what students will need in the real world? What are students' needs and how can curriculum be prepared to address those needs? Does the curriculum foster studying, critical*

*thinking, and social skills? Are classroom materials (books, lesson plans, teacher knowledge, etc.) user-friendly to students and educators?*⁶⁸

With regard to the development of the content itself, this is often left to the national government to determine, highlighting the unitary aspect of Ethiopia's system; however, the decentralized aspect of the system allows individual regions to decide how to convey learning objectives to students. A general complaint in the area of curriculum on behalf of most regions is the idea that the content is "overloaded," meaning that there are too many objectives that the curriculum wishes to address and not enough time to give each of those objectives the attention that they deserve. Further, as has been noted throughout this study, issues of differing languages from one region to the next and the general lack of sufficient resources allotted to the public education system also play a role in making it difficult to teach curriculum successfully. Further, although higher enrollment rates are something sought after by the government, the consequent issue of over-crowded classrooms also poses a problem to effective teaching. In over-crowded classrooms it is difficult to ensure that every student is getting the individual attention that he/she needs in order to succeed in learning the necessary material.⁶⁹ All of these scenarios pose daily challenges for educators in trying to teach curriculum.

Implementing curriculum is not done over night. It must take into account: the total hours of the school day, student attendance, and teacher comfort with the material in order to adapt it for specific classes and students. In general, when class periods are short and school days are few, with students barely attending classes and teachers not feeling prepared to teach, students suffer. I mentioned briefly in the section on finance the idea that students go to school in "shifts,"

⁶⁸ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, Global Partnership Organization, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (Date accessed: March 2013) (p 29-30)

⁶⁹ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 33-34)

allowing them to both attend classes, as well as work part-time. Creating a schedule that allows students to be in school for part of their day and also work for a second part of their day inherently denotes that less time is spent in the classroom in order to accommodate for a sufficient amount of time to be devoted to another activity, in this case, working. This has an effect on student retention, because children are not absorbing the information over a long period of time, which is a necessary aspect of learning. In relation to this issue is the topic of student attendance. When students miss a significant amount of days from school, they get behind in their studies, making it easier to feel overwhelmed and unable to catch up, which leads to high dropout rates as a result of this feeling. Since there is pressure on children, especially in rural areas, to work and help support their families, staying in school is not always a top priority.⁷⁰

For teachers, one of the main challenges is finding new and innovative strategies of teaching students. Teachers have the responsibility of engaging students in topics and sparking their interest for wanting to learn new things. This is not always easy, especially when teachers do not feel comfortable owning the material. Every student has his/her own way of learning and teachers have to work with different learning styles to make sure that every student has a chance at success. The ability to adapt materials for certain audiences is an important quality to have as an educator, and it also has an effect on curriculum outcomes in that teachers who are able to adjust materials can ensure the understanding of all of their students. All of these issues directly impact curriculum. Ethiopian officials have to think about what educational outcomes they want to see for every citizen that will ultimately ensure their success in the workforce, as well as what factors might impede on effective curriculum implementation.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 34)

⁷¹ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 34)

b. The Situation in Costa Rica

When it comes to determining curriculum in Costa Rica, the national government is concerned with applying both philosophical and practical principles to the core curriculum in order to ensure academic and workforce success for students. The development of this type of educational system is the product of much legislation around the issue to make sure that what is being taught in the classroom is fundamental to all areas of development throughout life. That is to say that the curriculum wishes to foster overall human development and implement learning objectives that students can act upon outside of the classroom, as well as inside.⁷²

Further, Costa Rican officials have developed four main objectives for creating state curriculum: 1) to form patriotic citizens who are aware of their basic rights and freedoms, contain a strong sense of responsibility, and value the respect of human dignity; 2) to foster the holistic development of the individual personality; 3) to create citizens who participate in the democratic process by balancing individual interests with those of the community at large; and 4) to stimulate interest in human solidarity and understanding through cultural preservation, respect for history, and engagement in literature and philosophy. In short, the intention behind curriculum planning in Costa Rica is to develop socially engaged citizens who are well-rounded individuals and value diversity within community.⁷³ These curricular objectives are also dedicated to building up the nation as well. Costa Rica is unique in that it has thoroughly utilized its public education system to produce a strong citizenry and the foundations for nation-building.

On September 25, 1957, the General Law of Education was developed in the Costa Rican government, shifting curriculum development from individual regions to being the primary

⁷² División de Planeamiento y Desarrollo Educativo, National Information: The Development of Education in Costa Rica, Ministerio de Educación Pública, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/costarica_en.pdf (Date accessed: March 2013) (p 3)

⁷³ División de Planeamiento y Desarrollo Educativo, National Information: The Development of Education in Costa Rica, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/costarica_en.pdf (p 3)

responsibility of the national government to create. This is another example of the centralized aspect of Costa Rica's unitary system, where the division of responsibility between the national government and local governments is clear. The Fundamental Law of Education created by the national government expressed the philosophical-political agenda that the country has for educational outcomes through curricula planning. Prior to the creation of this law, the Costa Rican education system lacked strong principles, and clear goals and objectives for educators to achieve. This new system was developed with the intention of setting national standards for all schools to achieve, while still leaving room for teacher and regional creativity in administering material. Similarly, the system wishes to incorporate aspects of "formal" and "informal" learning, meaning that different styles of learning are taken into account.⁷⁴ The creation of this law is intriguing, because in general terms, countries move toward centralization over time; yet, in the case of Costa Rica, centralization in the public education sector took shape on a specific date in history!

As is the case in most countries, education is divided into separate age groups, such as pre-school, elementary school, middle school, high school, and higher learning (colleges and universities). What is interesting about the Costa Rican system, however, is that the pre-school level of education is also compulsory, whereas in many other countries this stage is considered optional and parents may choose to stay home with children during this time. Each level of development comes with its own educational standards of what students are expected to take away from their grade level. Again, child psychologists and educators come to the table to assist government officials with developing a core curriculum for all students of a particular age group.

⁷⁴ División de Planeamiento y Desarrollo Educativo, National Information: The Development of Education in Costa Rica, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/costarica_en.pdf (p 4)

Part of that curriculum includes a wide variety of topics to ensure the well-rounded aspect of citizenship previously mentioned, meaning that students will engage in courses on: Spanish, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Religion, Agriculture, Technology, Industrial Arts, Physical Education, and Music over the course of their careers as a student. These subjects are prioritized by daily importance in students' lives, which gives educators insight into how much class time to devote to each subject. For example, as it is important for students to be literate in the national language, Spanish classes are taken daily, whereas Agricultural lessons may be taken twice a week.⁷⁵ As we can see, much thought has been placed into the development of the Costa Rican education system and curricula planning.

Standardized Testing

For the previous mentioned reason of evaluating student retention and understanding of material, standardized testing has become a huge part of the learning process in that test scores are able to indicate where specific districts are in need of more support. The government is able to consider alternate methods of teaching students the necessary material through having an understanding of where regions lack proficiency in certain subjects. However, there are also many downfalls to standardized testing. One concern is the idea that teachers gear lesson plans solely toward the information necessary to pass state examinations. This is problematic because teachers should give students the tools to think critically about how to answer different types of questions. This would not only ensure that students are actually grasping the information, but it would also help them in the long run to know how to problem-solve, which will continue to show up in their educational careers, as well as their lives in general. Educators need to be in the business of teaching students the skills to succeed, rather than teaching just to pass the test.

⁷⁵ División de Planeamiento y Desarrollo Educativo, National Information: The Development of Education in Costa Rica, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/costarica_en.pdf (p 7-10)

A second concern of standardized testing is that it does not consider or incorporate varying learning styles into its assessment. That is to say that some students do not test well, however, they are amazing at verbal articulation of what they have learned. Some students are better at expressing themselves through written work or artistic expression, and yet some are still better at calculations and mathematical equations. Standardized tests do not examine these different styles of learning which can skew results of bright students to seem lackluster on paper. This is dangerous because the test indicates that only a certain style of learning is valued, and anyone who is not able to show what he/she has learned in this one way is not coherent by standard evaluation. This demonstrates a lack of respect for diverse learning styles and expression of learning as well.

Finally, a third issue of standardized testing is that it does not take into account the resources, or lack thereof, available to certain regions. In areas where there are few resources—classroom supplies, books, sufficient teachers for the number of students—test scores are bound to be lower than in regions more financially stable. This is an occurrence that a test would not necessarily be able to pick up on. Those looking at the tests would have to have an additional document that notes the student to teacher ratio, the regional budget for education, and the quality of classroom materials and resources in order to fairly judge the scores of one region to the next. Once again, the results of the test could misrepresent the circumstances of the province. All of the above listed factors can lead to low test scores in certain regions over other regions. Similarly, test results may not certainly be representative of the reality of student learning and retention in certain places, simply because there are a variety of variables that the test itself cannot account for.

How does Language Effect Curriculum Setting?

Language is a factor that not all countries have to consider when creating curriculum or even creating other national documents, such as public signs and government documents accessible to the general population. However, in countries where multiple languages exist, this is something that governments do have to think about.

a. The Situation in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a prime example of one such country. As noted in the introduction, over ten officially recognized languages exist within the country, meaning that public institutions have to take into account the linguistic diversity of the nation. One way of addressing this concern is through declaring an official national language and encouraging everyone to be proficient verbally, as well as in written-work. Having a singular national language allows uniformity across the country while also providing the space for alternate identities to exist in the form of language. However, this is not a fool-proof solution to Ethiopia's language barriers and the national government does face difficulties with regard to language when attempting to create a singular national curriculum.

Ethiopia's decentralized system tackles this issue in a few manners. Although the national policy (especially geared toward primary education) is to encourage teaching in the mother-tongue—Amharic—regions do have the freedom to develop curriculum in the relevant regional language as they see fit. This freedom has caused its own set of problems, however, because regions are in different stages of developing their policies surrounding language of instruction. These outstanding issues are thus affecting the ability to educate the population using the national curriculum.⁷⁶ Further, it is an issue of federalism once again. There is a national

⁷⁶ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 32)

curriculum that needs to be taught, and decentralization allows for regions to think through their specific circumstances in relaying that information to students; yet, the issue of creating a single national language is still present. *How can the government utilize decentralization to ensure student success while still encouraging a singular national language in which all are literate?*

A similar area of concern in this topic is the fact that in some regions where classes are conducted in the national language, students are suffering because it may not be the first or primary language of the majority of students. Not only do students have to try to understand the new material that they are learning in class, but they also have the added stress of trying to translate the material in their heads to make sense of it. There is currently little support for this population of students who are being asked to learn another language in order to succeed in school. In the United States, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes are developed for students for whom English is not their primary tongue, thus allowing individual attention for grasping both the material and the language of instruction.⁷⁷ This is a resource that governments should provide when there are multiple languages in a country but there is one that the government wants everyone to be literate in. Without government support for students, the bill falls to parents to hire tutors to assist their children in learning a new language. As has been mentioned several times, parents simply do not have the resources to invest in personal tutors.

One attempt at overcoming the language obstacle is the idea of introducing a completely different language that no one is better in than another because it is not a national language, thus cutting back on inequality of opportunity for advancement based on circumstance. The language of choice is English; many schools are trying the idea of teaching students in English from the primary level in order to both increase English-learning since it is becoming the “language of

⁷⁷ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 32)

business” and place all students on an equal playing field of entering the classroom with the same knowledge (or lack thereof). The problem, however, is that test scores reveal that students taught in their mother-tongue (if it is different than the national language, Amharic) perform significantly better on exams than those students taught in any foreign language, be it Amharic, English, or otherwise. This is to be expected, as retention is directly correlated with understanding. Also, many of the teachers do not feel properly equipped to educate in English, which further reinforces the ineffective quality of classroom instruction in languages foreign to students (whether the language be English or that of another Ethiopian region).⁷⁸

The issue of language instruction has been correlated with student success and equity within education. Students who are taught in their mother-tongue are proven to be more likely to be successful on exams, whereas students who are taught in a language that they are not familiar with do poorly on exams covering the same material that they may have been successful in had instruction been conducted in a language they knew intimately.⁷⁹ These are issues that regions have the power to control given the decentralized nature of the Ethiopian educational system. Although it may require additional efforts, it is possible to take the national curriculum and translate it into languages that students are able to understand. This goal can be achieved simultaneously with teaching students the national language. Core classes should be taught in the regional language, with an additional class on Amharic grammar and literacy skills to ensure the best of both worlds—students are successful in learning the national curriculum, as well as gaining proficiency in the national language. This would ensure that neither goal is compromised.

⁷⁸ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 33)

⁷⁹ Joint Review Mission, Ethiopia: Education Sector Development Programme II, http://www.globalpartnership.org/media/library/Ethiopia_joint_review_report_end2006.pdf (p 33)

b. The Situation in Costa Rica

While there are ten recognized languages present in Costa Rica, the overwhelming majority of the population is literate in the national language of Castilian Spanish and many of those who do speak another language are also fluent in Spanish. Of the ten languages, one is institutional—Spanish, three are “developing,” two are “vigorous,” two are “in trouble,” and two are dying.⁸⁰ Thus determining the language of instruction is not an overarching issue in Costa Rica as it is in Ethiopia. However, while language instruction is not a primary concern, the Costa Rican government does want to give credence to schools for the Indigenous populations to maintain their mother-tongues as well. This is fascinating as it is the opposite situation that Ethiopia faces. Costa Rica is attempting to add linguistic and cultural diversity, where Ethiopia is overwhelmed by it!

This has manifested into the creation of Indigenous schools, who alongside following the basic national curriculum, also incorporate an additional component to constitute “Indigenous studies.” These components include courses in the regional native tongue, Indigenous culture, and environmental education. An itinerant teacher is asked to come in to lead a three-hour per week class on native language. A community member instructs two weekly lessons on Indigenous culture, and the regular teacher assigns projects on the environment.⁸¹ Creating such a program assists in keeping Indigenous languages and cultures alive, since they are a part of Costa Rican history and culture. While the other core courses are taught in Spanish, students are still able to learn in their native tongues without compromising their understanding of the national curriculum.

⁸⁰ Ethnologue: Languages of the World, *Costa Rica*, SIL International Publications, 2013, <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/CR> (Date accessed: March 2013).

⁸¹ División de Planeamiento y Desarrollo Educativo, National Information: The Development of Education in Costa Rica, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/costarica_en.pdf (p 11)

What is the Desired End Result of Education?

In reviewing the previous sections on curriculum development, the importance of education in general, and the national challenges faced by each respective country in this analysis, it is easy to conclude that there are several desired outcomes of the educational process that both Ethiopia and Costa Rica have in mind. Of those desired outcomes include: reducing poverty and government dependence by adequately preparing students for the workforce, stimulating a healthy domestic and foreign economy, increasing enrollment rates and keeping students in school, improving overall literacy rates in the national language, creating a well-rounded and invested citizenry, and developing a national identity and a strong sentiment of patriotism from an early age. These goals are not uncommon to most of the world, because countries should be invested in developing happy citizens who are proud to be from their nations.

How countries go about achieving these goals has been the premise of this section on curriculum. Schools are the second place (first being the home) where children and young adults will spend the majority of their time. This means that educators have an enormous influence on young people and the ways that they think about the world. The responsibility is vast and to be taken seriously. For this reason, national governments (at least in theory) invest a good portion of time and consideration into creating a curriculum that will meet the goals mentioned above. However, there are many threats to achieving those above goals faced on a daily basis. Some of those threats include: limited resources to devote toward education, unqualified teachers, low enrollment rates coupled with high dropout rates, and the general inability to effectively teach national curriculum for various reasons that many public educational school systems are facing.

The inability to teach curriculum for whatever reason, is a huge problem because it affects the achievement of the desired outcomes of education. When the desired goals are not met, this is a real concern and failure on behalf of the government toward its citizens. In order to

go backward and remedy the problem, more social welfare programs have to be put into place to fight what could have been prevented in the first place. In other words, if more funding and resources were poured into education on the front end of the issue by financing quality primary education institutions, then governments would not have to supply as much safety-net programming on the back end to make up for the failure of the education system in the long term.

An example of this type of prevention programming would be to provide the financial support to create successful schools that keep students motivated and coming to school upfront, which would in turn lead to higher graduation rates and greater matriculation into the tertiary level of education. Students who then graduate from college should, in an ideal situation, enter into a stable economy where they are able to find jobs/careers to support themselves and their future families. The economy is perceived to be stable because the government would have been able to allocate funds to varying dimensions of the market instead of recycling funds back into individual families through government assistance. Granted, there are people who will always be in need of support from the government and at varying times due to the nature of life circumstances. However, the more people that can support themselves financially, the less people the government has to think about in this field, allowing the government to spend time focusing its attentions on other aspects of country development. Another example of prevention programming is to make the investment in quality teacher training from the beginning. Teachers are the source for students to derive information. If they are confident in what they are teaching, there is no way that students will grasp the material and be expected to succeed. There must first be an investment in creating qualified teachers who will be able to produce the successful students that school systems desire.

On the other hand, poor education systems lead to low enrollment statistics, high dropout rates, and unsatisfactory overall preparation for entering the workforce. This in turn leads to unqualified people to take the positions necessary in creating a strong economy, such as technological developers and environment preservationists. As a result of the lack of qualified workers for in-demand positions, more people will fall into the realm of unemployment and will be seeking financial support from the government to take care of their basic needs. The resources poured into creating this overwhelming safety net to support the majority of the population will lead to a deteriorating domestic and foreign market. This is due to resources being devoted toward the idea of not allowing individual people to fail as opposed to encouraging individuals to invest in their own success and allowing the government to focus on the success of the country as a whole.

Does Curriculum Create Better Job Opportunity?

One of the core issues tackled in this overall analysis on education in the developing world is the correlation between educational goals and a country's economic status both domestically and in the global market. Similarly, I have determined that one of the core concerns linked with education is the creation of a stable domestic economy where citizens are able to access jobs that will bolster the economy, as well as encourage financial independence from the state. In the section on curriculum development, we observe that one of the desired outcomes of education is a curriculum that prepares students for the job market by creating well-rounded individuals and invested citizens. In these ways, one can see that the creation of a national curriculum with explicit goals is a key factor in the promotion of greater career opportunities. Similarly, a large part of the educational process is about shaping students to be active world citizens with the ability to appreciate knowledge from a variety of diverse fields. Schools are in

the business of teaching life skills—interpersonal, academic, social, emotional, etc. They are invested in the holistic growth of students, which includes their professional success.

When education from an early age is geared toward exposing students to the available resources for advancing the country, this is in reality preparing students to invent and/or take on the jobs that will be needed in the future to progress the country. In other words, giving students the necessary skills to identify problems and critically think about how to solve and address them using the current technologies will place students in a position to take on these career positions. An example of this type of educational exposure that provides greater opportunity for success in the job market is internet access. Although it seems intuitive because Americans take internet access for granted, the ability to use the internet to connect with people from around the world and gain information on a variety of subjects is an amazing facet to accessing the international market. Developing skills in this area of technology, as well as professional skills, is preparing students from a young age to use what is available to them and improve upon those structures already in place to advance their country's economy. These are skills that can be applied to any area of work.

These trends show that a core goal in the creation of national curriculum is to prepare students directly for the job market, both domestically and internationally. However, while this may be the goal in mind, it is clear from examining Gross Domestic Product that some countries are more advanced in this field than others. This fact allows countries to have something to strive for, and as mentioned in the introductory chapter, each country's accomplishments must be examined through the lens of its particular circumstances, be they historical or present-day challenges. Viewing Ethiopia's progress and Costa Rica's progress separately in this light will give each country's accomplishments and goals more meaning by individualizing their concerns.

To conclude and recapitulate some of the highlights of this chapter, I want to point out the link between finance and curriculum planning and how these goals are achieved in Ethiopia and Costa Rica respectively. Primary public education is funded directly by the government, as well as by parents, international organizations in the case of Ethiopia, and local organizations in the case of Costa Rica. In both countries, it is the primary responsibility of the national government to fund public education, however where Costa Rica's regional governments are not allowed to participate in financing this sector, Ethiopia's regional governments do have the ability to do so.

When it comes to planning curriculum, both countries are concerned with increasing enrollment statistics, but also keeping those students in school. Curriculum tends to be created with the goals of creating nationalized citizens and preparing students for the workforce. Many challenges impede upon these goals daily in both countries, some examples being: unqualified teachers, overcoming language barriers, and having relevant classroom materials. For Ethiopia, a large concern is education not being one of the foremost concerns of the government at this time and resources not being evenly distributed between regions. For Costa Rica, the main concerns today are keeping students engaged in classes and reducing dropout rates due to issues of poverty and lack of opportunity.

There are many issues within the public education system that exist in both countries; yet there is just as much hope for a brighter tomorrow through hard work, focus, and dedication to enhancing educational standards and products through small interventions. Education must take precedence in a national government's overall concerns for the country, because without an educated population the future for Ethiopia and Costa Rica are bleak. The children truly are the future of the country, and their education is something that should be taken seriously by all parties involved.

Conclusion

Returning to our two main characters, Ermias and Sol, we can see throughout the research that Ethiopia and Costa Rica are in very different places with regard to their educational systems and provide very different circumstances for Ermias and Sol to develop in. Yet both students are striving for the same success and access of opportunity for themselves and their peers as any other student in any other country is. This idea ties back into the original concept of universality—the fact that despite the differences in circumstances that allow people to succeed at faster rates than others, the initial desire to do so resides in all of us.

For individual countries, measuring that success must take into account the historical, social, and economic factors that have placed it where it is currently, especially with regard to its educational status. This will allow for a more accurate analysis of a country's present educational status and the means by which it should attempt to reach its goals. It will also help narrow what goals the government should be focusing the majority of their time and resources on. For example: Ethiopia's government is concerned with increasing literacy rates in the national language by having more students permanently enrolled in the public school system. Costa Rica's government is concerned with decreasing the high dropout rates by providing the support and resources necessary for students to stay in school and continue their education.

Throughout this study, I have examined the historical background of these countries in an attempt to understand their impact on present-day national, structural, and economic challenges that affect the public education system. I have looked at finance in order to determine how much financial influence various entities such as national and local governments, as well as parents and outside donors have in the education system. I have reviewed the formation of national curricula, looking at what inputs governments are concerned with in order to receive the outcomes desired

for education. The challenges that impede on the implementation of curricula have also been reviewed, including: regional language barriers, the creation of a national identity through the school system, and whether a unified curriculum has the ability to increase career success domestically and internationally. All of these lenses for looking at education have sought to answer the larger question of addressing educational equity and equality across regional confines within a given country.

As both Ethiopia and Costa Rica's education systems follow a *unitary system*, meaning that the central government is supreme and local governments can only exercise the power given to them through the central government, one of the main criteria to evaluate them on was the de facto circumstance of how they delegate those powers to regional governments in the case of education. By the nature of Ethiopia's many ethnic tribes and linguistic diversity, it would only make sense for it to be a *decentralized* system where regional governments had the ability to make decisions and translate curricula as they see fit. Costa Rica, on the other hand, had the leeway to follow a *centralized* system due to its cohesive nature with regard to language and cultural makeup, meaning that power was more concentrated with the national government's standards and regional governments following suit.

Ethiopia and Costa Rica proved to be outstanding subjects for this case study, as they posed almost a complete opposite set of circumstances in comparison with one another. Where Costa Rica lacked major diversity and chose to implement indigenous studies into the daily curricula, Ethiopia was overwhelmed with the linguistic and cultural makeup of the country to the point that finding a single national language to educate students in successfully is a continued problem. Where Costa Rica fully utilized the education system to be a primary means for creating nationalized students from a very young age, Ethiopia struggles with getting people out of the mindset of ethnic alliance and looking at the bigger picture of Ethiopian identity. In the

centralization of Costa Rica's educational system is the opportunity for success from one school to the next, while the decentralized aspect of Ethiopia's system entails that from one school to the next students can encounter a completely different curriculum based on linguistic classroom challenges. The responsibility of financial support flowing into Costa Rican public schools through the national government versus international support becoming a primary source of school funding in Ethiopia presented another interesting comparison. A surprising discovery of my research on Ethiopia was the degree to which international non-governmental organizations play a role in financing public education. This finding was one that challenged the idea of federalism and the division between national and local governments, because an added international influence was also a huge contributor. Overall, Ethiopia and Costa Rica provided varying scenarios to evaluate them on and provided for an interesting comparison not only of their education systems, but along the lines of how their countries operate as a whole.

What I took away from my research, and what I hope readers did as well, is that education must be personalized. We must see the disparities of other countries, as well as our own, as a threat to humanity and to the progression of our world. I say this because if we do not invest in our youth and provide quality education for them despite where they live or what language they speak within a certain region of their country, then we are ultimately not investing in the future of our world. Our generation can only do so much, and part of our responsibility is to pass along the skills and tools needed for the next generation to go further than we are able to. We should take away that education has both private and social values entailing that individuals are happier when they are educated, because opportunities expand for personal success. Similarly, governments are happier when individuals are educated, because they can focus their energies on other aspects of creating a strong state as opposed to providing a safety net for capable individuals.

In my introduction I outlined the two main questions that my research wishes to answer: *How do economic status, funding of education, and curricula planning determine educational equality within a country despite location? How do economic status, funding of education, and curricula planning determine educational success for a country in a global market?* I mentioned that I would use the de facto circumstance of centralization versus decentralization within a unitary system to evaluate the effectiveness of each in achieving the goals of quality and equality as applied to education accessibility and opportunity enhancement. Having completed my research, I feel in a better position to provide possible responses to these initial questions, as well as further questions to ponder in this discussion of education in the developing world.

In the case of Ethiopia, economic status, education funding, and curricula planning played a huge role in whether the quality of education was the same from one region to the next, as well as whether equality of education was fair despite location within the country. As mentioned many times throughout my research, financial resources are distributed to different regions with huge bias attached. Politicians are constantly looking out for their ethnic/tribal groups based on region as opposed to worrying about Ethiopians as a whole. This entails that the ethnic group of whoever is in political office at the time will receive the most funding. This is where international organizations try to redistribute funds by going into specific regions to address their monetary concerns. Similarly, Ethiopia's national government expresses other more urgent concerns, such as famine reduction as being the main area in need of funding. This often times suggests that more involved topics like education get put on the backburner because there are so many issues surrounding curriculum in general that it just feels like an overwhelming task for the national government to address in the short term. These realities set the foundation of an unequal public education system from one region to the next, which does affect peoples' daily lives and their chances at opportunity domestically, as well as internationally.

For Costa Rica this same criteria of evaluating economic status, education funding, and curricula planning linked to their role in creating a quality system of education from one region to the next, along with equality of education has proven less problematic. Due to Costa Rica's lack of a national military, many of the resources that would be spent in this area have been redirected toward the public education system. Similarly, while Costa Rica is still considered "developing" economically, overall it is doing pretty well and has managed a national budget that invests greatly into the public education system. The funding that comes from the national government, along with the resource support from local organizations has it made it possible for public schools to generally be on the same playing field. The issue with public education is the quality of it in comparison with its private school counterparts. However, this is separate from whether regional public schools are less well-off than their counterparts in another region. Of course, when it comes to funding there are certain provinces that are more financially stable than others, but the ability to maintain curriculum from one school to the next has been an accomplishable goal for Costa Rican schools. In theory, the public education system creates the opportunity for educational and career success both domestically and internationally that it strives for; however, we must remember that there are always flaws in the system and students who will fall through the cracks.

On the issue of centralization versus decentralization within unitary systems, I think that it is important to evaluate the nature and makeup of the specific country in question to determine first whether centralization is the strategy to follow for obtaining national goals, or if decentralization would prove more successful. From what I can see, I would argue that the centralized aspect of Costa Rica's system is what has allowed it to be so successful educationally; however, I cannot overlook the factors that push Ethiopia toward choosing a

decentralized system of implementation, nor can I suggest that if Ethiopia were to follow a centralized system that it would automatically gain more success in this area.

Quality education is developed through the collaboration of many people. It takes the work of a variety of professionals to determine desired outcomes and brainstorm means of attaining those outcomes. *Equality* within education derives from recognizing that every individual has the right to learn and be taught from the best of educators. When our world decides to stop taking arbitrary factors such as: language, religion, racial/ethnic background, and regional placement as a means of discrimination, then we can enter into a world where access to educational resources and opportunity *can* be on an equal playing field for all.

Given the information presented in this study, I leave you to ponder what might happen to Ermias and Sol; where they might end up educationally and career wise, based on the circumstances presented in their countries. I leave you to seriously think about what your role is in changing the statistics; not necessarily for children in foreign countries, but to personalize this issue and bring it home. *What can we do to ensure quality education and equal opportunity of access for our own children in the United States? How might our choices affect the global market if we do not take personal responsibility for investing in the education of our youth, our future?* If you leave with nothing else about the specific circumstances in Ethiopia and Costa Rica, let you at least leave with the desire to do more for today's youth.

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