



Review Paper

Impact of Cultural Diversity in the Society With Reference To Ethiopia: A Preliminary Review

Sempon Sathish. H,

Assistant Professor, Department of Management, College of Business and Economics, Debremarkos University, Debremarkos, Ethiopia.

Abstract

Multiculture nature of our society has been ignored. Most countries have been failing to recognize the enriching value of diverse cultures. Ethiopia is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse. It is tempting to deny this diversity consciously or unconsciously. Cultural diversity is now a fact of life in today's 'Global village'. Many people have been experiencing the negative effect of the cultural diversity. However, this paper will focus on the cultural dimension, giving special attention to the impact of cultural diversity on Ethiopia.

Keywords: Multi Culture, cultural industry, conflict, linguistic, arms, development

Introduction

Nature of the culture

A large part of the study of culture involves discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances, and for what reasons. These definitions are used, changed and sometimes fall into disuse. In fact, there is not much point I am trying to say what culture is? What can be done, nevertheless, is to say what culture does, and how does culture do it. Cultures are deployed differentially and it takes different meanings in other histories and in other places. For e.g. Ethiopia is multicultural and constitution reflects this. Virtually everywhere, from all sides in law, politics in the press and from the public channels of communication. We know that Ethiopia is composed of many cultures, and that those cultures are the product and properties of different people. But this notion distorts the nature of culture. This notion needs to be corrected in order to understand what culture is and what it does. For e.g. in 1950 the South African freedom charter stated firmly that different people of South Africa will be free to develop their own cultures. Culture is some kind of information that human beings are not born with but they need in order to interact with each other in social life.

Ethiopia is a land of plenty with a long and noble history giving rise to ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. It is the only African country never to have been colonized. It has more than 80 unique rich ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. Ethiopia is renowned for its distinctive Christian tradition and association with the Ark of the Covenant. It offers the most dramatic scenery of unsurpassed grandeur (i.e. Simien Mountains National Park), unique rock-hewn churches, the spectacular Blue Nile Falls, the Great Rift Valley, the Danakil Depression, imperial castles, monuments of an ancient civilization linked with the legend of the Queen of Sheba. There are influences from Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, India, and Italy. There are also other influences in the cuisine, music, and religion. Among many traditional customs, respect (especially of one's elders) is important. The major mixes of Ethiopian tradition are:

Music

The music of Ethiopia is extremely diverse, with each of Ethiopia's ethnic groups being associated with unique sounds. Some forms of traditional music are strongly influenced by folk music from elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia. However, Ethiopian religious music also has an ancient Christian element, traced to Yared, who lived during the reign of Gabra Masqal. In northeastern Ethiopia, in Wollo, a Muslim musical form called manzuma developed. Sung in Amharic, manzuma has spread to Harar and Jimma, where it is now sung in the Oromo language. In the Ethiopian Highlands, traditional secular music is played by itinerant musicians called *azmaris*, who are regarded with both suspicion and respect in Ethiopian society.

Clothing

Women's traditional clothes in Ethiopia are made from cloth called *shemma* and used to make *habeshaqemis*: it is basically cotton cloth, about 90 cm wide, woven in long strips which are then sewn together. Men wear pants and a knee-length shirt with a white collar, and perhaps a sweater. Men often wear knee-high socks, while women might not wear socks at all. Men as well as women wear shawls, the *neTela*. In cities and towns, western clothes are popular, though on special occasions, such as New Year (*Enkutatash*),

Christmas (*Genna*) or weddings, some wear traditional clothes. Often, a woman will cover her head with a *shash*, a cloth that is tied at the neck. *Shama* and *kuta*, gauze-like white fabrics, are often used. This is common among both Muslim and Christian women. Elderly women will wear a sash on a day-to-day basis, while other women only wear a sash also called a *netela* while attending church.

Cuisine

An Ethiopian woman while preparing Ethiopian coffee at a traditional ceremony roasts, crushes and brews the coffee on the spot. The cuisine of Ethiopia consists of various vegetable or meat side dishes and entrees, often prepared as a *wat* or thick stew. One or more servings of *wat* are placed upon a piece of injera, a large sourdough flatbread, which is 50 cm (20 inches) in diameter and made out of fermented teff flour. One does not eat with utensils, but instead uses injera (always with the right hand) to scoop up the entrees and side dishes. Traditional Ethiopian food does not use any pork or seafood (aside from fish), as most Ethiopians have historically adhered to Islam, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, or Judaism, all of which prohibit eating pork. Additionally, throughout a given year, Orthodox Christians observe numerous fasts (such as Lent), during which food is prepared without any meat or dairy products. Another food eaten in Ethiopia is Doro wat, which is chicken stew with hard boiled eggs.

Sports

Track and field is Ethiopia's most successful sport, in which they have won many medals in the Olympic Games. Football is the most popular sport in Ethiopia. Despite lack of success by the national team, it is supported by a significant part of the population.

Media

Radio and television are under the control of the Ethiopian government. There are nine radio broadcast stations, eight AM and one shortwave, licensed to operate. Major daily newspapers include *Addis Zemen*, the *Daily Monitor*, and the *Ethiopian Herald*. There is also a small but lively film industry.

Language

The official language in Ethiopia is the Amharic language, a Semitic language which is spoken by 21,631,370 people or 29.33% of the population (2.7 million expatriate). Amharic is written with the Ge'ez script, which derives its name from the ancient Semitic Ge'ez language. However, the largest language in Ethiopia is the Oromo language, a Cushitic language spoken by 33.8% of the population. The Tigrinya language is related to Amharic, but mostly spoken in northern Ethiopia in the state of Tigray.

Religion

About 62% of the population adheres to Christianity, which is Ethiopia's main religion. About 30-35% of the population are Muslim, with other religions covering another 4-5%.

“Cultural Diversity and its Effects” A View

Social scientists have suggested that cultural diversity in a nation leads to societal instability. However, societal instability may be affected not only by within-nation, but also diversity between a nation and its neighbors. It is also necessary to distinguish different domains of diversity, namely linguistic, ethnic and religious, and to distinguish between the direct effects of diversity on societal instability, and effects that are mediated by economic conditions. Results show that different types and domains of diversity have interacting effects. Linguistic diversity has a negative effect on economic performance and the higher the linguistic diversity among nations in a region, the less stable the nation. But, religious diversity has the opposite effect, reducing instability, particularly in the presence of high linguistic diversity.

Cultural Industry and its importance

The cultural industries are those activities which deal primarily in symbolic goods whose primary economic value is derived from their cultural value. We shall look at how this definition affects the practices and dynamics of this sector in a moment. This definition then includes what have been called the ‘classical’ cultural industries – broadcast media, film, publishing, recorded music, design, architecture, new media – and the ‘traditional arts’ – visual art, crafts, theatre, music theatre, concerts and performance, literature, museums and galleries – all those activities which have been eligible for public funding as ‘art’. There are certainly divisions between these two categories – but a line between ‘art’ and ‘commerce’ is ideological and not analytical. There is no way in which the classical music world, though in receipt of enormous public subsidy, cannot be considered deeply commercial. It merely responds to commerce in a particular way. Similarly, though aiming to ‘make it’ at some point, calling struggling pop musicians ‘commercial’ is to misunderstand a lot of what they do. The distribution of funds in these two areas is different – one relies on ‘the market’, the other on a bureaucratic system of attributing value, and thus money. But the difference is not as fundamental as has been claimed. Both deal in symbolic value whose ultimate test is within a circuit of cultural value which, whether mediated by market or bureaucracy, relies on a wider sense of it as meaningful, pleasurable, beautiful etc.

How it is diverse?**Disbandment of the dictatorship**

The right to self-determination is clearly provided for under article 39 and nine regional states were created based on cultural and linguistic categories. The nine regional states that were newly created are Harari, Benshangul Gumuz, Oromiya, Gambela, Somali, SNNP (Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples), Amhara, Afar and Tigray. Multiethnic cities and towns namely the capital Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa fall within the federal jurisdiction. Ethiopian federalism empowers the regions with extensive symmetrical autonomy and rights. Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the world. It is a diverse country with more than 80 nations, nationalities and peoples. There are also numerous religious groups with Christian, Islamic, Judaic and animist roots. Christianity and Islam were introduced into Ethiopia during 300 A.D and 700 A.D. respectively. Despite its long history and cultural diversity, however, Ethiopia's past is profoundly rooted in dictatorial and totalitarian traditions. Minorities and non-Christians were excluded from power and were often neglected. During the 20th century particularly in the consecutive imperial rules of Emperor Menelik and Emperor Haile Selassie, the modern Ethiopian state was based on political centralism and cultural assimilations. Its socio-political system was based on an archaic feudal system which entrenched ethnic and religious discrimination and inequality. These policies and practices continued unabated during the military dictatorship known as the Dergue which, through a long-drawn liberation struggle spearheaded by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) was removed in May 1991. The disbandment of the dictatorship has become the first step in attempting to reduce the instability in the country.

Dissatisfaction in using their own languages

Nations, nationalities and peoples now exercise their unfettered right to use their own languages. The Constitution defines nations, nationalities and peoples as groups inhabiting a contiguous geographical area sharing similar linguistic, cultural, historical and psychological makeup. The existence of more than seventy languages has been another barrier to social communication and national integration. The imperial government, recognizing the importance of a national language, adopted Amharic as the official tongue. The use of Amharic became mandatory in government, education, radiobroadcasts, and newspapers. But the government's promotion of Amharic entailed the suppression of other major languages, which aroused opposition and accusations of cultural imperialism. Language policy changed under the Mengistu regime, which attempted to reverse the trend by dropping Amharic as a requirement in schools for non-Amharic speakers. The new policy recognized several languages widely spoken in specific areas--such as Oromo, Tigrinya, Welamo, and Somali--for use in schools at the lower levels. Addis Ababa also authorized the use of the five languages mentioned above, as well as Afar, in radiobroadcasts and literacy campaigns. Nevertheless, Amharic remained the language of government, and anyone who aspired to a national role had to learn to speak and write Amharic. The constitutional jurisprudence which has grown through the functions of the House of Federation and other constitutional organs indicates that all categories of groupings enjoy identical entitlements. The constitution clearly provides that sovereignty resides in nations, Nationalities and peoples. As previously noted, previous linguistic and cultural policy alienated various groups by denying them the use of their languages. Currently, every nation, nationality or people have the right to use its own language within its region. Federal public broadcasting services now have programs in some of the main languages in the country. Regional and community broadcasting services promote broadcasting in minority languages in various regions in the country. Each regional state is empowered to choose languages for instruction in primary schools. Municipalities, Zones, Weredas and districts are also empowered to be involved in such process. Due to lack of resources, absence of writing system and other factors, originally several communities continued to use Amharic as a medium of instruction. Based on the Federal Educational Sector Development program, both the federal and regional governments are committing resources to help communities acquire sufficient capacity to use their own languages as a medium of instruction.

Inadequate Development and the threat in the societies:

The Ethiopian Government has a strongly held position that low level of socio-economic development not only generates conflicts but also creates conditions in which they thrive and are protracted. In the Ethiopian lowlands where significant number of conflicts occurs, lack of development has been a contributing factor to intermittent tensions. The Government thus has ensured that its economic policies and programs are geared towards achieving a fast and sustainable economic development by giving a special focus to those underprivileged areas. The Government's economic policies and programs are premised on reducing and alleviating poverty as a matter of priority. As such agriculture assumes a central element of its development policies. Government expenditure on pro-poor sectors such as education, health, agriculture, food security etc has shown remarkable increase. Exports have also registered phenomenal growth. Constitutionally land belongs to 'nations, nationalities and peoples' and the Government Administers it on their behalf. Lack of specific property regime has been a source of disputes and localized conflicts for long. Currently regional states in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) have introduced land proclamations which Allow the issuance of property certificates thereby ensuring land tenure and reducing disputes. Illegal cross-border trafficking of small arms and their proliferation contributed negatively to local tensions. Increased availability of smaller arms has fuelled local conflicts among the various ethnic groups. In Southern Omo, numerous individuals have access to small arms from Southern Sudanese rebel groups. When the military junta was overthrown in 1991, its soldiers left countless small arms to peasants and pastoralists. The

Government continues to work to regulate small arms and minimize their impact on community relationships. Ethiopia's ethnic and cultural diversity has affected social relations.

Different people and the religious impact

Most lowland people are geographically and socially isolated from the highland population. Moreover, rural inhabitants, who constitute about 89 percent of the total population, generally live their lives without coming into contact with outsiders. Exposure to other ethnic groups usually occurs by means of relatively limited contact with administrators, tax collectors, and retail merchants. By contrast, the towns are a mosaic of social and ethnic diversity. Since the early 1940s, towns fulfilling administrative and economic functions have proliferated. In Addis Ababa, it is common for families and groups from disparate social and economic classes to live side by side. Only in recent years, with unprecedented urbanization, have upper-income residential zones emerged. Smaller urban centers have tended to be fairly homogeneous in ethnic and religious makeup. But with increasing urbanization, towns are expected to be the scene of increased interaction among different ethnic groups and social classes. Traditionally, among the most important factors in social relations in Ethiopia has been religion. Ethiopian emperors nurtured the country's identity with Christianity, although there were at least as many Muslims as Christians in the country. Although the imperial regime did not impose Orthodox Christianity on Muslims and pagans, very few non-Christians held high positions in government and the military. In many cases, Muslims gravitated to commerce and trade, occupations relatively untainted by religious discrimination. The Mengistu regime downplayed the role of religion in the state's life and disestablished the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Moreover, the 1987 constitution guaranteed freedom of religion. In principle, all religions had equal status in relation to the state. Muslims live throughout Ethiopia, but large concentrations can be found in Bale, Eritrea, Harerge, and Welo. Muslims also belong to many ethnic groups, a factor that may prevent them from exerting political influence commensurate with their numbers. Centuries of conflict between the Christian kingdom and its Muslim antagonists, recent apprehensions about Arab nationalism, and Arab support for Eritrean separatism and Somali irredentism all continue to perpetuate Ethiopian historical fears of "Islamic encirclement." Such historically rooted religious antagonism has persisted in creating a social barrier between Christians and Muslims. Those who profess traditional religious beliefs are interspersed among Christians and Muslims. Such groups include the Sidama, the Gurage, the Oromo of Arsi and Borana, and the Nilotic groups along the Ethiopia-Sudan border. They have no political influence and are scorned socially by Muslims and Christians.

The social strata and their dominance

The most preferred occupations traditionally have been in government, the military, the clergy, and farming, with commerce and trade considered less important and consequently usually left to Muslims and foreigners. All major Ethiopian ethnic units include hereditary groups of artisans and craftsmen. Their occupations historically have been held in low esteem by the dominant groups. Prior to 1974, artisans and craftsmen could not own land or hold political office and could not participate in local meetings or assemblies. Dominant groups in their respective areas generally treated them as subjects. Social status in Ethiopia during the centuries of imperial rule depended on one's landholdings, which provided the basis for class formation and social stratification. The emperor, the nobility, and landlords occupied the social hierarchy's highest positions. Under them were smallholding farmers, followed by millions of landless peasants who cultivated rented land. In the twentieth century, most of the southern landlord class consisted of Christian settlers from the north, whereas the tenants were mostly non-Christians and natives of the area. Thus, ethnic and cultural differences exacerbated class distinctions, which, in turn, adversely affected social relations. With the dissolution of the imperial system and the nationalization of urban and rural land, social stratification and community relations based on landholding largely disappeared. The military regime wanted to create a classless society, but the social hierarchy based on landholdings simply was replaced by one based on political power and influence. National and regional party members, government ministers, military officers, and senior civil servants had enormous political sway and enjoyed the economic prerequisites that the nobility and landlords once possessed.

After Ethiopia's liberation from Italian occupation in 1941, education played an important role in social relations by creating "new nobility" and a middle class whose position and status were largely independent of landownership. This new group consisted of educated children of the nobility, commoners who had achieved distinction for their loyalty to the emperor, and others with advanced education whose skills were needed to modernize the bureaucracy and military. The postwar education system, the new government bureaucracy, and the modern sector of the economy also encouraged the growth of a middle class employed in the public and private sectors. Members of the small educated class that filled the bureaucracy and the professions during the postwar imperial period by and large retained their positions under Mengistu, although many left the country because of disenchantment with his regime. The educated group was generally less attached to religion and tradition than was the rest of Ethiopian society. Members' education, income, occupation, and urban life-style likewise set them apart. They had more in common with educated people from other ethnic groups and frequently married across ethnic lines, although rarely across religious lines. Nevertheless, in the last decade or so before the 1974 revolution, some younger and better-educated non-Amhara expressed continued, even heightened, ethnic awareness through membership in urban-based self-help associations, which the Mengistu regime later banned. Although this educated group played a vital role in the emperor's downfall, it had little influence on the military government. Despite the regime's tentative efforts--such as land reform--to defuse some longstanding grievances, opposition based on ethnic, religious, and class interests continued.

Findings and Conclusion

Within-nation linguistic diversity is associated with reduced economic performance, which, in turn, increases societal instability. Nations which differ linguistically from their neighbors are also less stable. However, religious diversity between neighboring nations has the opposite effect, decreasing societal instability.

- I have discussed some important practical features showing why there is no one who can afford to ignore the issue of multiculturalism. Because modern societies are multicultural in themselves encompassing a multitude of various ways of life and life styles.
- Minorities and non-Christians were excluded from power and were often neglected which is found to be a downfall in the society's strength (Information provided by the Government of Ethiopia on the implementation of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, CERD, CERD/C/ETH/CO/15/Add.1 (24 January,2008))
- Even in some of the southern parts of Ethiopia people have small and illegal armory in their house. Which is found to be illegal and imparts in hindering the communal harmony among the people.(Information provided by the Government of Ethiopia on the implementation of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, CERD, CERD/C/ETH/CO/15/Add.1 (24 January,2008))
- Ethiopia's centralist tradition did not encourage cultural pluralism, and hence the culture and tradition of several groups including minority groups were denigrated and people having the traditional beliefs are quarantined. The essence of other cultural groups are not taken to the limelight and hence the society loses a giant part of their resources.(Information provided by the Government of Ethiopia on the implementation of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, CERD, CERD/C/ETH/CO/15/Add.1 (24 January,2008))
- The education can promote principles of cultural tolerance and diversity. The Government's Education Sector Development Plan I and II were implemented with the view to expanding access to education for all sectors of the Ethiopian society. The number of primary schools is increasing at an impressive rate. For example, primary schools have increased from 11,780 in 2000/01 to 16,513 in 2004/05. More than 80 percent of these new schools are built in rural areas. The enrolment rate has also increased substantially. Given the relatively low level of enrolment in pastoral areas in Afar, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, special educational programs through mobile schools were initiated to respond to these specific needs.
- In the Ethiopian lowlands where significant number of conflicts occurs thereby lack of development has been a contributing factor to intermittent tensions.
- Lack of specific property regime has been a source of disputes which was a phenomenal cause for instability and conflict among the people notwithstanding to their language, region, religion, ethnic group etc. However, the government have introduced announcements for land which allow the issuance of property certificates thereby ensuring land tenure and reducing disputes..
- Separatist movements are wide spread in Spain, Quebec, Srilanka, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and Algeria
- With the homogeneous societies the standard of living would double about each generation.
- With the heterogeneous societies the doubling of standard of living would take nearly a millennium.
- Even though the Ethiopia's imperial government has declared Amharic as their national language the other languages are been suppressed too with their culture. If you have seen economically boomed countries such as china, USA, UK, Australia etc are having one language as common. As we all know nothing is impossible in the world the culturally diverse countries are trying to fill their gaps in connection to their growth.
- The FDRE Constitution provides for extensive right to Ethiopia's nations, nationalities and people to promote and develop their own culture. In a remarkable break from the past, this has led to the protection of a broader entitlement to education and the adoption of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Every primary school child in Ethiopia now enjoys the right to learn in his or her own mother tongue
- Apparently the Intergroup enmity is widespread in culturally heterogeneity societies.
- The increase in desertification and climate change strongly influences the stock of biodiversity of Ethiopia. Because of global warming some of the parts of the country have been changing and which in turn affects the cultural industry which depends upon the local environment for inputs, depletion of the environment significantly affects the country.
- The societal attitude towards artisans and artists is non-accommodating and discouraging. This also affects the transfer of knowledge and skills to the new generation.
- Reading Culture as to be expected, the high rate of illiteracy coupled with a lack of a culture of reading seriously affects the availability of literature and gradually the awareness of the culture.

Suggestions

- The Government must continue to work to regulate small arms and minimize their impact on community relationships
- Equal opportunity must be given too all the citizens of Ethiopia regardless to their religion, language, ethnicity etc.
- The institutionalization of culturally informed federalism requires that the numerous cultural traditions and assets of communities be promoted and studied. To this end, the government adopted Ethiopia's first cultural policy which aims, among others; recognition and promotion of the cultural heritages of all groups in the country, promotion of cultural study and research, promotion of cultural tolerance and understanding, enhancing the capacity of the country's cultural sector, establishment of cultural centers, augmenting the role of culture in peacemaking and peace building, etc. should be fortified.
- The Government must further encouraging local districts and the minorities to play an active role in the administration and running of educational institutions
- The government and the people should take some steps and keep it aware that all the ethnic groups should be given values and intergroup enmity should be minimized which is apparently hinders the country's growth.
- Even though the Government has ensured that its economic policies and programs are geared towards achieving a fast and sustainable economic development by giving a special focus to those underprivileged areas or the low lands, the plans they have executed must be toned up.
- The government must work to regulate small arms and minimize their impact on community relationships
- Awareness programs could be volunteered by the government, students among the people will best help the situation.
- Designing a national policy that guides the development of the cultural industry in the country.
- Developing the domestic market for cultural produce and preventing excessive import.

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