“Beware of Politics and Fire!”
Teaching under the Control of Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front

A Qualitative Study of Government Schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Annika Weigele

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree on Education Policies for Global Development (GLOBED+)

Autonomous University of Barcelona ● University of Oslo ● University of Malta

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Abstract

The role of education and teachers in conflict transformation has gained increased attention from both international organisations and scholars. When providing education in (post-)conflict societies, teachers face various challenges. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of teachers’ complex role in conflict-affected countries by exploring how authoritarian regimes control the education sector and how teachers cope with this control. For this purpose, qualitative research with 77 educational stakeholders in Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa was carried out in autumn 2018. The new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali has embarked on a democratic transition after decades of authoritarian rule under Ethiopia’s current government, the Ethiopian People’s Democratic Revolutionary Front’s (EPRDF).

The thesis shows that EPRDF controls the education sector both through efficient surveillance networks to identify potential government opponents and coercive crackdown of political dissent. Teachers who are supposedly in opposition are imprisoned, suspended from schools, and threatened and attacked by educational administrators. The government expects teachers to indoctrinate students with its ideology while reproaching and attacking them if they refuse to do so. Teaching topics such as comprehensive history, civic and ethical education and economics became a political minefield as the government strategically prohibits critical dialogue and manipulates curricula. Teachers thus operate under immense pressure of their government. The fear and suspicion that the ruling party’s control creates in the education sector lead teachers to isolate themselves, to avoid dialogue with their peers and students, to refrain from political discussions and to obey to instructions of their superiors.

This thesis argues that the control structures which authoritarian regimes install in education deserve deliberate attention as they can become the doom to successful educational reforms and educational interventions. If teachers’ actions are guided by fear and avoidance, they are unlikely to contribute to democracy and peacebuilding.
“To the oppressed
And to those who suffer with them
And fight at their side.”

Paulo Freire
Acknowledgements

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the teachers who participated in my research. You are not only the thematic core of this research, but the reason for my dedication and motivation to accomplish this research project and thesis. The desire that guided me was to make your voices heard and your contribution visible. I cannot thank you enough for your immense trust, contribution and cooperation.

I owe a big amaseganalew to everyone in Ethiopia who made this research project possible. This includes colleagues, school principals and especially vice principals and staff in the Ministry of Education who gave me their time by being my interviewee, facilitating access, connecting me with new participants, giving recommendations and translating transcripts. My greatest gratitude goes to my translator, local supervisor and friend Tyobestya Sahlemariam, without whom this research project would have not taken place.

Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisor Cyril Owen Brandt for his time, effort, patience and insights when supporting me on every step on the way. Both my thesis and my research competencies have tremendously benefited from his constructive criticism and his encouragement to always strive for a deeper understanding.

Accomplishing this project would have been impossible without the professional and emotional support of my strong network of friends, colleagues and family. My gratitude particularly concerns friends from my bachelor’s degree, my master’s degree, other studies, workplaces and my sisters who have contributed to this thesis through recommendations, proofreading and encouragement. Most special thanks go to my parents; not only for their constant support, but for teaching me the importance of fighting for social justice long before I even knew.
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List of abbreviations and acronyms:

AAEB: Addis Ababa Education Bureau
AAU: Addis Ababa University
ANDM: Amhara National Democratic Movements
CEE: Civics and Ethical Education
CST: Critical Social Theory
EATP: Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation
EER: Ethiopia’s (new) Education Roadmap
EPRDF: Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
ESDP: Education Sector Development Programme
ETA: Ethiopian Teacher Association
ETP: Education and Training Policy (1994)
FMoE: Federal Ministry of Education
FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GCPEA: Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
HRW: Human Rights Watch
IPSS: Institute for Peace and Security Studies (part of AAU)
NSD: Norwegian Center for Research Data
OLF: Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO: Oromo People’s Democratic Organisation
SEB: Sub-City Education Bureau

SEPDM: Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement

SNNPR: Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region

SRA: Strategic Relational Approach

TESO: Teacher Education System Overhaul

TPLF: Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNESCO IICBA: UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

WEB: Woreda Education Bureau
Declaration

I, Annika Weigele, declare that this dissertation is my original work, and has not been presented in fulfilment of other course requirements at any university.

Annika Weigele

1 July 2019
1 Introduction

Revolutionaries come from schools. And behind them, there are teachers who know the history well. So, if they influence students, they might even start a revolution. This is not good for the government. The government’s perception of teachers and other civil servants is not the same. They see them as enemies.

Teacher at government school in Addis Ababa (I28)

Teachers in Ethiopian government schools face various challenges: a low salary that barely covers rent or living expenses, low levels of respect from the society, a lack of housing opportunities, adequate infrastructure and helpful training opportunities (II-I41; Mengistu, 2012; Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015; Gemechu et al., 2017; Teferra et al., 2018). Adding to this, the Ethiopian government harasses, threatens and arrests teachers all over Ethiopia if it suspects them to be in opposition to its rule (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2019; Global Coalition to Protect Education Against Attack (GCPEA), 2018; Amnesty International, 2018). If teachers dare to peacefully protest against their government, they risk being injured or killed (Smith, Koons & Kapit, 2014; GCPEA, 2018). Simultaneously, the government uses schools as spaces for political indoctrination and party recruitment, while expecting teachers to contribute to this agenda (Rawlence, 2010a, b). This dangerous and conflicted relationship between teachers and the government is captured in the title of this thesis: “Beware of politics and fire!”, which corresponds to an Ethiopian saying that came up in an interview (I40). It warns Ethiopian citizens to both be careful of the government’s politics and refrain from opposition support for their own safety.

The named crackdowns in the education sector appear to mirror the harsh control that the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) exerts over the society. Governing Ethiopia since 1991 and currently holding all seats in the parliament, the party is known for stifling any form of political dissent. Holding uncompetitive elections, adapting repressive anti-terrorism laws, oppressing civil society, imprisoning, killing and torturing protestors and censuring independent news channels are only a few of the measures taken by EPRDF to entrench their authoritarian regime (Badwaza & Termin, 2018; HRW, 2019).

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1 Numbers with I in parenthesis refer to interviews conducted for the research (see Annex 1).
2 The complexity of those dynamics will be further discussed in chapter 5, 6 and 7.2.
3 As EPRDF fully controls the parliament, the term government will be used as synonym to EPRDF in this research.
However, in April 2018, the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali\(^4\) embarked upon a massive reform campaign to address the concerns of Ethiopia’s citizens: he released ten thousands of political prisoners, including opposition leaders and journalists, ended the border war with Eritrea and officially committed to democracy, freedom and unity. Moreover, he admitted the government’s oppression and violence and publicly apologised to citizens (Weber, 2018; HRW, 2019; Hussein, 2018). Abiy further plans to restructure the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) (Abiye, 2018) and to reform the current Education and Training Policy (ETP) from 1994 in order to align the education system with the country’s new ambitions and needs. For this purpose, a new Ethiopian Education Roadmap (EER) is currently being developed (New Business Ethiopia, 2019; Abiye, 2019). The EER draft indicates that the education sector should allow for achieving “peace, unity, […] establishment of democratic systems and good governance” (Teferra et al., 2018, p. 3) by creating “critical thinkers […] who […] stand for justice; peace and unity in diversity” (Teferra et al., 2018, p. 93). As they are at the core of delivering education, teachers are expected to contribute to those goals. EER indicates that teachers will be supported by the improvement of working conditions, pay, training opportunities and competitive recruitment strategies (Teferra et al., 2018). However, an important issue is not tackled in this list of solutions: the terrorisation of teachers by the government.

Scholars as well as international organisations increasingly deem teachers as key educational actors who can make significant contributions to an education for peace and conflict transformation (UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building (UNESCO IICBA), 2017; Rubagiza et al., 2016; van Ommering, 2017). Yet, a scholarship that grew over the past decades argues that education is no panacea for overcoming conflict. Education might contribute to positive transformation by addressing root causes of conflict dynamics, but it might also reproduce and intensify those very dynamics (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Pherali, 2013; Novelli & Smith, 2012; Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015). Furthermore, scholars found that teachers are not simply victims of conflict but are agents who interact with their environment and who have (limited) ability to transform the context they operate in. They do so by strategically acting upon this context based on their experiences and motivations (Brandt, forthcoming; Pherali, 2013; Wilson, 2000; Lopes Cardozo, 2009, 2011; Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015; Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016). Following this perspective, it is crucial to examine

\(^4\) As Ethiopians are generally referred to by their first name, Abiy Ahmed Ali is known in Ethiopia as Abiy, which is what he will be called in this thesis.
how Ethiopian teachers engage with their context, notably the oppression of their authoritarian government, to find out to which extent teachers can contribute to transforming Ethiopia into a just, democratic society. Investigating how Ethiopian teachers interact with the government’s oppression mechanisms and reproduce or challenge the oppressive dynamics is therefore the pronounced purpose of this research.

The following section provides a short elaboration on the background in which the study takes place. Subsequently, it outlines how this research contributes to both the Ethiopian context and its education system as well as to existing literature on teachers’ agency in conflict affected countries. This directly leads to a brief overview of relevant literature and the description of the research question, followed by a delineation of the thesis structure.

1.1 Background of the study

After decades of harsh central governance during the military regime “Derg” in 1991, EPRDF established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). The new constitution, established in 1994, allowed for a multi-party democratic system and decentralised Ethiopia’s governance by creating a federal republic of nine regional states. Yet, there is a consensus among human rights organisations and critical scholars that neither the decentralisation nor the official multi-party system makes Ethiopia democratic (Aalen & Tronvoll, 2008; Tronvoll 2008, 2010; Abbink, 2019; Freedom House, 2019; Lyons, 2016; Arriola & Lyons, 2016). On the contrary; EPRDF has only held uncompetitive elections since its advent (except for 2005) (Arriola & Lyons, 2016; Di Nunzio, 2014a, b; HRW, 2008). In May 2015, EPRDF won 547 seats (100%) of the parliament (Arriola & Lyons, 2016; Horne, 2015; Abbink, 2017) and thus managed to re-establish the one-party state that was until 1991 (Abbink, 2017). At the time of writing, EPRDF still controls all seats in the parliament and thus minimises political space and room for political dissent (HRW, 2019). In addition, EPRDF’s affiliation parties control the executive and legislative branches of the regional states, which makes the decentralised system executers of EPRDF’s will (Arriola & Lyons, 2016; Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008; Ayele, 2011). In addition, EPRDF relies on wide-reaching surveillance systems to monitor political dissent (HRW, 2019; Rawlence, 2010b), which involves appointing its members as spies throughout all sectors (Di Nunzio, 2014a; Rawlence, 2010b) and monopolising postal services and telecommunications (Gebreegziabher, 2018; Horne & Wong, 2014). The ruling party then takes rigorous measures to reproach dissenters and shut
down anti-governmental protest by harassing, threatening, arresting, imprisoning (often involving torture) and killing citizens who are suspected to be in opposition (Amnesty International, 2018; HRW, 2019; Freedom House, 2019). In conclusion, EPRDF controls the entire society to maintain its autocratic rule.

The education system is not spared from this control: a HRW article describes the political intervention of the ruling party in the education system as a “sustained crackdown on academic freedom” (Rawlence, 2010b, p. 30) and reveals that EPRDF’s efforts to recruit members and to oppress opposition support increasingly targets teachers and students. Siyum & Gebremedhin (2015) demonstrate that teachers without EPRDF partisanship are pressured and attacked by the school administration and local education offices. Furthermore, Rawlence (2010b) highlights that it seems as if there is an intensified intervention of the ruling party in the education sector as compared to other sectors. Since the ruling party has its origins in a student movement (Lyons, 2016; Rawlence, 2010b; Berhe, 2008), EPRDF’s strong intervention in the education sector can be interpreted as a recognition of the education system’s potential to serve as a possible platform for government criticism, which makes it a probable source for political dissent (Rawlence, 2010b; see Pherali (2013) for similar dynamics in Nepal).

The reviewed sources show that EPRDF relies on different control mechanisms to entrench its autocratic rule: installing surveillance systems to identify potential opponents, coercive crackdown of the suspected dissent and mobilising new members through force and indoctrination. How exactly those political interventions translate to EPRDF’s state pressure in the education sector will be investigated in this thesis.

1.2 Research problem and research question

Despite the fact GCPEA (2018, Smith et al., 2014), HRW (2019; Rawlence, 2010 a,b) and Amnesty International (2018) have already proved that EPRDF’s control is present in the education sector, it is unclear how exactly the ruling party’s pressure is applied and how teachers engage with it. A few scholars have investigated teachers from a more political angle, such as their participation in decision-making processes in schools (Bademo & Tefera, 2016; Mitchell, 2017) or how their political partisanship affects their freedom and autonomy (Siyum & Gebremedhin, 2015). Yet, these sources do not provide an insight of how teachers actively cope with the government’s control and how they navigate their teaching based on it. Even
though there is a wide range of research available on the Ethiopian education system and its teachers, it seems like the influence of Ethiopia’s authoritarian regime on education has been neglected. Scholars have merely provided rich evidence on the job satisfaction of teachers (Mengistu, 2012), teachers perceptions of effective teaching (Roseman, 2018), the reforms and processes of pre-service training (Gemechu et al., 2017; Barnes et al., 2018; Egne, 2015; Semela, 2014) and the implementation of teachers’ continuous professional development (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015; Akalu, 2014). I can therefore argue – to my knowledge of accessible sources – that there is a significant gap in the scholarship on Ethiopia’s education sector regarding how teachers actively engage with control structures of the autocratic political system that has a constant bearing on their work.

For other countries, little but very insightful research on teachers’ complex relationships with the state and different interest groups in conflict affected areas was conducted: Pherali (2013) shows how teachers during Nepal’s civil war were caught in the crossfire between Maoist rebels and the state’s security forces while operating in schools that were highly influenced by various political parties. Similarly, in Peru, teachers functioned as mediators “between state and society” in and prior to the civil war (Wilson, 2000, p. 1;3;15) due to the mandate of having to transmit the state’s ideology, while simultaneously being deemed as intellectuals in struggles against the government (Wilson 2000; Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016). Lopes Cardozo and Shah (2016) document similar complexities from Indonesia’s Aceh province where teachers were expected to deliver education in accordance with the ideology of the state, while being under immense scrutiny from the Free Aceh Movement for transmitting those messages (Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016). This reveals that those scholars have both understood teachers as active agents who interact with their environment and looked at “state pressure” (Brandt, 2019) on teachers. Nevertheless, those sources say little about how exactly the pressures of the state play out in the education sector, who applies it and how teachers direct their teaching and their relationships in the school in relation to it. Brandt (2019) however made a significant contribution to the conceptualisation of state pressure by analysing “concrete practices of government” (p. 148) to investigate reasons for teachers to return to their villages after displacement due to armed conflict. By employing the stance of “infrastructural power”

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5 Cooperating with the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) and Addis Ababa University (AAU) has shown me that most resources produced in Ethiopian universities only exist as hard copies and are often unpublished.
(Mann, 1984, p. 189) and identifying logistical techniques that execute this power, Brandt (2019) found that state actors can influence teachers’ decisions to return to their villages by exerting power through teachers’ salaries.

The present study aims to contribute to an understanding of how authoritarian governments control education sectors and how teachers actively cope with this control. Therefore, it combines the following purposes:

Firstly, investigating how EPRDF politically intervenes in the education sector by identifying different logistical techniques of the party’s control and infrastructural power. Secondly, exploring how teachers exercise their agency to “react to and contest” (Brandt, 2019, p. 149) those political interventions. The research took place in government schools of Ethiopia’s vibrant and fast-growing capital Addis Ababa that accommodates a diversity of ethnic and political interest groups.

To analyse these two dovetailed fields and to fill the above-described empirical gap, the study addresses the following research question:

**How do teachers in government schools in Addis Ababa exercise their agency to cope with EPRDF’s political intervention in the education sector?**

Table 1 below names the sub-research questions which operationalise the main research question and indicates in which chapters of the thesis they will be answered.

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6 The level of schooling (primary, secondary or preparatory) will not be further specified as a commitment to participants’ anonymity.
### Table 1: Sub-research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5</th>
<th>a) How does EPRDF maintain control over the education sector?</th>
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<td>b) How do teachers cope with direct and indirect experiences of EPRDF’s oppression of dissent?</td>
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<td>c) How do teachers navigate their relationships with colleagues and administrators in relation to EPRDF’s intervention?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>d) How do teachers reproduce or challenge EPRDF’s control structures when coping with the political intervention in the classroom?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e) How do teachers navigate their relationships with students in relation to EPRDF’s intervention?</td>
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### 1.3 Thesis structure

To allow for an in-depth understanding of the ruling party’s capacity to apply state pressure to the education sector, a context chapter (chapter 2) provides a brief description of recent educational developments and further elaborates on the historical and current characteristics of the government’s authoritarian rule. The next chapter (chapter 3) outlines the theoretical framework of this study. Followed by a chapter (chapter 4) that describes the research design and methodology of the research, there are two chapters that report the findings of the study: chapter 5 addresses EPRDF’s means to control the education sector and teachers’ coping strategies, while chapter 6 focuses on teachers’ strategies in relation to control in classrooms. Finally, chapter 7 answers the main research question, debates selected findings in relation to Ethiopia’s democratic transition and gives recommendations for further research, educational interventions and Ethiopia’s future education policies (including EER).
2 Context

This chapter lays a foundation of background information that allows an in-depth analysis of teachers’ interaction with infrastructural power in the education sector. Therefore, the first sub-section gives a brief insight in Ethiopia’s current economic and educational situation to locate the study in recent developments of the country. The next two sub-sections are set up around the following question: Which historical patterns and current efforts allow EPRDF to comprehensively control the society, including the education sector? Therefore, the second section outlines past and current patterns of autocracy and stifling dissent. The third section then describes the use of decentralised governance structures for entrenching autocratic control in the past and present with links to the education sector.

2.1 Ethiopia and its education sector: a brief description

Widely represented in international media as struck by famine and fragility in previous decades, Ethiopia transformed into a fast-growing economy of immense strategic importance since EPRDF’s advent (Badwaza & Termin, 2018). Home to approximately 105 million people, Ethiopia is Africa’s second most populous country (World Bank, 2017a, c; Badwaza & Temin, 2018) and is projected to be one of the world’s 10 most populous countries in the world by 2050 (Badwaza & Temin, 2018). Despite its status as one of the fastest growing economies of Africa, its income per capita of $783 still places it among the poorest countries in the region (World Bank, 2017c). Since the late 1990s, Ethiopia has attracted large amounts of foreign money7 and is now the top recipient of foreign development assistance in Africa (OECD, 2019).

Alongside economic successes, EPRDF largely expanded and reformed the Ethiopian education sector (Negash, 2006). Based on the 1994 constitution (FDRE, 1994a), the ETP of 1994 (FDRE, 1994b) marked the start of a series of five year development plans that run until today: the Ethiopia’s Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDP) I-V (MoE, 2005; FMoE FDRE, 2010; FMoE FDRE, 2015) and the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) (MoE, 2003). Furthermore, Ethiopia successfully mobilised foreign funding for its educational

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The General Education Quality Improvement Programs (GEQIP) I, II and GEQIP-E with the World Bank as main donor were launched as support programs for the ESDPs (MoE, 2008; World Bank, 2013; World Bank, 2018b). The main success of those efforts were massive increases in enrolment rates: the country has a net enrolment rate of 85.44% at primary school level and 30.96% at secondary school level (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2015). With more than 30 million children and adolescents of primary and secondary school age (UIS, 2015), this means that Ethiopia’s educated and potentially critical mass is rapidly growing. Based on the finding that EPRDF has a strong interest to control education to work in its favour (Rawlence, 2010b; Horne, 2016), this means that the government would need efficient control systems in schools for this large mass.

2.2 Autocratic rule and oppression of dissent

EPRDF’s authoritarian governance and the crackdown of (potential) opposition have been briefly addressed in 1.1. This section aims to explore more in depth by answering the question: Which historical and current patterns can be found in Ethiopia regarding authoritarian rule and the oppression of dissent?

2.2.1 The past

Except for the short Italian fascist occupation from 1936-1941 (Pankhurst, 1972), Ethiopia has unlike other African states no colonial history (Adamu, 2013). Despite the almost uninterrupted absence of oppression from colonial rulers, Ethiopia has a long history of oppression from their own national leaders. Until the inauguration of Abiy, political power has been monopolised by the North Ethiopian ethnic groups Amhara and Tigre (Adamu, 2013). The fact that two groups have politically dominated a country that accommodates more than 80 ethnic groups each with their own traditions and languages entrenched ethnic inequalities and led to the marginalisation of Southern Ethiopian groups such as the Somali and Oromo (Adamu, 2013; Egne, 2015).

Oppression in Ethiopia is not only ethnic but involves a tradition of harsh and autocratic rule. A look at Ethiopia’s modern history reveals that prior to EPRDF, no Ethiopian government ever came to power by election and none had “the slightest plausible claim to democracy”
Ethiopian regimes never ended peacefully\(^8\), but usually ousted by force. Past Ethiopian rulers\(^9\) were either overthrown by coup d'État (1916, 1974 (twice), 1977), by external invasion (1868, 1936, 1941) or by civil war (1855, 1871, 1889, 1991) (Clapman, 2004). Even though a country’s political past does not necessarily determine its future, history establishes patterns that aggravate the (re)construction of a democratic system and guide citizens’ expectations towards their society (Clapman, 2004). In Ethiopia, this long-established pattern involves a track record of violent oppression of political dissent and the prohibition of political parties to serve the various interests of the extremely diverse nation: during the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, political parties were not allowed (Clapman, 2004). Additionally, Selassie violently stifled political dissent by ordering armed attacks on peaceful opposition protestors and undermining critical speech through strict press control (The Ethiopian Students’ Union in North America, 1971). The Derg (1974-1991), a military dictatorship led by Mengistu Haile Mariam (Rawlence, 2010b; Bach, 2011), was responsible for the loss of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian lives. Not only through famine, forced resettlement programmes and failed economic programmes, but also through the Red Terror – the mass killings of suspected government opposition supporters in urban centres in order to suppress and eliminate political dissent (Rawlence, 2010b; Jayapregasham et al., 2018). Various Ethiopian regions witnessed more than three decades of massive civilian loss of life due to counterinsurgency programmes and campaigns imposed by both the Derg and Emperor Haile Selassie (Rawlence, 2010b). This shows that Ethiopian governments have a tradition of depriving their citizens of meaningful participation, let alone granting them the right to political dissent. Regarding the education sector, this suggests that political critical dialogue in schools took place under immense caution and maybe even suspicion.

### 2.2.2 EPRDF’s rule

The current ruling political party was founded during the civil war under the Derg regime which was overthrown in 1991 by ethnic-based liberation fronts (Arriola & Lyons, 2016; Ayele, 2011). The insurgency was led by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, a Tigrayan “Marxist-Leninist guerilla movement” (Rawlence, 2010b, p.9) that was headed by Meles Zenawi (Arriola

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\(^8\) The exceptions are 1913 and 1930, where legitimate successions took place as the incumbent died (Clapman, 2004).

\(^9\) Leaders of terminated regimes never continued to live peacefully in Ethiopia, they were either killed (1868, 1889, 1974 (two), 1977) put in prison (1916) or forced into exile (1936, 1991) (Clapman, 2004).
TPLF formed the EPRDF in 1989 (EPRDF, 2019) as a coalition of armed wings from different ethnicities (Arriola & Lyons, 2016; Lyons, 2016). When coming to power after the end of the Derg Regime, EPRDF had to quickly transform from a rebel movement into a government and did so by facilitating the transition from ethnic-based fronts into the political parties Amhara’s National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and Oromo People’s Democratic Organisation (OPDO), and later Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement (SEPDM) so that they could function as EPRDF’s constituent parties (Arriola & Lyons, 2016). This allowed TPLF to reach into three of the largest regions (Oromia, Amhara and SNNPR) while retaining its power position as leader (Arriola & Lyons, 2016). TPLF still stands as the dominant party of the named coalition, while the allied parties are not represented in the Executive Committee of EPRDF (Arriola & Lyons, 2016).

Many Ethiopians were hopeful that EPRDF’s advent would mark the beginning of a democratic transformation without repressive rule (Rawlence, 2010b). EPRDF was the first government to address the long-established ethnic grievances: it introduced what is today widely called “ethnic-based federalism” (Cohen, 1995; Abbink, 2011; Bélair, 2016). Article 47.1 of the constitution (FDRE, 1994) declared Ethiopia a federation that is split into nine regional states. Particularly among marginalised ethnic groups, this commitment to regional autonomy and ethnic diversity alongside EPRDF’s promises to respect human rights and democracy sparked hope (Rawlence, 2010b; Adamu, 2013). Nevertheless, there seems to be a broad consensus that dividing the country on ethnic boundaries while retaining old hierarchies with Tigrayans in power has further entrenched and intensified ethnic tensions (Abbink, 2011; Adamu, 2013; Taye, 2017). Scholars argue that both transforming ethnic-based movements into political parties and making ethnicity the underlying ideology of the state structure led to the politicisation of ethnic identity (Taye, 2017; Adamu, 2013; Tronvoll, 2008; Smith, 2007; Fessha, 2017). Ethnicity became thus partly a political identity or even a political stigma (Adamu, 2013; Tronvoll, 2008; Smith, 2007; Fessha, 2017). Abiy declared it his goal to tackle ethnic grievances by making unity the guiding vision of the country, more specifically a unity “that embraces our diversity and highlights our multinational identity” (Hussein, 2018).

As pointed out in the introduction chapter, Ethiopia is currently a one-party state where the government does not shy away from human rights violations to blight dissent. For the education sector, the oppression of dissent combined with pretentious democratisation implies
that political discussions among teachers, students and other school staff possibly take place under extreme caution and fear of being suspected to be in opposition.

2.3 Decentralisation for control and elimination of political dissent

Understanding how the government can implement its large-scale surveillance and control in a country with the size of 1,104,300 square kilometres (World Bank, 2018a) with a large population of which around 77% live in rural areas (World Bank, 2017b), requires background knowledge about Ethiopia’s decentralised governance structures. This chapter briefly outlines how Ethiopia’s past and present regimes have relied on long-established local and regional governmental structures for reaching into even the most rural communities to not only control political dissent but expand their regime. As those governance structures administer the education system today, the following elaborations are indispensable for an investigation of how teachers navigate the challenges created by EPRDF’s control.

2.3.1 A long history of exploiting local and regional authorities for central control

Ayele (2011) points out that Ethiopia’s leaders have a long history of using local and regional governance to enhance their control. From the Axumite civilisation until the 1850’s (Ayele, 2011), decentralisation with a central rule (emperor) and regional/provincial and local authorities existed in Ethiopia due to the country’s large size, rugged landscape and ethnic diversity (Ayele, 2011). These decentralised structures of power were exploited by all following leaders to institutionalise their regime and expand their territory. Emperors Tewodros II (1855-1868) and Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) attempted to install a centralised rule by appropriating the existing structures of local and regional governance without visible success. Menelik II (1989-1913) managed to subdue the regions southern to Tigray and Amhara by military coercion and strategic collaboration: his appointed regional and local authorities (from Northern Ethiopia) implemented his will by cooperating with indigenous leaders from Southern communities who functioned as local brokers and mobilised communities, preserved security and assisted in land expropriation processes (Abbink, 1997; Teshale, 1995 in Ayele, 2011).
Afterwards, Haile Selassie dispossessed regional and local leaders of their traditional entitlements. Ethiopia’s first written constitution (1931) and administrative reforms defined local and regional lords as exporters of the emperor’s rule (Ayele, 2011) and traditional rulers served as apparatus of control (Cohen & Koehn, 1980 in Ayele, 2011). After the committee of 120 military officers (the Derg) removed Selassie from power, they created the Urban Dwellers’ Association (UDA) and Peasant Association (PA) at kebele (sub-district) and woreda (district) levels to implement developmental mandates such as building markets, roads and schools (Ayele, 2011). Yet, UDA’s and PA’s were quickly transformed into an apparatus of terror and repression as they served as the Derg’s partners in identifying and killing political opponents through Red Terror (Tiruneh, 1993; Ayele, 2011). After overthrowing the Derg and introducing ethnic-based federalism, the Ethiopian government started a process of decentralising governance and decision-making further within the regional states (Arriola & Lyons, 2016, Rawlence, 2010b; Ayele, 2011) to serve ethnic diversity and to establish democracy from the grassroots after the Derg’s radical monopolised rule (Ayele, 2011).

2.3.2 Decentralisation under EPRDF

The decentralisation was further institutionalised starting from 2001 when EPRDF decided to assign more political, financial and administrative power to woredas, zonal and regional administrations to implement policies for development and poverty reduction (Ayele, 2011). Currently, the regional states are split in zones that are clustered in woredas (districts), and woredas are divided into kebeles (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008; Rawlence, 2010b). Regional, zonal and woreda administrations and kebeles are composed of councils that consists of around 100 representatives and cabinets of around 7 to 10 members. All those administrative entities work closely in line. The higher levels distribute instructions through this hierarchical construct, while the lower levels are accountable and report back on all instructed activities to the next higher level. The judicial apparatus of the region is implemented through zones and woredas that feature courts on their level (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008; Ayele, 2011).

The chartered city Addis Ababa, having the same political responsibilities and hierarchical structures as a regional state (Ethiopian Government Portal, 2019; World Population Review, 2019), is organised in 10 sub-cities (equal to zones in other regions) and 116 woredas (Addis Ababa City Government, 2019) which then include 328 kebeles (Ethiopian Government Portal, 2019). Addis Ababa’s city administration has an education office (Addis
Ababa Education Bureau (AAEB) that coordinates the 10 sub-city education bureaus (SEB) that are responsible to oversee the woreda education bureaus (WEB) (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008, Addis Ababa City Government, 2019). Kebeles are not directly part of the educational governance. Yet, they are omnipresent in the life of Ethiopian citizens: following the orders of the kebele is mandatory to access services such as hospitals, house reparation services and coordination of employment that are under its control (Rawlence, 2010b; Ayele, 2011). Kebeles also function as advisors for the named educational bureaus as they have a closer insight in the lives of all community members, which involves happenings in schools (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008, Rawlence, 2010b, Ayele, 2011).

As argued in the introduction, EPRDF followed the tradition of previous leaders to exploit local and regional governance structures to reinforce their control. Ethiopia’s large regions are governed by EPRDF-affiliated political parties who hence function as extending arms of the ruling party’s power (Arriola & Lyons, 2016). Similarly, in local governments, legislative and executive branches are fully controlled by EPRDF, which makes them local executers of the ruling party’s will (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008; Ayele, 2011). Rawlence’s research for HRW with numerous civil servants in different Ethiopian regions reveals that the kebele and woreda structures provide an “… intrusive mechanism for the ruling party to gather information on and control communities” (2010b, p. 22). The kebeles and woredas play important roles for oppression, surveillance and harassment of opponents as they have knowledge about everyone who is (supposedly) in opposition. In addition, they have capacity to attack and arrest dissenters as they control local security forces, the local social court, local prisons and conflict resolution processes (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2008, Rawlence, 2010b, Ayele, 2011). The education system is governed by the same structures, meaning that educational authorities function as implementors of EPRDF’s will in the education sector. This might involve the constant control and surveillance of happenings in schools to identify dissenters.
3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter illustrates the theoretical framework that underlies this thesis. Firstly, critical realism as an epistemological and ontological stance are described. As this stance is the foundation of the approach to both theory and methodology, it is already outlined at this point. Afterwards, infrastructural power as a way of operationalising oppression and state pressure and its application in the Ethiopian context are illustrated. Next, the combination of several critical approaches to further conceptualise teachers’ agency in interaction with infrastructural power are delineated. Before presenting the conceptual scheme of the thesis, a theoretical framework suggested by van Ommering (2017) and its application for the study are explained.

3.1 Critical realism

For the analysis and presentation of reality, it is relevant to outline the approach to what we call reality in this thesis. Having served as the foundation in previous research on teachers’ agency in complex contexts (Brandt, 2014; Lopes Cardozo, 2011), critical realism as developed by Bashker (as in Jessop, 2005; Sayer, 2000) serves as an epistemological and ontological lens for this study. Realism’s defining feature is that belief of a world (reality) exists independently of human knowledge of it, whereas critical refers to the thought that understanding this world is only possible through particular descriptions and discourses (Sayer, 2000, p. 2). Being ontologically situated between objectivism/positivism and relativism, and lying epistemologically between empiricism/positivism and interpretivism, it refuses to reduce the investigation of social phenomena to either law-seeking, naturalist approaches or solely individuals’ interpretations (Sayer, 2000, p. 2ff.). What is unique to empirical realism is the concept of contingent (meaning: “neither necessary nor impossible” (Sayed, 2000, p. 12)) causality, meaning that critical realism differentiates between the world and human experience of it and between the real, the actual and the empirical. The real is what exists regardless of whether the object is physical (minerals), social (e.g. bureaucracies) or whether there is human knowledge of it (Sayed, 2000). Referring to the powers and structures of objects, the real is generative of causal mechanism or structures (Sayed, 2000; Jessop, 2005). The actual then defines the possible activation of those powers, the process of this activation and possible consequences (e.g. activating bureaucracies’ powers could result in activities such as invoicing) (Sayer, 2000, p.12). Thirdly, the empirical is everything we can observe, which can or cannot
relate to the real or the actual (Sayed, 2000) This form of stratified ontology does not only allow to move away from flat ontologies that either reduce the world to what we perceive (the empirical) or of what we think is happening (the actual). It also offers a special analysis for causality: critical realism understands objects as structures, while structure “suggests a set of internally related elements whose actual powers, when combined, are emergent from those of their constituents” (Sayer, 2000, p. 14). In this understanding, it depends on conditions whether those powers are activated (the real), and if so, the result (the actual) of those activations are determined by conditions too. Then again, how those social processes are understood depends on how actors interpret them (the empirical) (Sayer, 2000, p. 13ff.). Thus, to explain phenomena, critical realism aims to identify the nature and functioning of causal mechanisms as well as whether they were activated and under which circumstances (Sayed, 2000).

Critical realism allows an in-depth analysis of structures and mechanisms that lead to social phenomena. Furthermore, it underlies the Strategic-Relational Approach (SRA), which combined with other critical approaches serves as theoretical framework of this research (see section 3.3). The following sections elaborate on the theoretical framework of the study as well as the application of those theoretical underpinnings for this research.

3.2 Infrastructural power

Like in Brandt (2019), Mann’s (1984, 1986, 1993) concept of infrastructural power is adapted as a theoretical stance for this research to understand how the Ethiopian government applies “state pressure” to the education sector. Soifer and vom Hau (2008) argued that Mann’s concept of infrastructural power is the answer to scholars’ collective strive to investigate a state’s reach or power. Based on Mann’s concept, Soifer and vom Hau (2008) define infrastructural power as the “institutional capacity to exercise control and implement policy choices within the territory it claims to govern” (p. 220). Mann (1984) describes that infrastructural power enables the state to “penetrate civil society” (p. 189) and to enact logistical techniques, such as “enabling stabilised messages to be transmitted through the state’s territories by its agents” (p. 192). In addition, this concept does not only allow for an analysis of the spatial dimension of power, meaning the “capacity of state institutions to radiate outwards from the center” (Soifer & vom Hau, 2008, p. 226), but emphasises the relational dimension of power. Soifer and vom Hau (2008) developed this idea further by distinguishing spatial control and social control. They point out that a state’s spatial control does not necessarily lead to
success as the pure “presence of “logistical techniques” such as schools or police officers in the most remote areas may not guarantee control over society” (Soifer & vom Hau, 2008, p. 226). Considering social control as the state’s ability to regulate social relations and cooperation among state-actors and non-state for its control is therefore relevant to understand how a state can implement its logistical techniques throughout the territory. Applied to Ethiopia, this means that the pure presence of long-established decentralised country-wide state structures that govern schools do not suffice to implement EPRDF’s control. Ensuring that surveillance and oppression of dissent is enacted in schools requires networks and strong cooperation among both the ruling party’s agents and among EPRDF-agents and non-EPRDF actors. Based on vom Hau (2008) and Soifer and vom Hau (2008), this study understands the education sector as part of the state’s infrastructure through which EPRDF can reach into its society by implementing various logistical techniques and controlling the relationships within the education sector. The focus here lies not in assessing the strength of government’s infrastructural power but in identifying through which logistical techniques and political interventions it allows EPRDF to be present in the education sector. This enables the investigation of how teachers interact with different forms of EPRDF’s control and pressure.

Yet, this research does not understand teachers as objects over which the state exercises its infrastructural power. In his analysis of how states use their infrastructural power to promote nationalism, vom Hau (2008) argues that teachers employed different strategies to avoid teaching the imposed nationalistic curriculum. As Brandt (2019) and vom Hau (2008) conclude, teachers can contest and challenge the state’s logistical techniques. This leads directly to the concept of teachers’ agency and the strategic-relational approach, integrated with critical social theories in education.

### 3.3 Critical approaches: teachers as active agents

Do Ethiopian teachers have the ability, as vom Hau’s (2008) findings suggest, to challenge the state’s mechanisms of infrastructural power? The fact that EPRDF specifically controls the education sector due to fear of insurgency (Rawlence, 2010b) implies that it deems teachers as able to initiate protests and contestations. This chapter now provides a theoretical framework that both conceptualizes teachers as (potentially) active agents in contesting state pressure and infrastructural power.
Critical social theory (CST) and theory of resistance in education

Critical educationalists like Freire (1970/1993), Giroux (2003a, b) and Leonardo (2004) emphasise that education has a potentially liberating function as it can accommodate critical dialogue, which then might inspire agents to recognise their oppression and to stand up against it. However, CST acknowledges that criticism and attempts for change are determined by the broader political structures. Giroux declares schools as “economic, cultural and social sites that are inextricably tied to issues of politics, power and control” (2003b, p. 48). Both CST (as in Giroux, 2003b) and theory of resistance in education (as in Fernandes, 1988) argue that the school’s position in politics makes it a potential platform for the emergence of different and contradicting practice or discourses that can become the advent of criticism and resistance against dominant dynamics. This argument is central to this thesis as it shows the embeddedness of the education sector and its teachers in EPRDF’s political system and control. Extending this argument, Fernandes (1988) foregrounds that even though schools are sites of the reproduction of (state) ideologies and structures, teachers can exploit the (limited) autonomy of schools to challenge those very structures. Criticism and resistance do not solely address teachers’ general actions but also refer to teaching strategies. Critical educationalists have conceptualised teaching practices which empower students to overcome oppression: Giroux suggests a “radical pedagogy” (2003a, p. 11), within which teachers work with knowledge that is relevant to the student’s everyday life to engage them in critical scrutiny so that they can recognise “antidemocratic forms of power” (Giroux, 2003a, 12). Based on Giroux’ previous work (1983 in Leonardo, 2004), Leonardo (2004) conceptualises two types of dialogue for critical pedagogy: the language of critique where teachers enable students “to read the world more critically” (p.16) and the language of transcendence to give students hope for the future by initiating reflection on how a world without oppression could look like. By employing those strategies, teachers exercise their own critical autonomy within the given structures, which can create conditions for (institutional) change (Leonardo, 2004). This underlines that CST approaches not only pay due attention to structures, but place teachers as active agents for the potential transformation of those (control) structures. To define structures and agents’ interaction with them, the following section connects CST and the theory of resistance with SRA and teachers’ agency.
Strategic- Relational Approach (SRA) and teachers’ agency

Within critical realism, society is understood as a set of structures, conventions and practices, for whose reproduction or transformation the performance of certain practices by the agents in the society is needed (Jessop, 2005, p. 47). Likewise, in Hay’s account of SRA, political, social or economic contexts are “densely structured and highly contoured” (Hay, 2002a, p. 381). Structures in contexts are therefore “strategically selective”, meaning that they unevenly distribute constraints and opportunities to actors, facilitating the strategic actions of knowledge- and resource-rich actors while possibly hampering the intentions of the worse-off (Hay, 2002a). Actors, on the other hand, are strategic and reflexive as they orient their strategies on the conditions presented by their environment (Hay, 2002a, b). This research adapts Hay’s definition of strategy as an “intentional conduct oriented towards the environment… to realise certain outcomes and objectives which motivate action” (Hay, 2002b, p. 129). Therefore, agents and structures are in a contingent, dialectical interplay: while political economies on different levels (such as spatial or social control) constantly constrain, conditions and enable strategic actions, those actions (re-)produce the very same structures (Hay, 2002a, p. 386). Agency itself is hence understood as “room for action” (Brandt, 2014, p. 8) or a “space for manoeuvre” (Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015, p. 60) limited by the agent, other agents and the strategically selective structures. SRA consequently positions teachers as “strategic political actors who operate within a complex strategically selective context” (Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015, p. 60). With their actions, teachers (un-)willingly reproduce or transform existing structures. But what determines whether agents’ strategic actions contribute to reproduction or transformation? According to Hay (2002b), it is a matter of agential factors - how an agent chooses to act - and contextual factors, meaning the unequal distribution of opportunities and limitations which results in unequal access to resources for agents (Hay, 2002b; Lopes Cardozo, 2009). He also argues that agents who reject recurrent conventions are more likely to transform structures (Hay, 2002b). Rejecting conventions is strongly related to criticism within the education sector, as outlined above.

Combining the named approaches with the concept of infrastructural power means that this research understands the education sector as systemic part of EPRDF’s control structures and analyses step by step how teachers and the said structures interact. Interlinking infrastructural power with SRA means to acknowledge that spatial and social control, as well as logistical techniques provide opportunities or limitations for the actions of teachers. By
strategically acting in interplay with those structures, teachers might either (un)consciously reproduce or challenge EPRDF’s control structures. The incorporation of CST and theory of resistance in education further allows to look at how criticism in the education sector might lead to the contestation of mechanisms of infrastructural power.

3.4 Van Ommering’s four key areas

To provide concrete reference points for the described theoretical approaches, this research incorporates the four key areas\(^\text{10}\) of a theoretical framework suggested by van Ommering (2017). Based on research in Lebanon, he created a framework that includes four key areas that should be considered when examining teachers’ capacity to contribute to conflict transformation: (1) the political, social, institutional and economic context, (2) the relationships of teachers with colleagues, students, school administrators, (3) teachers’ personal experiences with conflict and (4) the tools available to teachers to confront conflict in the classroom. Those four key areas are strongly interconnected in their application, as this thesis demonstrates. Van Ommering (2017) contributes immensely to the complex research field of teachers’ position in conflict transformation as he points out concrete obstacles for teachers in fragile contexts rather than abstractly engaging with the topic. Yet, his approach to teachers’ roles is deterministic since he highlights how potential barriers limit teachers instead of portraying teachers as active agents. Therefore, the following elaboration on his four key areas incorporate aspects of the theoretical underpinnings (see section 3.3.), including references to other work on teachers’ agency.

3.4.1 Political and institutional context

Van Ommering’s (2017) first suggested key area strongly aligns with the application of institutional power and SRA in this study (see sections 3.2 & 3.3), as he argues here that education and teaching need to be investigated as part of a larger political and institutional context. This can reveal significant constraints for teachers work, such as weak rule of law and corruption that are “an attribute of decades (if not centuries) of armed strife and insecurity that has fostered a political and institutional culture in which rights-holders face great challenges in holding duty bearers to account” (van Ommering, 2017, p. 111). In Ethiopia, this larger political

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\(^{10}\) Van Ommering (2017) does not explicitly name the four categories that he suggested, but once calls them “key areas” (2017, p. 106), which is why they are called key areas in this research.
and institutional context contains the described tradition of employing decentralised structures for the execution of rulers’ infrastructural power. It further refers to an overall culture of oppression by the political elites established through centuries of autocratic rule and violent oppression of dissent. Following SRA, the education sector is densely structured by those dynamics and provides constraints as well as opportunities for (non-)action.

3.4.2 Teachers’ relationships

The emphasis on communication and relationships of teachers with other educational stakeholders (teachers, students, school principals, parents) makes van Ommering’s framework unique. Other studies on teachers’ role in conflict-affected countries (with the exception of Wilson, 2000) reveal little about how teachers navigate their relationships with said actors in schools under the conditions of conflict. For Lebanon, van Ommering found that the political and social context strongly impacts teachers’ relationships, which can pose more difficulties and obstacles: missing stability and accountability from higher levels translated into hierarchical structures in schools in which principals coercively implement their decisions and teachers mistrust each other. How students want to be taught collided with the principals’ instructions for teachers to strictly control students. Hence, teachers found themselves trapped between different expectations, which resulted in a loss of motivation and inaction. Following van Ommering’s call to pay due attention to how context (see section 3.4.1) impacts the relationships of teachers with other stakeholders added a tremendous value to this research. It will be shown how different logistical techniques of Ethiopia’s oppressive dissemination of infrastructural power have a bearing on teachers’ relationships with their colleagues, the principals and the students. Moreover, will be discussed how those relationships then affect teachers’ work, motivation and behaviour.

3.4.3 Teachers’ experiences

Widely acknowledged in research on teachers in conflict-affected areas are the paralysing and devastating effects of teachers’ experiences with (armed) conflict on their work. Trauma, lack of motivation and insecurity of teachers are only a few examples (Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016; Brandt, 2019; Pherali, 2013; Smith et al., 2014; GCPEA, 2018). Van Ommering urges researchers to not only look at large-scale attacks, but also at the “small but fundamental acts of violence in everyday life” of teachers (van Ommering, 2017, p. 106). Other scholars
highlight that experiences with violence decreased teachers’ interest in their profession as their focus was to “survive” and to protect themselves (Pherali, 2013; Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016). In this context, Pantic (2015) stresses that teachers need to be deemed as “whole persons with their past experiences, emotions, commitments and concerns for their own well-being” (p. 763) and the well-being of their families.

Ethiopia is not in a situation of armed war, but it will be shown that the experiences that teachers make with the state’s oppression mechanisms have a strong bearing on their teaching.

3.4.4 Teachers’ tools

Lastly, van Ommering advocates for considering the tools available to teachers (van Ommering, 2017, p. 106) for dealing with conflict in the classroom. Those tools can be curricula and teaching material, that often reinforce conflict by further marginalising ethnic and political groups: “Where political and ethno-religious elites control governmental institutions, the textbooks and curriculum may exclude the narratives, history, religion, ethnic identity, culture, and perspectives of other groups.” (Smith et al., p. 10). Teachers might, however, take actions to overcome the constraints created by those tools: Fernandes (1988) stresses that teachers might organise alternative curricula in situations where the textbooks might intensify conflict. Vom Hau’s (2008) analysis reveals how Argentinian teachers undermined curriculum reforms by refusing to teach nationalist topics to contest the government-imposed ideology. This perspective underlines that “Infrastructural power is a two-way street: It also enables civil society parties to control the state” (Mann, 1993, p. 59).

Other tools are the (lack of) teachers’ professional development, teaching methodologies and general patterns of discourse on conflict (van Ommering, 2017). The latter involves the silencing of political topics and conflict in schools to give children a “time-out”. In Lebanon, this constrained teachers in addressing conflict dynamics and students’ questions (van Ommering, 2017). Freire (1970/1993) argues that teaching students to be passive recipients of knowledge is typical for oppressive systems. He outlines that teachers in those systems are obliged to employ “banking education”-methods, meaning the teacher-centred imposition of knowledge instead granting an active role to students. This sustains the system of oppression: “…this concept [banking education] is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it” (Freire, 1970/1993, S. 76). He stresses that for transforming systems of
oppression, teachers need to deeply engage students. Transmitting critical and liberating messages by imposing them instead of by allowing students to reflect on them would again lead to education in favour of the oppressor (Freire, 1970/1993). As van Ommering (2017) argues, addressing critical topics in an interactive way might however be limited by structural constraints. Therefore, this research carefully looks at tools like curricula, textbooks and overall silencing cultures. While this study does not attempt to provide a pedagogical analysis of how teachers’ strategies enable critical thinking, the concepts of critical educationalists (non-banking education and teaching strategies outlined in 3.3) operationalise how teachers can exercise their agency for contestation of control structures. Hence, the outlined pedagogical strategies serve as stance for looking at teachers’ actions in classrooms to examine how teachers either comply with or challenge EPRDF’s oppression.

3.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual scheme portrays the application of the described theoretical concepts in the Ethiopian context of this study (see figure 1). It is built on Hays’s (2002b, p. 131) scheme of the SRA and further inspired by versions of SRA frameworks in Lopes Cardozo (2011, p. 40) and Brandt (2014, p. 18). It reads from left to right. The Ethiopian political context refers to both the origin of infrastructural power and the strategically selective context (box on the left). It includes the previously outlined characteristics of the Ethiopian political context (see chapters 1.1 & 2). The arrow next to it represents EPRDF’s political intervention (elements outlined in 1.1 and further explored in 5) in the education sector that stems from the political context. The education sector is constituent of both the decentralised administrative structures in education, curricula and schools. As the round thin arrows illustrate, the political context constrains or enables the creation of strategically selective structures, while the education sector can both reproduce or challenge the structures of the political context. Based on van Ommering’s (2017) key areas, teachers’ position (circle next to education sector box) is marked by relationships with their counterparts in schools, experiences and tools. The slight overlap with the education sector demonstrates that teachers are part of the education sector. However, the arrows that surround the two forms depict that strategically selective structures of the education sectors can both constrain and enable teachers in their strategic actions, while teachers are able to reproduce or partially change those structures. The bold arrow right to the teachers’ circle illustrates teachers’ agency as strategic manoeuvring based on the enabling and
constraining structures and their relationships, both impacted by EPRDF’s political intervention. This manoeuvring then leads to specific strategic actions and coping with the political intervention. Based on the action, teachers either reinforce or transform the current structural dynamics of their experiences, relationships and tools which then again either transform or reproduce the structures in the education sector that were created by political intervention. The strategic actions always lead to increased strategic knowledge, meaning that teachers make (in)direct experiences with the political intervention and then orient their future manoeuvring and strategic actions on that.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

In accordance with CST, theory of resistance and SRA, this framework illustrates that teachers can both reinforce and challenge the structures that EPRDF’s control installed (red arrows). Simultaneously, the political context and infrastructural power constrain and enable the establishment of certain strategically selective structures which makes certain actions of teachers less likely than others.
4 Research design and methodology

The research was carried out in Ethiopia’s capital for a total duration of three months from September to November 2018. The research in schools took place in the beginning of the first new school year under Abiy’s rule. It is qualitative study that includes 64 semi-structured interviews, 4 focus group discussions and 39 classroom observations. This chapter provides a description on the research design of this study. First and most importantly, it outlines ethical considerations before and during the research with a link to the researcher’s positionality. Subsequently, it describes the methodology and data collection process. The final section delineates how the collected data was analysed for this thesis.

Critical realism as epistemological and ontological lens to reality and knowledge creation in this research has already been illustrated in depth in chapter 3.1. The following chapter makes links to critical realism and show how the concept guided the research design.

4.1 Research Ethics

Previous elaborations on Ethiopia’s long tradition of elimination of political dissent (see section 2.2) demonstrate how sensitive political issues are. Therefore, ethical considerations played an essential role in my study. Research ethics, as Bryman (2012) phrases it, revolve around questions like “How should we treat the people on whom we conduct research?” (2012, p. 130). Therefore, I first speak about my own positionality and reflexivity in the research as it closely relates to the ontological and epistemological stance of critical realism (see section 3.1) and consequently guides the entire methodology chapter. Afterwards, this chapter discusses two stages of ethical consideration based on a division by Guillemin and Gillam (2004). At first, I elaborate on how I approached what Guillemin and Gillam call procedural ethics, then I speak about the application of ethics in practice. Afterwards, I connect my own reflexivity/positionality with the other two dimensions.

4.1.1 Critical lens, positionality and reflexivity

Based on the ontological and epistemological stance of critical realism (see section 3.1) and my aim to identify means of infrastructural power, my goal was to take apart “normalized notions […] to denounce systems of power and domination […] and the political structures that support
them” (Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg & Monzó, 2017, p. 419). Critical research, as Kincheloe et al. (2017) argue, is “connected to an attempt to confront structures of oppression” (p. 421). Furthermore, they point out that critical researchers do not emulate the artificial construct of the researcher’s neutrality, but “announce their partisanship in the struggle for a better world” (Kincheloe et al., 2017, p. 421).

In this context, I engage with my positionality as critical researcher with multiple identities. Positionality can be understood as “one’s position in relation to others, including the research participants” (Hynes, 2014, p. 80) and scrutinising one's positionality means to “thematize our participation in the world we study” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5). Poole and Mauthner (2014) argue that interactions in engaged research are always “situated historically, politically and culturally as well as mediated by race, gender, […] and […] other identities” (p. 465). This involved a constant reflection process on how my identity as a white, young, western woman who does not have experiences with being politically oppressed but has a strong self-appointed mandate to confront oppression affects my research. This means not only to look at how participants react towards me and how I interact with them, but also how my own background affects my interpretation of social phenomena. To a certain extent, being a ferenji (term widely used in Ethiopia for “white foreigner”) allowed for easier access to compounds of schools, FMoE and AAEB that are highly protected in terms of security. In the first contact with the participants, my outsider-position sparked both curiosity and suspicion. Yet, being accompanied by my local translator seemed to make participants feel more comfortable. Looking back, I am convinced that my outsider-position facilitated a research process marked by critical scrutiny. Firstly, being ferenji and my short-term stay suggested that I was not involved in the ruling party’s politics which might have enabled a more open conversation. Secondly, the fact that I was unfamiliar with EPRDF’s the systems of oppression meant that participants had to take a step back and unpack their experiences when narrating them for me. Dialogues between the translator and the participants showed how much Ethiopians have internalised and normalised the government’s oppression: statements from participants such as “I am sure your translator knows this - no one here is encouraged to think critically” or the translator asking for further explanation of quarrels with the government by saying “I understand, but give me more details so that I can make it understandable for her” were frequent. Engaging with oppression based on literature about Ethiopia, the interactions with the participants and local friends was a protracted reflective process which allowed me to unfold the faces of state pressure for this research.
4.1.2 Procedural ethics

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) define procedural ethics as the approval that is sought before starting the research. This involved notifying my project at the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD). It was helpful as it required me to protect participants’ identity by developing scrambling keys and thinking about secure data storage (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, I had to seek approval at the FMoE, where I would receive a formal letter to seek approval at AAEB, where I would then be given the permission to access schools.

When seeking for approval at FMoE, I started to encounter first challenges in relation to the sensitivity of politics. After being interviewed by me and reviewing the interview schedules for the field, the head of the directorate11 (I60) in the FMoE and one of his staff (I61) who agreed to facilitate contact with AAEB, schools and universities almost refused to collaborate. They said that “no teacher will want to talk about politics” and “your questions are too sensitive, too political”. It is relevant to note here that the most sensitive questions I asked at that point were “How do you perceive the root causes for conflict in Ethiopia?” and “How do you think the country might change under Abiy’s rule?”. Only after long negotiations, the directorate referred me to AAEB, where officials were similarly suspicious and not cooperative. “Research, nowadays, it is sensitive” and similar statements were made a couple of times. One official at AAEB told us not to conduct focus group discussions because group discussions might lead to protest. Receiving the research permission without the translator’s persuasiveness would have been impossible. In the field, school principals were collaborative as I had official approval from their authorities.

Poole and Mauthner (2004) argue that even though procedural ethics remind researchers to protect participants and to reflect on risks of harms, it does not tackle ethical issues that arise in various forms in the field. Those concerns are addressed by the concept of ethics in practice.

4.1.3 Ethics in practice and reflexivity

Ethics in practice are here understood as “everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of research” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 263). In Guillemin & Gillam’s (2004) understanding, the process of qualitative research is “made up of “ethically important

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11 Further specification not available to maintain anonymity.
moments” (2004, p. 265) which can be both smaller and larger dilemmas (e.g. participant starts crying as topic touched upon a trauma) that require appropriate reactions of the researcher.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, I was required to both handle confidentiality and those ethically important moments to minimise the risk of doing harm. Harm is understood as both physical and psychological damage or danger, including loss of self-esteem or stress (Diener and Crandall, 1978 as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 135). I did so by strictly practicing the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent, meaning that I gave potential participants enough time to read the letter of consent and to decide whether they want to be involved. Moreover, I usually waited until participants brought political issues up themselves, and only asked political questions very carefully after building trust (Poole & Mauthner, 2014). If participants got uncomfortable, I directly withdrew. When interviews got very political, I remained careful and asked open questions so that participants could choose what to share. Furthermore, the fact that the research took place in an environment where political statements can have harmful consequences (see chapters 1 and 2), ensuring confidentiality was key. Besides refraining from discussing personal information in relation to participants with third parties, confidentiality in this research refers to that “Nothing reported from the study, in print or in lecture, should permit identification of respondents” (Weiss, 1994, p. 131 as cited in Kaiser, 2009, p. 1634). This thesis thus refrains from specifying the levels of schooling of the schools in the sample (see section 4.2.2). Despite all efforts, it is due to the omnipresence of surveillance in Ethiopia’s education sector (see chapter 5) questionable whether confidentiality can be 100% ensured. Furthermore, procedural ethics required me to notify the research at both FMoE and AAEB. The official who granted the permission at AAEB only gave me access to certain schools, which means that he partly knows which schools were in the sample (more in section 4.2.2).

Towards the end of the research, ethics in practice involved self-protection and respecting boundaries. Teachers who had extreme experiences with political violence such as imprisonment or suspension increasingly recommended teachers from other schools who made similar experiences as potential interviewees. After careful consideration, I decided that the political situation was not stable enough to pursue the research with a clear focus on politically attacked education personnel. A research with such focus might have led to very insightful outcomes, but would have had unpredictable risks for both the potential participants and myself. Therefore, I saw it as my responsibility to prioritise safety over research outcomes.
4.2 Methods and data collection

This chapter addresses different aspects of the data collection in the following order: first, it demonstrates how linguistic issues were solved during fieldwork. Secondly, it elaborates on the choice of research site and sample. Then, it introduces the multiple case method as an overall approach. Afterwards, the research methods as well as their concrete use and value for the research are outlined. As each method contributed to answering the sub-research questions, there will be no attempt to divide the methods based on which sub-research question they addressed.

4.2.1 Working with a translator

To ensure the collection of in-depth information, I worked with an Ethiopian translator who was recommended by a university professor. She is an Amharic native speaker with a very good command of English. Her tasks included the facilitation of interviews with teachers or school principals in Amharic by translating the questions asked to Amharic and translating the participants’ answers back to English. She was also present for classroom observations.

The translator’s knowledge about political challenges in Ethiopia as a student of political science and gender studies tremendously befitted the research. While I made all relevant decisions about the sample and the implementation of research strategies, she gave recommendations on how to approach sensitive topics and how to understand recurrent political terms (e.g. one-to-five (1-5, see section 5.2.2), spy (see 5.2)). Our daily discussions and close cooperation helped me to make sense of the complex phenomena in which the participants’ statements were embedded. She additionally translated casual conversation among persons in the school that she overheard, which allowed me to grasp the dynamics of the everyday interactions in schools.

4.2.2 Multiple case study and sample

The research took place in the chartered city of Addis Ababa12. Addis Ababa was chosen as a research site because it accommodates various ethnicities (Ethiopian Government Portal, 2019).

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12 Addis Ababa’s total population is difficult to specify as the latest population census that is accessible online is from 2007 that states that Addis Ababa has around 3,3846 million habitants (FDRE Population Census Commission, 2008), but assumptions exist that the census under-estimated the city’s population (World Population Review, 2019).
with different political preferences. I assumed that the data would be more varied due to this diversity. 

Generally, the sample included a variety of national and regional educational stakeholders from different directorates of the MoE and the AAEB, professors (education specialists) from AAU and IPSS, staff from different UN organisations as well as staff from the Ethiopian Teacher Association (ETA). Those participants were recruited based on their expert position (expert sampling) and recommendations (snowball sampling). Interviewing those actors allowed for the collection of contextual information. Since teachers are at the centre of this research, most participants are actors in schools.

The research in schools was conducted based on a multiple case study design. A case study refers to “an in-depth examination of a single social unit” (Dick, 2014, p. 89), and a multiple case means that more than one case has been researched (Bryman, 2012). In the research, schools were treated as “single social units”, which means that I attempted to establish a holistic image of every school. This was done by interviewing not only teachers, but administrative leaders in every school (the principal and one vice principal, from now on referred to as administrators) and support staff (ETA representative and school counsellor). The (multiple) case method is highly compatible with the critical realist stance, as critical realism aims to “seek out generative mechanisms that are responsible for observed regularities” (Bryman, 2012, p. 74) which case studies enable to reveal due to their depth. I used multiple cases to see if patterns stayed similar in a variety of settings: I was interested in seeing if there was a continuity regarding the degree of political intervention and teachers’ interaction with it across different schools. The official at AEEB who granted the research permission insisted to only give me access to six schools, but he respected my request to include schools that were administered by different sub-city education bureaus (SEB) and located different parts of the city to ensure a variety of settings. I was not satisfied with the fact that a political official determined the sample as I was afraid that he assigned me “model schools” which would lead to unvaried data. However, all schools turned out to have little in common in terms of infrastructure, leadership style, student performance, location and age. In order to reduce participants’ exposure to risk, I have decided to forego detailed description of the schools in terms of school type (primary, secondary or preparatory), size and location. All I can disclose is that all four schools were urban government schools at the same level of schooling.
The aim concerning the teacher sample was to interview around 8-11 teachers per school of the subjects of history, Civics and Ethical Education (CEE), economics and English. The reason for this “social science” focus was the assumption that those teachers might have more exposure to political intervention as their topics naturally involve discussions about the country. This assumption was partly confirmed by the research, but it will be shown that all teachers are generally at risk of being politically attacked. For the one focus group discussion per school, I randomly recruited teachers of diverse subjects. The multiple case study also incorporated elements of an extended case study (Small, 2009) since I changed the approach to methods or recruitment when experiences from the prior school showed that alterations would be beneficial. Also, I maintained flexibility by interviewing more teachers of other subjects based on participant’s recommendations (snowball sampling). Furthermore, even though teachers’ experiences made within the four schools were at focus, insights from previous schools were acknowledged as well to deepen the understanding about their individual agency.

4.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured, open ended interviews were the main research method due to the interest in “the lived experiences of people as told by those people” (Poole & Mauthner, 2014, p. 463). In total, I conducted 64 interviews, of which 41 were with teachers (see Annex 1). To ensure a confidential atmosphere, sufficient time was scheduled to build trust in the beginning of the interview. Similarly, we conducted the interviews in places where no third parties could listen and in the preferred language of the participant. The length of an interview ranged between 30 and 90 minutes. The depth and privacy of those interviews facilitated the collection of delicate, political data. Around half of the interviews in schools were conducted in Amharic, while interviews with national and regional education administrators as well as with university and UN stakeholders were done without translator. For each stakeholder group, an interview schedule (see Annex 2-5) was developed based on the theoretical underpinnings (see chapter 3) with a strong focus on van Ommering’s (2017) four key areas and inspired by interviews with educational experts of UN organisations. Those schedules included both specific questions and “grand tour questions” (Poole & Mauthner, 2014, p. 464) like “tell me about….” or “please provide an example for….”. Using those guides as orientation allowed for a flexibility to discuss other relevant topics brought up by participants, to prioritise certain topics over others and to ask spontaneous questions (Poole & Mauthner, 2014). Moreover, employed sequential interviewing (Brandt, 2014) which relates to the extended case method (Small, 2009). Informed
by which questions proved to be stimulating relevant discussions in prior interviews, over time I eliminated questions, specified them or added new topics to the interview schedule.

4.2.4 Focus Group Discussions

In each school, one focus group discussion was conducted (4 in total) for the purpose of exploring the topic of teachers’ challenges in depth (see Annex 5) in depth and of observing discussions among teachers (Bryman, 2012). The discussions were difficult to plan as teachers were barely available at the same time due to different schedules and their engagement in other part-time jobs. The advantage of those discussions was to collect a variety of perspectives and to observe interesting dialogues between the participants. The shortcomings were that due to the sensitivity of political topics, participants did not feel comfortable enough for critical dialogue or vivid discussions.

4.2.5 Classroom observations

In total, 36\textsuperscript{13} of the 41 interviewed teachers were observed once while teaching for the main purpose of contextualising the data from interviews to by seeing teachers’ behaviour in their daily work. As Carron and Chau (1996) point out, what teachers say and then actually practice in the classroom is often quite different. A limitation of classroom observations is that teachers might have behaved differently when being observed. In my case, students were irritated by the presence of a ferenji at the beginning of the lesson, but after around 15 minutes the atmosphere seemed less tense. To guide the observations, a semi-structured classroom observation guide that focused on the active interaction between teachers and students to examine whether critical discussions was developed (see Annex 6). In addition, special attention was paid to how sensitive topics were addressed by the teacher (mostly in history or CEE) and if contextual, political or ethical examples were given. The translator filled in the sheet as well, which allowed to “triangulate the data and lessen bias from one set of eyes” (Roseman, 2018, p. 49). In school, 4 I stopped to observe each interviewed teacher since I realised that I had reached saturation: with a few exceptions, teachers across all schools employed the same inactive teaching methods. Yet, classroom observations were helpful for

\textsuperscript{13}Additional to those 36 observations, 3 more teachers were observed but dropped out for interviews (39 observations in total).
me to grasp overall patterns of teacher-learner interaction, even if they only directly contribute to the answering of sub research question d).

4.3 Data analysis

All interview and focus group discussion were recorded and transcribed. Transcribing all English recordings myself allowed me to reflect on my own weaknesses and strengths of moderating interviews (Bryman, 2012; Poole & Mauthner, 2014). In addition to the field translator who transcribed the most politically sensitive interviews, three translators who were recommended to me by other researchers transcribed the remaining recordings in Amharic. All of them signed strict confidentiality agreements (see Annex 7) to not speak about the content of interviews to any third party and obliged them to eliminate all notes or files from the research after finishing their assignments (Bryman, 2012). Coding, which refers to organising “data into smaller manageable chunks” (Poole & Mauthner, 2014, p. 465) was done as followed: based on recurrent topics regarding the research focus in all interviews that were identified in a pre-scan of the files during and after transcription, codes (larger categories) and sub-codes (smaller categories that operationalised the larger ones) were developed. Those codes and sub-codes were entered into Nvivo12, a software for qualitative data analysis. All transcribed files were then coded based on the pre-existing codes. If certain topics reappeared during coding that were not included in the code-list, new codes were added, and previously coded interviews were scanned again in the software for those topics.

Quotes that represent patterns of participants’ experiences with certain topics (Brandt, 2014; Lopes Cardozo, 2011) are used in the finding section to portray the researched phenomena in an authentic way. As I did not recruit a sample with specific experiences of state pressure (e.g. imprisonment), I discovered different experiences of teachers with political control. Those experiences not only show the various faces EPRDF’s control in the education sector, but also unveils how it impacts the individual biographies of teachers. I therefore decided to exhibit them as cases in the finding section by highlighting them in case illustration boxes.

Both data collection and data analysis were impeded by participants’ carefulness and fear to reveal sensitive information. Vague replies, defensiveness when political topics were brought up and the fact that some participants indicated in the beginning of the interview that they will not talk about politics, suggest that the absence of statements concerning the ruling
party’s control is not an indicator of an absence of experience with this control. Likewise, I recognise that actors operate through implicit knowledge and are not always fully aware of surrounding conditions (Brandt, 2014; Scott & Usher, 2011) of state pressure. Hence, I acknowledged in the research that their statements do not always reveal their full experience or the reality of the social world. As Venkatesh (2013, p. 6) formulates it:

In my own work, I have found that subjects are not always conscious of (and able to articulate) unwritten rules and codes of conduct. (…) The scholastic fallacy, as Bourdieu writes, would be to fail to understand that the subject’s inability to state such rules of the game is not necessarily a measure of the nonexistence or lack of importance of such rules for the game being played.

4.4 Limitations

The data collection involved a constant balancing the risk of doing harm and scaring participants by asking too sensitive (political) questions, while attempting to collect relevant data. In this constant negotiation process, I often decided against asking sensitive questions that might have led to interesting political information (such as questions about political partisanship) because participants were uncomfortable. A few participants mentioned that they would not have shared sensitive political information if Abiy was not in power. Nevertheless, it was challenging to overcome participants’ carefulness concerning topics that were slightly political. As revealed in 4.1.3, it was unclear to which extent political issues can be discussed without endangering the participants, the translator or the researcher.

Linguistic issues were efficiently handled thanks to a smooth cooperation with the field translator, and all teachers were fluent in English and able to correct her translations in case of a misunderstanding. Furthermore, having different translators ensured that data collected in Amharic was not biased by the interpretations of one person only. As translation always involves interpretation, language is still a limitation in this study. Moreover, being fluent in Amharic would have allowed me to understand the everyday conversations happening in schools which could have deepened my overall understanding of the field.

Lastly, it is important to stress that the findings only portray the situation of an urban setting, as political interventions in schools in Somali or Oromia region is more brutal (GCPEA, 2018; Horne, 2016; Amnesty International, 2018). This suggests that infrastructural power and
control occur in different forms in those settings. Even though the data might reveal general patterns of EPRDF’s control in the education sector, it is not representative of the situation of the extremely diverse nation.

**Gender sensitivity**

Ethiopia is known for ranking low in terms of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2018). Women are underrepresented in leadership positions and restricted from participating in decision-making processes in all sectors (Gebru & Demeke, 2015), including the education sector (Ademe & Singh, 2015; Panigrahi, 2013). In schools, men largely outnumber women and dominate in leadership positions, while women are often deprived from participation in decision-making processes and training opportunities (Panigrahi, 2013; Ademe & Singh, 2015; Mitchell, 2017). During fieldwork, none of the school principals or vice principals were women. Women barely accounted for one fourth of the total number of teachers in each school. Likewise, all participants from the educational governance level were male. Even though efforts were made to include women’s voices, such as particularly asking for female participants and ensuring that women have enough space to contribute to the male-dominated focus group discussions, only around four participants per school were female. The sample is exemplary of the under-representativeness of women in the Ethiopian education sector as it only includes 14 female participants out of 77 in total. Even though it can be argued that this proportion reflects the real situation of the Ethiopian education sector, I consider it a limitation of the study that it contributes to the general pattern of excluding female voices from relevant debates.
5 Teachers’ interactions with EPRDF’s control in the education sector

This chapter outlines through which means Ethiopia’s government controls the education sector by addressing the first sub-research question: How does EPRDF maintain control over the education sector? As those control systems have a strong bearing on teachers’ relationships with their counterparts, this chapter also contributes to answering the sub-research question How do teachers navigate their relationships with colleagues and administrators in relation to EPRDF’s intervention? Since EPRDF’s control involves the crackdown of political dissent, this chapter answers the research question How do teachers cope with direct and indirect experiences of EPRDF’s oppression of dissent?

Following SRA, the findings presented in this chapter create a deeper understanding of how EPRDF’s oppressive infrastructural power may play out in the education sector in the form of political intervention. This enables the analysis of how the politicised education sector offers constraints and opportunities to teachers’ agency, making certain actions more likely than others. The following sections examine the government’s control measures. Firstly, EPRDF’s hierarchical chain is described, in which power positions are usually occupied by EPRDF members (or bureaucrats loyal to EPRDF14). Next, the dynamics of surveillance systems in the schools are illustrated. Both sections address how teachers navigate their relationships with the school administrators and other teachers. Subsequently, one sub-section describes which actions EPRDF takes against dissenters and how teachers react to those actions. Before concluding the chapter, the last sub-sector sheds light on the government’s takeover of the Ethiopian Teacher Association (ETA).

5.1 The hierarchical chain: control from top to bottom

“We see in Ethiopia most of the time, the requirement to get into governmental institutions is to be involved in [the governments] politics.”

Teacher at school 1 (I3)

14 Loyal/affiliated to EPRDF means that a person is not necessarily a member, but has agreed to support their strategies, intervention and ideology.
As outlined in the context chapter (see section 2.3), the government’s decentralised governance structures at region (city in Addis Ababa), zone (sub-city in Addis Ababa) and woreda level are responsible for the administration of schools. A closer review of critical literature shows that EPRDF efficiently uses those administrative structures as arms to execute its infrastructural power by firstly appointing their loyal members to leadership positions (Rawlence, 2010b) and secondly by ensuring that only EPRDF-loyal citizens can benefit from the administrative support of those entities. Rawlence (2010b) discovered that non-EPRDF members and suspected opponents were denied working opportunities, farmers were denied fertilisers and seeds, and payments were withheld from workers in governmental food programmes. For the education sector, findings from the study for the development of EER suggest that the job positions in education administration offices are not filled based on the candidates’ qualifications: “There are education bureau heads that have no background in the field of education. In many cases, the academic level of school and bureau heads is lower than that of teachers.” (Teferra et al., 2018, p. 41). Besides this form of controlling local entities, Rawlence (2010b) showed that kebeles and woredas serve as means of surveillance. He found that kebeles keep lists of people (potentially) in opposition and who supposedly follow other political parties than EPRDF. The data collected for this research revealed that teachers were highly aware of this hierarchised structure as a manifestation of the government’s control in schools. The following interview of a teacher of school 1 is illustrative of how teachers perceive the hierarchy:

Researcher: If you have problems with the students, or problems with your salary, who do you talk to about that?

Teacher: (pauses, laughs) We have no chance to ask anywhere. Because, there is a chain, the hierarchical chain. From school principal to there. If you go there, to the Addis Ababa Education Bureau, to say something about our problem, they are not accepting you. […] And the woreda, zone, and Addis Ababa Education Bureau, when we go there, they don't accept you, because it is interconnected with each other. From school principal to there. Even to the Ministry of Education.

Researcher: So, the school principal reports that teachers are causing problems and they know?

Teacher: Yes. For example, if I tell my problem to the upper officials, and they don't accept me, they only accept the school principals. So, they reject you, and even if it's not true, the school principals will be accepted by the higher levels. (I8)
This *hierarchical chain* played out in the life of teachers as an omnipresent authority that somehow is always informed about who was cooperating with the school administration and who was not. Similar to the quote, another teacher reported that he frequently accompanied his colleague to the sub-city education bureau to report concerns. The bureaucrats refused to help as the school administration informed the office beforehand that those two teachers were known to be “problematic” and to criticise the administrators (I6). Other teachers replied similarly, stating that they were not heard by the SEB, WEB or AAEB concerning general problems they faced. Several teachers claimed that school administrators directly inform those bureaucrats, about the behaviour of all teachers (I2, I10, I11, I34, I38, I41). The cited interviewees perceived the *hierarchical chain* as a paralysing, self-enclosed system in which they have no chance to seek support or make their voices heard. This is well-expressed by a teacher at school 1: “I just keep silent. I don't have the chance to express my feeling. Nobody is willing to accept or hear your opinion.” (I17). A case study from an urban school in Tigray showed that particularly teachers who are not EPRDF members feel intimidated by the *woreda* (Siyum & Gebremedhin, 2015). Teachers saw the unqualified, politically appointed actors in education bureaus on different levels as a threat to positive change, as the speech of this teacher depicts:

> They are assigning incapable rulers and politicians who cannot maintain peace. You have to uproot the problem, the challenges, but they don't have the capacity to address the problems from the grassroot level. Dr. Abiy tries to regulate and to control the problem, but those people don't disappear at province level, at district level, they don't want such transformation, political transformation. Teacher at school 1 (I11)

Confirming the power of this hierarchical chain, school principals described that the SEB and WEB are very present in the school environment through meetings and regular inspections (I42, I44, I46, I49). In accordance with that, findings from other Ethiopian schools confirm that school principals have little autonomy and space for decision-making as the *woreda* undermines their decisions and is omnipresent in their work (Mitchell, 2015; Workneh, 2012). The principal of school 2 stated: “We [the administrators] are overruled from our bosses who are political authorities.” (I44).

**School administration politically appointed**

“The school is not led by professionals, but by politicians, appointed by the government.”

Teacher at school 1 (I12)
Teachers throughout all schools underscored that school principals and vice principals came to their position based on EPRDF membership and compliance with political ideology rather than work experience or having the required qualification (I1, I2, I3, I12, I17, I23, I27 I30, I31, I34, I36, I39, I40). The statement of a teacher at school 3 illustrates how the politically assigned principals are an element of the control system:

Most principals of the school are directly or indirectly the member of the leading party of this state. So, they are expected to shape the workers of this school that are in opposition of this party. So, they can influence, directly or indirectly, the position of those teachers, not only those of teachers, but the position of all workers of this institution. (I27)

A teacher of school 4, forced to work as a vice principal for four years, stated that his position involved political assignments:

I wanted to be a teacher, but they appointed me to become a vice principal. I worked for about four years. But I did not agree with them. They wanted me to participate in political affairs, doing such rude things rather than educational activities, I am an educationalist and my profession is education. So, I was always quiet with it.15 (I38)

The interviewed principals and vice principals did not indicate whether they were members of EPRDF. Concerning the access to the school leader position, administrators gave vague replies, such as “…my interest and the availability of the work coincided” (I44) The principal of school 4 started claimed that, when he started his new position in 2018 under Prime Minister Abiy, a merit-based, competitive and transparent process of hiring school administrators was in place. Before, principals have according to him not been hired based on their qualifications or work experience (I48).

Figure 2 below provides an example on how the interconnectedness of the school, all levels of educational governance and the justice system under EPRDF’s control can play out in the life of a vice principal and teacher.

15 More about this vice principal’s experience in figure 2.
Figure 2: Case illustration box 1

“They have chains everywhere”

During the time that teacher Tekeste® (*=real name changed by author) worked as vice principal for four years, he was falsely held responsible for forging the students’ results of a national exam. Other administrators of school 4 let all students pass from one year to the next by ignoring the real results of the exam to increase the woreda ranking of the school. When Tekeste came back from his summer training and found that all students passed to the exam, he quickly noted the mistake based on students’ actual results. Tekeste directly addressed the case to the school administration, expelled the concerned students from class and tried to convince the SEB to give students another opportunity to sit the exam. After negotiating, Tekeste received a letter from the SEB that declared him responsible for the forgery. Consequently, the school administration took him to the discipline committee of the school, where it was decided to degrade him from vice principal to a teacher. This step equalled taking him down one level in the salary scale. Despite that, the school administration arbitrarily decided to take Tekeste down three levels, putting him at the entry level salary despite decades of teaching experience. He tried to reverse the unlawful decision of the school administration by speaking to the civil service, but they decided in line with the administration. When Tekeste attempted to take legal action, his case was dismissed despite the testimony of his colleagues that he was not present at time of the forgery. The responsible bureaucrats were already informed of his case and decided in line with the school principal. “They [the school administration] have chains everywhere and even with judges, all of them are under control of the government”, stated Tekeste. Simultaneously, the students who wrongly passed to the next year could continue their education despite not being qualified. However, as parents were uncertain about what would happen to their children, they went in masses to the SEB and AAEB, attracting the attention of the Ethiopian Satellite and Television and Radio (ESAT), a media organisation that is known to oppose the government. When ESAT started reporting on the case, the schools’ grade forgery and Tekeste’s case became popular. As the school administration already thought of Tekeste as an opponent since he refused to carry out political activities for the ruling party in the school, they considered the connection with ESAT an official confirmation of their assumption. Tekeste became publicly known as an opposer, received threats via phone calls and was evicted by his landlord. At the time of the interview, he was still receiving the salary of a novice teacher. He described that this process lowered his self-esteem and confidence and that ever since those events, he has been working silently and obediently to avoid attracting attention (I38).
Despite the extreme nature of Tekeste’s case, his experience illustrates the pervasiveness of the social control of EPRDF’s infrastructural power. EPRDF’s agents on different levels cooperate extensively to intervene when someone is not in line and can expand their influence even unto uninvolved people (e.g. the public and Tekeste’s landlord). Finally, Tekeste’s case depicts the powerlessness of teachers in a self-enclosed system of control. It also proves the power position of the principal as political official whose decisions will be supported by higher authorities. Further implications of the principals’ political appointment for teachers will be addressed in the next section.

**Teachers’ agency regarding the relationship with the school principal**

The fact that school principals are an essential element of EPRDF’s control structures had a bearing on how teachers navigated the relationships with their leaders. Moreover, it also had different consequences for teachers’ strategic actions in coping with the control.

Firstly, teachers mentioned that being managed by politically appointed principals who do necessarily have the required qualifications made them uneasy (I17) and angry (I2, I3, I12, I36). Teachers furthermore criticised principals for prioritising political activities over teaching-learning processes in the school (I28, I34, I40). Many teachers perceived administrators as active organs of EPRDF’s control. Complaints were that administrators frequently engage in political meetings and forcing teachers to attend those meetings (I23, I30, I32, I33, I34) or generally following political instruction from educational authorities (I35) instead of addressing teachers’ concerns. Rawlence (2010b) and Siyum and Gebremedhin (2015) reveal that political meetings for both teachers and students in schools are used for recruitment and EPRDF indoctrination. In this research, teachers recounted that those meetings aimed at reinforcing the government’s political agenda in education (I2, I3, I30, I33, I34, I37, I39, I40). One teacher outlined that the meetings took place to monitor negative attitudes against the government. He even described that teachers were ranked based on arbitrary observations about how loyal they are to the government, which includes not engaging in pro-government political discussions: “They provoke you; they gather you; they stalk! And they give you grade! ‘You didn’t talk! ABCD grade!’ In the meetings, even if you didn't talk. They provoke you. It is difficult to speak. Difficult to remain silent!” (I40).

Mirroring Rawlence’s findings of schools as places for new party member recruitment (2010b), teachers mentioned that their superiors asked them to become an EPRDF member
(T34, T44, T40, T42, T46). This phenomenon also happened in the schools they worked prior to the schools in the research sample. All those teachers claimed that they refused. Among those, one teacher stated that the school administration forced him to join the party (T34).

A frequent disagreement between teachers and administrators was the principal’s imposition of what and how teachers should teach to either directly promote the government’s ideas or to at least not interfere with them. Teachers perceived this as an infringement of their academic autonomy. Administrators pressured teachers to teach the content in its original government-praising\(^{16}\) way (I18, I22, I27, I28, I31, I34) and reproached or even threatened teachers when they did not comply with the administrators’ instructions (I6, I22, I28, I31, I34, I38). An example of this is that teachers were accused of student groups (I34), which was not allowed in the past (I35, I41), as non-government-initiated building of groups could mean opposition building.

Teachers stated to deal with those pressures and threats in different ways: for one teacher, the lack of freedom of expression in the classroom while being clearly instructed on what to teach, led to him wanting to leave the teaching profession:

> Nowadays, I just dream how to escape from this profession. With such poor feeling, how can I teach? This is not right, I propose to vice director. ‘You have to do it!’ How can I do it? I need more mind freedom; I am not a producer of soap. It is mind-slavery, it is not easy for expression. And all the teachers feel such things, but cannot express it, they rather just cry inside (laughs sadly). (I18)

Teachers also described that the instructions strongly limit their teaching as they cannot engage with students as they would like to, which is illustrated by this quote of a teacher in school 3:

> Teachers are not satisfied. Because they want to involve, they want to talk something, what they believe, in the classroom. That is not allowed. If they do, the information gets out, and they will be called to the director’s office or somewhere, they will be like: ‘Why you are doing this? You are simply a teacher, teach your subject and go out.’ This discourages teachers’ motivation. (I23)

Even though teachers from various subjects made those complaints (I2, I3, I5, I6, I14, I18, I22, I33, I44), there was consensus about history and CEE teachers being particularly affected as

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\(^{16}\) More about politicised curricula in chapter 6.
their curriculum is related to politics. For example, one teacher at school 3 described how the school principals pointed out the responsibility of promoting the government’s rule:

The vice principal […] said: ‘You civic teachers have a great responsibility to work in accordance with the constitution and its basic principles, and to guide other workers of this school. And even to guide the students to become good in behaviour and in their activities. But some of you civic teachers are teaching the students in a bad way. Why not just say that there is democracy here in Ethiopia? Why do you say: ‘There is no democracy in Ethiopia’? (I27)

Then, he mentioned that CEE teachers would often cope by criticising their principals: “Currently, most of us refuse this type of influence or pressure because we are saying that we need to have academic sovereignty. So, we are criticising our administrators. Some of us are refusing the administration.” (I27)

Teachers referred to those instructions from their principals as administrative pressure. Yet, not all teachers deemed principals as perpetrators of applying this pressure: Teachers who generally had a good relationship with their administrators praised them for keeping this administrative pressure as low as possible (I14, I15, I16, I22, I24, I29, I30). This shows that even teachers who are happy with their principals acknowledge that the political pressure does exist, appreciating how school principals navigate and channel these pressures, as the following quote of a teacher at school 3 depicts:

There is politics here. When the government sends a message, that is different to lessons or our work, it is like there, ‘you should do that one’. (loud) When you move, everything is politicised! But the managements are friendly. The environment is so free, so it is easy to work for us. It is difficult to keep it [politics] out of the school, but they simplify it, and they treat you accordingly. (I22)

A few teachers acknowledged the pressure that school principals received as a problem of the system. Since “you cannot go beyond systems” (I30), teachers did not hold their leaders accountable for neglecting teachers’ problems or putting political pressure on them. This implies that coping mechanisms for political intervention can involve the acceptance of oppression and being thankful when it is minimised (I22, I34, I41).

Participants also described that teachers who were critical towards government-imposed instructions in schools, or merely just critical in general, were disrespected by the school
administration (I2, I3, I36, I54). They even expressed that school leaders would monitor or wrongly punish teachers who frequently criticise events in schools and ask many questions:

They did not favour critical teachers, teachers who ask “why” in different kinds of meetings. They follow up on critical teachers, for instance, even though they come to school or to class regularly, they would punish them for missing classes. For teachers who are politically affiliated, they would let them pass, even though they don’t come regularly. (T34)

In this regard, teachers also commended impartial school principals and underscored their gratefulness about the principals who did not form political groups and refrained from punishing non-EPRDF members, unlike experiences in previous schools (I1). Concerning partial treatment, teachers felt like their performance was not assessed based on their activities as a teacher, but their loyalty to EPRDF (I1, I3, I17, I41). Likewise, Siyum & Gebremedhin’s (2015) research revealed that teachers in Tigray region perceived that their activities were assessed based on EPRDF (in Tigray TPLF) membership. Further, teachers highlighted that the school administration would specifically give financial opportunities such as working at the national exam (I17, I54), training opportunities (I10, I11, I17) and awards (I40) to teachers who have EPRDF connections and support their agenda in schools. In addition to the political bias, two teachers explicitly mentioned that their principals favoured teachers with the same ethnic background as themselves (I8, I17).

Despite all the complaints and issues about the school administration, only a few teachers stated that they would contest and ignore instructions or to confront principals about unjust practices. Throughout all schools, teachers seemed to (reluctantly) accept both the politicised dynamics and the principals’ instructions.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the administrators’ position as an element of EPRDF’s control system has different impacts on the teacher-administrator relationship. Teachers generally felt the administrative pressure and deemed principals either as perpetrators or as victims depending on the perceived application of this pressure. Perceiving them as perpetrators led to anger and in few cases to quarrel, which indicates a troubled relationship in which teachers cannot seek support or guidance. Perceiving principals as victims led teachers to approve of their effort, which might enable a positive relationship with administrators despite structural constraints. This (un)conscious submission of teachers to their authorities makes them more likely to reproduce the control structures they operate.
5.2 Surveillance

As pointed out in previous chapters (1 & 2), the ruling party relies on a vast surveillance system in all sectors. This sub-chapter will reveal through which means EPRDF monitors schools besides appointing its affiliates in administrative power positions on different levels.

5.2.1 EPRDF’s spies in schools

Within all four schools, teachers stated having either reason for suspicion or direct knowledge about the fact that their teacher colleagues or students carry out spying activities for EPRDF in the school compound (I2, I3, I5, I6, I10, I12, I13, I17, I22, I23, I26, I27, I28, I31, I32, I34, I35, I36, I38, I39, I40, T41). Teachers described the tasks of those spies as identifying potential opponents by carefully examining if and how a person criticises the government or speaks about potentially political topics. The spies would then report the activities of potential opponents to the school administration (I23, I22, I27, I34, I35, I40), to political authorities or the police (I6, I12, I40)\(^{17}\). The elaboration of a teacher at school 1 depicts students’ spying functions:

In Ethiopia, there is no respect of human and democratic rights. When I give these comments for the students, they come back to tell the police and all and the director criticises me. They consider this type of things as if I am a member of another [other than EPRDF] political party. (I6)

Another explanation of a teacher at school 1 is typical of what participants say about teachers spies:

…the school administrators, the woreda administrators, and the agents of the political party associations here, all of them are in an agreement to spy on me and on other teachers. So, the teachers are just working in spying activities. (I3)

The participants’ statements suggest that there are different types of spies. The most frequently mentioned were teachers or students who are EPRDF members (I2, I3, I6, I13, I17, I26, I36, I38, I39, I40, I41). During multiple other interviews, teachers mentioned that students work with a political assignment in schools and report back what their teachers say, but it was unclear whether those students are necessarily EPRDF members (I10, I12, I22, I23, I27, I31, I32, I34, I38, I39, I40, I41).

\(^{17}\) Potential consequences of being suspected of opposing the government are outlined in chapter 5.3.
I35, I40). Also, two teachers mentioned that students in their classroom turned out to be disguised young policemen (I12, I40). Confirming teachers’ statements about student spies, school administrators commented that they would “collect data from students” (I47) on the behaviour of their teachers. “For us, it is very simple. Students can collect information for us” (I43). The principal of school 1 openly stated that if teachers speak about politics, they “would be informed of that immediately” by their students (I42). Interestingly, the principal of school 2 reported that at the time of the interview, a political official had asked him to accept a new student even though the school year had begun weeks ago. As the official could not explain why this student had not been able to start the school year on the regular date, the principal was scared to accept the student as he suspected this student to be a government spy. He was afraid that teachers were going to think the same (I45).

Teachers named economic incentives in the form of small payments and access to job opportunities as reasons for students’ involvement in political activities of EPRDF (I12, I17, I35, I40). Similarly, teachers outlined that colleagues who carry out monitoring duties for the party would be more likely to access training opportunities or to be appointed to power positions instead of direct economic advantages (I12, I36, I40). The findings of Siyum & Gebremedhin (2015) confirm those advantages but indicate that teachers do not necessarily join EPRDF because they agree with their ideology or seek to enjoy advantages. They found that many teachers join EPRDF by force and suffer financially due to the membership fee. The fact that political party membership is closely connected to ethnic identity (see chapter 2) was visible in the statements where teachers of non-Tigrayan background claimed that it is mostly Tigrayans working in spying activities, while non-Tigrayans are victims of spying activities (I2, I3, I10, I11, I35, I36, I40). One Tigrayan teacher at school 1 explained, without stating to be a TPLF member, that his ethnicity prevents him from being targeted by government spies:

The teachers who come from Tigray are not afraid about the politics. But teachers who come from Oromia and Amhara region are afraid. ‘There will be spies in the school’, they say. But I am not afraid because it is not my problem. (I8)

For students, teachers outlined that the political assignment comes with several duties, such as government trainings, which was described as hindering students even more from focusing on their education as spying activities would already do (I31, I35).

The perceived presence of teacher spies suggests that some of them were among the participants. However, none of the interviewed teachers clearly stated that they were EPRDF
members or carrying out political activities for the government. With a few exceptions, most critical teachers stressed that they have no political connection (I2, I3, I11, I32, I36, I38), while others did not express criticism and reported no interference from the government (I7, I15, I20, I25, I30, I32, I43). Yet, this is neither an indicator of EPRDF membership nor a sign that the issues other teachers have with the government’s intervention are not valid. As outlined in chapter 4.3, teachers’ silence about political topics or absence of criticism can be related to their mistrust or to their fear of becoming a suspect as well. Furthermore, as Siyum and Gebremedhin (2015) found, teachers who are forced to become EPRDF members are often unhappy with their assignment, which implies that even teachers who criticised the government in the interviews could be EPRDF members. I could therefore unfortunately not explore the perceptions of teachers who were spies.

The next section will explore an organised form of group surveillance that was found to be part of EPRDF’s monitoring structure.

5.2.2 Organised spy-system: 1-to-5 networks

1-to-5 (1-5)\textsuperscript{18} group arrangements or networks were frequently mentioned by participants of school 1 and 4. 1-5 is a governmental structure (Mosley, 2015) invented by TPLF (Siyum & Gebremedhin, 2015) and occurs in various forms, but usually involves one individual coaching, mobilising or monitoring five\textsuperscript{19} other households or individuals (Horne & Wong, 2014; Horne, 2016). It is widely used in Ethiopia, for example in development initiatives, called ‘the health development army’, ‘model farmers’ and Ethiopia’s Women’s Development Army (Jones et al., 2015), and even in prisons and ministries (de Freytas-Tamura, 2017). Mostly, it is an organised structure, hierarchically beneath the kebele, that allows the government to follow the citizens’ actions in communities and what they say among neighbours and friends (Albin-Lackley, 2005; Rawlence, 2010b; Horne & Wong 2014; Horne, 2016) by appointing one EPRDF member to monitor five others (Rawlence, 2010b; de Freytas-Tamura, 2017). Furthermore, it serves as a means to mobilise citizens before elections (Mosley, 2015; Horne & Wong, 2014; Horne, 2016).

\textsuperscript{18} 1-to-5 is also known as 5-to-1 (Horne & Wong, 2014; Horne, 2016), ‘the cell’ (Rawlence, 2010, p. 24) or “garee/shanee” in Oromia (Albin-Lackley, 2005, p. 36).

\textsuperscript{19} While Horne and Wong (2014), Horne (2016) and de Freytas-Tamura (2017) and one teacher (I31) argue that 1-5 means that one person monitors or coaches five, Tefera et al. (2018) and a vice principal (I49) indicate that it is a group of five with one leading individual responsible for four others.
1-5 is used in schools as well (Siyum & Gebremedin, 2015; de Freytas-Tamura, 2017). In the draft of EER, 1-5 is called an ‘educational army’. Despite its history as a governmental structure, EER described it as a “new” method for participative group work that is to be expanded and reinforced: “Educational Army[,] a very recent educational innovation in which students are organized into groups of five (commonly called one-to-five; one leader and four members) intended for studying and learning together was introduced and scaled up to include all schools” (Teferra et al., 2018, p. 24). Mitchell (2017, 2019) found that 1-5 is excessively used in schools in Tigray region, among other forms of ubiquitous monitoring. The school principal of school 4 explained the implementation of 1-5 as follows: “1-5 for students is when they group five students, one who is a high-achiever, one average and the rest three low-achievers are grouped together so that they help each other.” (I49)

There were big discrepancies concerning how teachers perceived the function of 1-5 in their work. In school 1, the participants followed the MoE’s appeal to use 1-5 as a method for student-centred group work. The principal called 1-5 a new and innovative form of group work for both teachers and students, and criticised teachers who refused to engage with it (I42). A teacher claimed that by using 1-5, he can easily monitor which students follow the lesson, and that working in those group arrangements improved students’ grades and even lowered the repetition rate (I7). Even teachers who criticised government-initiated spying activities highlighted that 1-5 makes their teaching easier and helps them also to engage non-active students (I5, I6). School 1 furthermore used 1-5 to organise their staff. In every department, teachers are obliged to have 1-5 discussions every week. One teacher described that the administrators would “take its own actions” if teachers refused to engage (I4). Another teacher underlined that he and other teachers refuse to engage in 1-5 (I2).

In school 4, teachers spoke out strongly against 1-5 for both students and teachers and perceived it as the governmental structure that it originally is. They described it as “[preventing] the school from being secular” (TI41) and as a mechanism for the government to recruit students for EPRDF (I35). Furthermore, it was perceived as a means of surveillance:

They will give you an agenda under and-de-amnest [Amharic for 1-5]. For example: ‘Discuss about peace. Who is disturbing the peace, is there anything that you know,
anything negative against the government? [...]’ So, this is espionage! I don't like to be involved in such issues! (I40)

The statement of this teacher illustrates in more detail how 1-5 is used for surveillance:

Students were selected to be part of their political mission [...] They [the government] are highly organized in doing this; first they group them in an arrangement of 1-5, this is done to assess the thinking of five students within the group, that is how they run their politics. They will establish a system of report and based on that, one student from the five will report who is who and what’s going on in the school. We [the teachers] were highly against this since the school has missed its objective of teaching the students. The other thing is, there was another way of selecting top twenty students from schools and they will train them so that they become their agents in the school. (I31)

Interestingly, the vice principal indicated that the new principal who started his post in the school year 2018/2019 prohibited 1-5 for teachers in order to minimise the political involvement in schools. It was unclear if 1-5 for students is still planned.

The case of 1-5 shows how teachers’ perceptions concerning different monitoring mechanisms vary based on the extent to which they associate it with a government-imposed structure. While most teachers in school 1 found 1-5 a helpful tool for their teaching and discussions with other teachers, teachers in school 4 stated that 1-5 itself terrifies them as it is part of the government's political agenda.

The ubiquitous surveillance in schools means for teachers that there are spies among both their colleagues and their students. The following section will discuss how this affects teachers’ relationships with each other, while the effects on the relationship with students will be addressed in chapter 6.

5.2.3 Effects of spy system on relationships between teachers

The data suggests that throughout all four schools, EPRDF’s strategy of appointing spies to implement its social control had a strong bearing on the relationships between teachers. The interview with a teacher at school 2 offers an accurate introduction to this topic:

Researcher: But how is the relationship with other teachers for you?

Teacher: (pauses) it is not just like what you think. It is just like individual act here. Now, we are individualistic. We all just go on our track. No more hospitality, no friendship.
Researcher: So, you just go home after class, you don't interact with others?

Teacher: Yes. No more interaction.

Researcher: Do you have a reason for that? Do you face particular problems with other teachers?

Teacher: Usually, there is supposed to be interaction. But what I believe is that it broke, the interaction and trust between the teachers. It is broken at one place, at one time. And all the teachers fear each other.

Researcher: And why is that?

Teacher: One of the things is that sometimes, the teacher tried to just protest. Against the administration and the government, for the purpose of salary increase, or some purpose. But on the process, maybe, someone betrayed them. Maybe, maybe. And such condition just overwhelms all the environment. Just, the air is full of lack of trust. (I18)

These utterances include relevant elements of how teachers manage their relationships with other teachers. They attempt to minimise interaction between each other, to be individualistic (I41), to keep to themselves (I8), to choose not to make friends within the teaching force (I2, I3, I8, I35, I33, I41) and hurry out of the school after class, work and out! (T3, T8, T15, T45). Teachers stated to fear each other (I2, I23, I26), to be are suspicious (I11, I38) and to have no mutual trust (I36). The last sentence of the quoted teachers’ statement suggests teachers reporting others to authorities in case of protest. Being afraid of spies is one reason for teachers to keep to themselves (I2, I3, I11, I23, I40). Revealing information to the wrong person can have severe consequences:

I am not talking. I am isolated. Because those teachers are just doing the spying activity. […] The teachers become isolated. No more talking about political or any aspects of their country, just keep silent. For the sake of survival. Otherwise, their lives will end in prison. Teacher at school 1 (I3)

Teachers navigated this lack of trust and fear by being reserved and avoiding confrontation (I35). Therefore, the social life of teachers takes place under extreme caution about every small action, which this quote by a teacher of school 4 illustrates:

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21 Elaborations on imprisoned teachers follow in 5.3.1.
Well even now [with the new Prime Minister], there is not much change. But in previous times, we were very cautious about everything we do, when we talk, when we eat, and when we gather in groups. Even, gathering in groups was not allowed. (I41)

In addition to their overall carefulness, teachers overthought every conversation as other teachers could interpret what they said as opposition: “Even when I say something that is right but in some people's opinions not correct, then I am very afraid. He thinks like this, so he opposed the ruling party'- like that.” (I26) A few teachers stated teachers would particularly refrain from socialising with members of the ruling political party (I39, I40).

We don't have smooth relationships with those members of [EPRDF’s] political parties. Because, you know, they espionage us, and they told what we said, what we discussed, what we did. Always. So, we don't have a good feeling or a good relationship. (I40)

Several teachers seemed sad and disappointed about the absence of good relationships in the school compound and generally among individuals due to the lack of trust (I18, I23, I41):

Translator: Do you wish for a stronger relationship among teachers?

Teacher: Yes, very much. Because is like a second home. We get out of our home in the morning and return at night. […] So, I think social life is crucial. […] it is what we lack these days. We as Ethiopians have lost our biggest treasure, like dining together. Now, everyone is scared of each other.

Teacher at school 4 (I41)

However, political topics were not completely avoided among teachers. Some teachers mentioned that they would discuss politics with the peers that they trust (I1, I5, I8, I22). Interestingly, teachers even outlined that “heated political discussions” sometimes took place in the school compound, often resulting in fights and disagreements (I8, I27, I32, I39, I40, I41). Those discussions led many teachers to feel uncomfortable and to keep to themselves even more (I8, I39, I41).

Political and ethnic groupings of teachers in the school compound were mentioned by a few teachers as well (I8, I36, I39):

For example, the Oromo teachers are making different types of groups. The teachers from Tigray are making group. And the Amhara region has their own group. Teachers from Southern part have their own group. Especially, it makes us disturbed in the school. Because, it is connected with political issues. (I8)

A few teachers stated that under Abiy, they felt like the relationships between teachers have become less tense (I3, I5, I41). Nevertheless, the presented findings about how most teachers
felt when Abiy was already Prime Minister demonstrate the existence of what Rawlence calls “a pervasive climate of fear” (2010b, p. 9).

This demonstrates the efficient functioning of EPRDF’s infrastructural power: not only does the existence of spies ensure that potential opponents can be identified (spatial control), the functioning of the spy networks also destroy relationships among teachers (social control). Those structures of control pose significant constraints, which is why teachers choose to protect themselves by avoiding others and keeping to themselves. With these strategic actions, they reproduce the structures of control and contribute to EPRDF’s objectives of eliminating dissent: individuals who stand alone and fear their environment have less capacity to contest the structures of control.

5.3 Crackdown of political dissent

This chapter will address teachers’ experiences with the consequences of different forms of political pressure based on the elaborations on which structures the government’s control creates in the education sector. It will also discuss how coercive crackdowns impacts teachers’ strategic actions.

5.3.1 Imprisonment

The government, the institutions, still have the capacities. Not only to take people to jail, but to kill people. Everything is in their hands. So, I have to refrain from being the frontman for the right of others and my rights.  
Teacher at school 1 (I11)

Arrest and imprisonment of education personnel as an intervention to suppress political dissent is a pattern in Ethiopia (see chapter 1), which was confirmed during my fieldwork. Two teachers of school 1 have been imprisoned during the two states of emergency that took place from 2016 to 2017 and in early 2018. Both teachers were wrongly accused of being members of the opposing political parties Ginbot 7 (I2, I3) and OLF (I10, I11), called “terrorist”-organisations by the government and banned from the country (Rawlence, 2019), until Abiy lifted the ban in 2018 (Weber, 2018). Regarding the notion “terrorist”, it needs to be outlined that EPRDF adapted the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism-Proclamation (EATP) No. 652/2009 (FDRE, 2009) in 2009 that officially criminalises political dissent (Gordon et al., 2015; Workneh, 2019). Due to

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22 Both teachers were interviewed twice.
being charged of “terrorism” under EATP, hundreds of dissenters and peaceful protesters were arbitrarily arrested and went through unfair trials involving undue delays, pre-trial detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment (Amnesty International, 2018; Burnett, 2018; Tura, 2017). The EATP became a powerful tool for EPRDF to eliminate all forms of dissent in the name of ‘protecting the country from terrorists and maintaining peace’. Especially during the two states of emergency, the Ethiopian government became known for mass killings of protesters and mass arrests of so-called terrorists (HRW, 2016; Amnesty International, 2018). Figure 3 and 4 depict cases of teachers who were arbitrarily arrested under the EATP.

Figure 3: Case illustration box 2

“Never again”

Dawit* is a teacher at school 1 who with no political partisanship. He is known to ask critical questions in school meetings. During the first state of emergency in 2017, he was suddenly taken to prison:

I am just teaching lessons in the afternoon, when I am just going to my home with my colleagues, and some of the government officials, those who work spying activities, they called me. […] They were suspecting me: ‘You have a connection with Ginbot 7, so you are suspected to be the member’. After reaching the prison, they changed their ideas. ‘You are suspected to create instabilities in the teaching learning process of the schools’, they said. And again, after all, for the third time, they changed their mind, they said ‘You are suspected … you need just deep renaissance. After all, you will be released. You have negative attitude towards this government. So, this negative attitude should be just reminded, refreshed by renaissance.’

He was then taken to a “new renaissance training” (how he called it) in a rural area in Afar region with a duration of two months. Dawit stated that he was only able to wash his face and his clothes two times and barely got food throughout this time. The training included different modules that were aimed at brainwashing the detainees by constantly indoctrinating the failure of past regimes while praising the current government for its great contribution to the country. The indoctrination also involved teaching about the constitution, especially article 38 and 39, to underline the tremendous benefits that EPRDF brought in terms of democracy and self-determination. Dawit described the harsh treatment towards the 240 detainees, who were teachers, workers from other sectors and government officials from woreda, sub-city and city administration bureaus: “I have never seen those kinds of training ever in my life. Look, we are Ethiopians, I have not expected those people have
considered us to be Ethiopian people’s, Ethiopian citizens. Because no one, no one can just create such type harsh treatment towards Ethiopian citizens.” Not only felt he dehumanised in his Ethiopian identity, but he was forced to cut his connections to the outside world when all detainees were obliged to give their phones to the instructors and delete their Facebook accounts. At the end of the training, the humiliation reached its peak:

“After all, at the end of the course, they forced me to wear a t-shirt with a motto, that said: Never again. Never again. (laughs ironically). Never again.”

In the second state of emergency, Dawit was imprisoned again, which he described as a “check-up” for the government to see if he had changed his attitudes towards or not. Government spies took him from his home during night time. After five days, he was released as he could convince the officials again that he did not have connections to Ginbot7.

But how did Dawit really deal with the violence and maltreatment his government made him suffer? Firstly, he stated that after being imprisoned, he retained his invisibility by not having a smartphone or a Facebook account. Furthermore, Dawit underscored that he was afraid that suspecting and imprisoning him would lead to doing the same to his students, which made him feel extremely guilty. Furthermore, he felt ashamed in front of his students for having been in prison and emphasised that he never imposed his negative attitude towards the government over his students. Finally, he confirmed that the government reached the contrary of its actual purpose with both the training and the imprisonment: “I have just increased my negative attitude towards the government. Nothing changed. Secretly, I have bad feelings.” (I2, I3)

Even though Dawit’s case was unique in the research sample, there is further evidence on what the government called a rehabilitation programme (Yibeltal, 2017). During the first stage of emergency in 2017, the government took about 2500 detainees who were mostly men and suspected to be in opposition to a prior military camp in Afar region. Based on interviews with detainees, Yibeltal (2017) points out the health-threatening conditions under which those trainings took place such as lack of food, water and extreme heat. Detainees reported that they were forced to wear t-shirts with the slogan “Never Again” as mentioned by Dawit.

The second teacher described that his ethnicity as an Oromo was the only reason to be suspicious about him and to conclude connections with the OLF (I10, I11). Albin-Lackley (2005) reports that schools in Oromia were under special surveillance to identify potential OLF
members who would then be arrested or suspended, which demonstrates the scope of this pattern.

Figure 4: Case illustration box 3

“If they kill me, the only ones who suffer are my family”

Tolessa is of Oromo origin and quarrel with the government has always been part of his life. At university, he was suspended together with 360 fellow students because they demonstrated against the killing of young Oromos at other universities. As part of the Oromo student council at AAU, he led the protests. His resistance made him a target of the government’s security forces. Tolessa was terrified and left Ethiopia for a couple of years. After coming back, he became a teacher. During the second state of emergency in 2018, security forces violently took him from his home to prison and arrested his family as well:

I was at home, they came with a great bracket, more than 50 soldiers surrounded my home, they carried our ground investigation to find weapons, they found nothing, also, they said they had a communication with the OLF. They tried to find this material in my laptop, whether I had communication with the so-called terrorists. They found nothing. They asked my parents, even my family, for the time being, they arrested all my family, then they took me to the jail and released all of them.

After more than two months, him and other suspected ‘terrorists’ who worked in different sectors were released by the new Prime Minister:

We were suspected of terrorism (laughs), according to their language. Without any question or court, we stayed in jail for 65 days. Finally, Dr. Abiy became the new Prime Minister, he established different committees who followed our case. Our case was simply being the member of an ethnic group, for this very reason we were imprisoned. Finally, the government released all political prisoners and let us go home.

Tolessa lost several months of his salary due to his imprisonment but could regain his position in the school. Being in prison made him fear and resent the government even more. He stated to only do and teach what is expected from him, which involves not engaging in part-time jobs in private schools as this is officially not allowed. Being an Oromo who is known for opposition, he lives in fear of his life and the lives of his family. Tolessa therefore gave up on his role as an activist. “I have to refrain from being the frontman for the right of others and my rights. If they kill me, if I lose my life, the only ones who suffer are my family.” (110, 111)
The statements of other teachers indicate that Dawit and Tolessa were no isolated cases. A teacher of school 2 was imprisoned when he was working as a journalist. After being released, he fled to Kenya. In the interview, he was very concerned of being attacked again, which is why he kept a low profile by not having any relations with other teachers, refraining from engaging in critical dialogue with students and not challenging the administrators (I17). Moreover, the aforementioned imprisoned teachers stated to have met other teachers when detained. All other teachers who have been directly asked stated that they knew at least one teacher (from other schools) who was wrongly imprisoned: “He refused to be a spy, then he was put in prison” (I30), “Because he was upfront about everything, they took him from the school directly” (I41), “He was an English teacher, if you oppose their way, they arrest you” (I28) and “He was punished two months in prison without any reason. ‘You are a terrorist, you initiate students to come against the government, despite your responsibility of being a teacher. We have a witness!’ they said to him” (I39) were the replies of teachers. The imprisoned teachers were teaching various subjects, history, English, Amharic, mathematics, which suggests that teachers of any subjects can be targeted. Again, a few teachers stated that history and CEE teachers are particularly at risk as their curricula involves political content (I2, I3, I5, I10, I11, I36). On top of that, older teachers gave examples from the past, where arbitrary mass arrests of teachers happened especially during elections in 2005 and 2010 (I13). Another teacher reported that during 1997 E.C. (2005) elections, they were hiding in schools, witnessing that their teaching colleagues who dared to leave the school in the afternoon were randomly arrested (I34).

Witnessing their colleagues went going prison purely based on suspicion created fear (I6, I13, I26, I34), anger (I28) and led teachers to be as silent as possible about political issues or voicing any kind of disagreement with the government (I6, I26, I41, I36, I39).

We [teachers] were fighting, about what would happen to us. Because if we have such kind of people [spies]in the classroom and in the school environment, how can we work? Even when we discuss… 'The political issue, the government', it is like ‘psssst!’.

Teacher from school 1 (I39)

The fact that several teachers claimed to not be afraid of imprisonment because they refrained from discussing political issues and kept to themselves underlines how successful the undermining of government criticism is. Teachers knew the rules: to be safe, one must withhold from political discussions. Another teacher at school 4 concluded: “All teachers fear the
government and politics, so they need to work silently without interfering in government and state politics.” (I40)

The adaptation of an official law that institutionalises political dissent as terrorism became a powerful tool of EPRDF’s infrastructural power. Prisons themselves are institutions of infrastructural power, which are here used as an intimidating instrument for coercive crackdown of (suspected) opposition. The data suggests that imprisoning as a mean for the demoralisation of potential opponents and the intimidation of the people in their environment leads to fear and silence among teachers. The imprisonment increased the negative attitudes towards the government of both the victims and the people who witnessed imprisonment. Yet, this does not necessarily affect the efficiency of imprisonment as an intimidation strategy as EPRDF seems to count more on oppression than on genuine ideological support when pushing its infrastructural power. The following sections will elaborate more on how teachers feel about and react to other targeted crackdowns of dissent.

5.3.2 Teachers’ experiences with open acts of resistance

Teachers mentioned that open acts of resistance, such as protesting or collectively voicing concerns is unthinkable for Ethiopian teachers due to their fear of the government (I3, I11, I36). Even writing critical articles was perceived as a form of resistance that could lead directly to jail (I3, I11, I36, I 59). The speech of a teacher at school 4 is illustrative of this: “If you write something against the government, you will go to jail. I know young teachers wrote articles about the government. They are either abroad or in jail. We are losing them.” (I36). One teacher stated that even for looking for critical articles was a reason to imprison teachers before Abiy (I3).

However, in conformity with the theory of resistance, it was interestingly found in I31, I35, I40 and I56 that in school 4, critical teachers gathered and decided to contest the government’s actions. In early 2018, the government announced in the media that there will be a big salary increase for teachers. Yet, this increase was only 70 Birr (€2.50). To protest the false announcement and the low renumeration, almost all teachers in school 4 went on a strike for three days. The government perceived the strike as a political plot because most teachers of the school left the ETA due to its involvement in EPRDF’s activities. Consequently, the government put the 27 teachers on a blacklist, that they perceived as protest leaders due to their
previous actions of criticising the government’s intervention in schools. For most of them, this meant suspension from the school or being put under special surveillance.

In addition to this, the same critical teachers publicly confronted the school principal around the same time for his involvement in corruption and for his missing educational qualifications. Those actions at first seemed successful as the principal’s case went to court and a committee investigated his criminal actions, which finally led to his suspension from the school. After two months, said principal became an official in the SEB and started to take action against the teachers on the blacklist who managed to stay at the school. He did so by either suspending them or randomly allocating them to different schools in rural areas around Addis Ababa (which is a problem for teachers and their families due to the lack of public transport), sometimes even different types of schools which resulted in salary decreases or months of not receiving salary (entire paragraph I31, I35, I40, I56). Siyum & Gebremedhin’s (2015) findings confirm that teachers in Tigray region suffered from random and unwanted transfers as a form of punishment. These allocations were happening at the time of the interviews. The subsequent administrator worked previously as a vice principal in the same school and was known to directly collaborate with the previous principal (I31, I34, I35, I40, I41, I48). He came to his position when Abiy was already in power (SY 2018/2019) and announced in his first meeting that the school will be closed if teachers kept rebelling (I31, I56).

The reactions and feelings of teachers to this crackdown were mostly indifferent. Some were disappointed that their actions did not bring change as the system allows for powerful EPRDF members to keep their power positions and terrorise teachers. The fact that the new principal was affiliated with the previous one added to teachers’ disillusionment. The re-allocations seemed to reach their goal, which the representative of the Ethiopian Teacher Association called “to demoralise teachers” (I56): one teacher who witnessed the transfers resulting from the blacklist case stated: “I never oppose, because I can never be certain of my tomorrow” (I35). Another teacher from the blacklist who was still in this school expressed his fear: “I am not even sure about the next day. I may find my name on the list of rotation. I might even be sent to some other school tomorrow morning” (I31).

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23 More information on the blacklist case could not be gathered as most of the 27 teachers had already left the school. Among those who left the school, one came back for the interview (I40).
The case of school 4 demonstrates that the government might interpret and treat non-political protest as an act of opposition. Also, it shows how harshly the government intervenes to silence teachers’ protest and resistance. It furthermore suggests that leadership positions are assigned to fulfil political agendas (e.g. employing the previous principal in the SEB so that he can point out critical teachers and punish them by reallocation to different schools). This goes to show that even under Abiy, officials in SEB or other administrative entities still have the power to pursue (own) political agendas. The fact that the new school principal openly threatened with closing the school in case of further protest confirms this. Given how scared and intimidated teachers were, it can be argued that EPRDF’s efficient acts of intimidation create structures that make careful and non-critical behaviour more likely than resistance.

5.3.3 Other threats and accusations

Finally, there were a few cases of accusations of opposition that could not be attributed to the prior sections but are valid experiences of teachers with the government’s control. One teacher of school 4 reported that he did not use the plasma TV\(^\text{24}\) in previous times because he found that students were overwhelmed by the pre-designed programmes. This was enough reason for the government to threaten him: “I used to teach, just shutting off that plasma, and then they tracked me and I was given a warning letter: ’You are against the system’, regarding with the politics. So, they simply made a connection with politics.” (I39). Another example for far-fetched conclusion of EPRDF-opposition is the case of another teacher in school 4 who wrote a reference book for teachers for the city education bureau. The responsible people told him they would not be publishing it after all. Yet, the teacher found out that they published the book without mentioning him as an author. When he confronted the responsible people, they notified the school administration that he was opposing the government. As a result, he got questioned by government officials, but there were no consequences: “I didn’t get arrested because they couldn’t find anything.” (I34). Further, teachers witnessed how their colleagues received threats:

They attacked him [teacher friend], they said that he left the meeting because he had negative attitude towards the government, and the director of the school should do

\(^{24}\) Starting from 2006, plasma-TV’s were installed in secondary schools to support a new ICT in education (Abera, 2013; Kim, 2015). The purpose of the plasma-tvs was to display a fully digitalised lesson in English, which took the teachers’ role as instructors away (Abera, 2013; Kim, 2015). For a few years, teachers have not been obliged to use the plasma TV anymore. As none of the observed teachers used it and the plasma only came up in I39, it will not be further discussed in this research.
something immediately, and he received a letter that he has to continue going to the meetings. (I39)

Lastly, the teacher of school 1 (see figure 3) was threatened to be suspended if he stopped being the school’s representative of the ETA:

I asked the questions: 'I don't want to be this member. Why do I have to do this?'. But they said, in the ETA: 'He has to be the chairman'. They send a letter to the school administration and said, 'Why don't you just expel him from the school?'. (I3)

All those actions are not as straightforward as imprisoning teachers, suspending them from schools or forcing them into EPRDF membership. They nevertheless depict the breadth of EPRDF’s infrastructural power to be present in the everyday life of teachers. For teachers, the presented findings indicate that attacks can happen due to immensely random suspicions. Those small threats and reminders of the ruling party’s omnipresence add to the structural constraints for teachers’ actions.

5.4 The Ethiopian Teacher Association (ETA)

Another mechanism to avoid political dissent in the teaching force was to rob teachers of their union. The Ethiopian Teacher Association (ETA) was the country’s largest independent organisation until 2008. After 15 years of quarrel and harassment, the government closed the ETA by confiscating its assets. Subsequently, a new teacher union was registered under the same name (Rawlence, 2010b; Smith et al. 2014). Undermining teachers’ unions due to their strive for freedom and democracy appears to be a global pattern: GCPEA reports that the governments of Bahrain, Turkey, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Columbia, Iraq, Fiji, Iran, Philippines, Honduras, Korea and the United Arab Emirates harass, intimidate and imprison teachers’ union’s leaders and members as they might try to challenge the political status quo (Smith et al., 2014).

In my study, teachers throughout all schools were frustrated by how a union with the official purpose of supporting them serves the government as well. Teachers stated that the ETA cannot address their concerns as it is “a puppet of the government” and expressed their disappointment (I2, I3, I6, I11, I38, I41):

… if they oppose the government’s action, they are suspended from power. […] What they have to do is standing on the side of the teachers, but always, they stand on the side
of the government. So how you can call this my association?

Teacher at school 1 (I11)

Especially in school 1 and 4, teachers articulate that they do not want to be a member of the ETA (I3, I6, I11, I41). Besides, teachers were angry about the fact that they have to pay a fee for an association that is only benefitting them by providing paper tissues and soap (I3, I41, I56).

In urban Addis Ababa, one representative of the Ethiopian teacher association is assigned to every school (I43, I53, I54), which enhances EPRDF’s presence in schools. The ETA-representatives of school 2 and 3 portrayed their roles as advocates for victims of unfair treatment, such as having to teach disproportionally more periods than other teachers (I54, I55). In contrast, the ETA representative of school 4 spoke openly about the fact that his hands are often tied when teachers are pressured by education authorities or even attacked (I56). One of the imprisoned teachers (see figure 3), who turned out to be the ETA representative of school 1 during the second interview, insightfully illustrated ETA’s affiliation with EPRDF, the coercive recruitment of ETA members and the compliance of the ETA with the ruling party’s goals:

Researcher: There is an Ethiopian teacher association, do you know if they can provide any help for teachers who have problems?

Teacher: (laughs for almost half a minute) During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, and during the reign of Haile Mariam, they [ETA] played great roles towards the development of Ethiopia. Even the regimes, the downfall of such regimes was because of the Ethiopian educational sector, and Ethiopian educational association. Now, the last 27 years, it seems like puppets. Sub-servants of the government. […] They become the sub-servants of the government, a puppet-association. I can't believe it! (angry). I don't want to be a member of such associations. […] they just recruit their members by using force. If you are a teacher, you must be a member of such associations. Why? Why? Repeatedly, in meetings, here in the sub-city and the Addis Ababa bureau, I am just greatly opposed. […] (laughs) they forced me to be the chairman of the teachers' association in this school. The decisions of the teachers' association are backed by the government officials. So, I have no choice. […] The current one [ETA] is a puppet. Including me. I am sorry! (laughs). (I3)

Generally, the fact that the government extended its infrastructural power by taking over the ETA appears to be an additional measure to ensure that no political protest can arise from the education system. Even though the collected data does not indicate that the ETA is a part of the
surveillance system, the idea that an entity with a mandate to ensure teachers’ rights would side with the government adds to the feeling of neglect and powerlessness of teachers. Moreover, it adds to the perception of the self-enclosed system of governmental omnipresence in which teachers cannot seek for support and have no space for criticism.

5.5 Conclusions

As this chapter has shown, the hierarchical chain and the surveillance system are rigorous forms of both spatial (the presence of EPRDF members at all levels) and social control (the network for passing information between those members) through which EPRDF’s infrastructural power reaches in the education sector. In addition, the harsh crackdown of political dissent, such as allocating teachers to different schools, imprisoning or threatening them demonstrated that anti-government conversations or protests can have serious consequences. Those intimidation strategies led teachers to refrain from contestation and criticism. Teachers were unable to receive justice for their maltreatment as their teacher union was taken over by EPRDF as well. The principal as an “appointed official” and integral part of the hierarchical chain was found to be an executor of EPRDF’s instructions in schools. This led to troubled relationships between teachers and school principals where teachers had little choice but to accept the principal’s instructions, impartial treatment and wrongful punishments. Due to the presence of spies in the teaching force, most teachers chose to keep their contact with their peers at a minimum level.

In sum, EPRDF’s paralysing and pervasive control isolates teachers and limits their opportunities to seek support and have critical discussions. Teachers mostly cope with those structural constraints by complying for their own safety. The next chapter provides further elaboration on how the government’s infrastructural power plays out in classrooms and how teachers interact with it.
6 Teachers’ agency in relation to EPRDF’s control in the classroom

Based on the findings in previous chapters regarding EPRDF’s omnipresent control and efficient execution of infrastructural power, this chapter will focus on teachers’ interaction with political intervention in classrooms. For this purpose, the first section elaborates on general dynamics created by EPRDF’s intervention in classrooms. Section two outlines how teachers either reproduce or attempt to challenge the control structures in the classroom. This chapter will thus address the research question How do teachers exercise their agency to reproduce or challenge EPRDF’s intervention of control in the classroom? As this chapter provides information on the relationship between teachers and students with regards to the political intervention, the research question How do teachers navigate their relationships with students in relation to EPRDF’s intervention? will be touched upon as well. The last section will shed light on how teachers imagine a school without EPRDF’s intervention.

6.1 EPRDF’s intervention in the teaching process

As outlined in chapter 5, teachers are constrained by a variety of oppressive governmental interventions in the education sector. In addition, EPRDF concretely intervenes in the teaching-learning process by strategically silencing political discussions and exploiting curricula for indoctrination. Not a targeted intervention in the education sector, but a general dynamic that EPRDF’s rule and control creates for teaching is the problematic of ethnocentrism. Those three interventions and phenomena as well as the dynamics they create for teaching will be discussed in the following sub-sections in the named order.

6.1.1 Political secularism: Banning political dialogue from classrooms

When we teach, it must raise the “why” questions, and we should be able to give answers. But the school does not want us to do those things, they want to pursue their own agenda on the students. Teacher at school 4 (I31)

Van Ommering (2017) underlines that silencing of political topics in (post-)conflict contexts pose constraints for teachers’ actions in his fourth key area. In my research, the strategical silencing of political dialogue in classrooms to avoid government criticism or insurgency was
found to be another manifestation of EPRDF’s infrastructural power. Throughout all schools, topics that are potentially related to the party’s politics were a taboo. For teachers’ practice, that means that critically engaging with topics like elections, peace or answering to students’ critical questions to events in the country are at best a balancing act and at worst impossible. Both teachers and school principals stressed that politics and education are immiscible, and that politics do not belong in classrooms because the education system needs to function in a “secular” manner (I42, I43, I2, I6, I20, I22, I30, I32, I48). Interestingly, formal definitions of secularism only refer to the separation from religion and state affairs (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.; Marriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.). In point 2.2.7 of the ETP of 1994, it is solely prescribed that education must be secular, but the term secularism is not further defined (FDRE Government of Ethiopia, 1994). As mentioned in chapter 1.1, the 1994 constitution states that “[education] shall be provided free from any religious influence, political partisanship or cultural prejudices” (FDRE, 1994, article 90.2). Yet, this neither implies that political dialogue in schools is prohibited nor that secularism involves politics. Despite the absence of an official regulation, participants’ statements suggest that secularism functions as an overarching principle that prescribes the avoidance of critical (political) dialogue from classrooms. This particular use of term secularism will be called political secularism in this thesis. The following interview extract demonstrates how social topics are deemed to be a threat to political secularism:

Researcher: When it comes to things that happen in the country, for example elections or when fights between ethnic groups happen: What questions do students bring to the school and how should teachers answer those questions? How do you think can teachers promote a dialogue about those type of topics?

Principal of school 1: That is not allowed in the school as the school is secular. Because of secularism, they won’t talk to them about such things. […] there might be a teacher who might want to share what he has heard from outside with the students, but we’d be informed of that immediately. The students would come and ask why a math teacher tries to talk to them about politics when they have been told that a school is a secular place, we would then take actions right away, we do not want them to have a dialogue because they might mislead them. (I42)

The vice principal of school 4 mentioned that officials from the SEB would regularly check whether the schools promote critical political dialogue, and that instructions to keep politics out of the school directly come from SEB and AAEB:

Political involvement in the schools is forbidden. And the policy also states that the school is secular, which means that religious and political issues will not be raised in
schools. [...] normally, there are people from the sub-city that come to check that we do not allow that, and we are told at meetings with the Educational Bureau [of Addis Ababa] that we should not involve in politics [...] and secondly we have heard in the media too that schools are free from any involvement in politics [...]. It is not like we received a formal letter permitting us to not welcome it, but we took our own mandate and we don’t allow it. (I49)

As the last sentence of the statement and absence of instructions to prevent political dialogue in schools in the ETP suggests, there is no formal regulation obliging actors in schools to not talk about politics. This suggests that political secularism is an unofficial rule, reinforced by the overall intervention of EPRDF in the education sector.

This political secularism meant for a few participants that schools are a space “free from politics”, which they saw as an advantage (I8, I17, I20, I37). If that was true, political secularism would translate to an absence of EPRDF’s political intervention in school. Yet, the findings presented chapter 5 as well as direct statement of teachers who argued that education was politicised and not free of the government’s political intervention (I18, I22, I23, I31, I34, I40, I41) indisputably indicate that an absence of EPRDF’s intervention in education is an illusion. Since the ruling party itself shows no hesitation to use the entire education sector for its political purposes, it appears that EPRDF is not forbidding any political activity, but political activity that is connected or could lead to opposition. One teacher of school 1 pointed out the paradox of EPRDF’s politicisation of the education sector while claiming that schools should be free from politics:

If you ask me if schools are really secular, [...] they are not. Because we see political meetings of the ruling party being held here at the school, they discuss whatever they want with students or teachers. If the school was meant to be secular, then why are they allowed, and others banned from doing so? They don’t allow the rest of us to say anything about politics in the compound! (I2)

At the same time, the ruling party’s strong presence in all aspects of Ethiopians’ lives (see sections 2.3 and 5.1) aggravates the avoidance of topics that could result in statements about the government. In turn, this implies there are countless taboo topics, which makes every critical discussion a possible minefield. The imperative of political secularism seemed to be deeply entrenched in the mindset of teachers who knew that they were not allowed to raise critical issues: Teachers called questions of students about political happenings “dirty questions” (I12) and replies like “I have to keep myself from those things!”(I29) and “We prefer to shut our
mouths about politics” (I20) were typical indicators of the discomfort that political topics caused in teachers. In addition, teachers who do not follow the government’s objectives can be easily identified and might face severe consequences (see chapter 5). Teachers are hence even less likely to break the political secularism-rule for the sake of critical discussions. This demonstrates again the efficient functioning of EPRDF’s social control in the education sector: even though there is no official law or regulation in place, the message of political secularism is passed through EPRDF’s decentralised systems of infrastructural power and impacts teachers’ behaviour in classrooms.

The difficulty of not speaking about politics in classrooms is further aggravated by the politicised curricula, as the next sub-section will demonstrate.

6.1.2 Politicised curricula and students’ questions

Following the fourth key area of teachers’ tools by van Ommering (2017), curricula and textbooks have a bearing on teachers’ opportunities to navigate tensions created by the conflict (here: EPRDF’s control) in the classroom. Various scholars have demonstrated how governments instrumentalise curricula for strengthening political agendas and imposing ideologies (to name only a few: Apple, 2004; Shah, 2013; vom Hau, 2018; Hickman & Pofilio, 2012). Looking at teachers’ interactions with the curricula created by governmental bodies revealed that textbooks posed additional structural restrictions for teachers. Particularly CEE, history and economic teachers were exposed to special challenges as the curriculum directly or indirectly relates to political topics. For them, this did not only mean that the avoidance of political topics was often impossible, but that the government’s influence was present in their teaching in the form of politically charged texts. This led most of them to be unsatisfied with the textbooks: Teachers criticised that history books lack sources and scientific references (I2, I11, I17, I28), which made them feel like they were teaching unscientific stories (I2) or even politically manipulated and biased content (I17, I28, I29). Teachers deemed this politicisation of history as potential to increase the tension that already exists among Ethiopian citizens: “The textbooks are not written by professional historians; they are written by politicians. […] those are fabricated histories. They cannot create values. They only create conflicts within the society.” (I28). Other teachers mentioned that the government uses history textbooks for their doctrine by changing the curriculum based on what they want the society to know and to think:
The problem is: our text is prepared by the government bodies. For any material, there must be sources. But there are no sources for the textbooks. [...] They are politicising it. Politicising history is crime. [...] I have seen in my teaching life, the text is changed three times. When the government changes policies, it changes the text. (I19)

The strong focus on and repetition of political events in history books to promote the rule of the current regime led, according to a few teachers, to the neglect of cultural events, especially those of marginalised and non-northern ethnic groups (I2, I10, I11, I29). Teachers stated that this led to issues of recognition and thus to disappointment of students from those very groups, which made teachers feel helpless:

Once, a student from Gambella region asked me, ‘Where is my history? If we call this the history of Ethiopia, then where am I placed? I know that we don’t have a political history, but we have social and economic history. Why is our history neglected?’ He was very disappointed when he asked me, and I was very shocked and did not know what to say. (I2)

Similarly, CEE and economic teachers underlined that the book preaches the current government’s achievements for the society and glorifies the 1994 constitution, while holding past regimes accountable for all previous and current shortcomings of the country (I8, I14, I18, I34, I36, I38). The speech of a teacher in school 2 illustrates the implementation of this strategy:

Let us say, the textbook […] analyses the performance and policies of agriculture and services during Derg, pre-Derg, and post Derg and EPRDF. And then, all the policies during this regime are presented in a good way. I have a lot of criticism on the current policies. But the textbook is prepared to according to 'this policy is the serving the country', whereas the policies in the Derg regime and the monarchy are described as if they were in crisis. I think it is controversial. The textbook is made just to brainwash them. The ones who prepared them [the textbooks] are a joke. They are putting random numbers in there, so such thing is just political and for the government. Such factors make me regret. (I18)

Teachers expressed that when teaching content that they deem as politically manipulated, they feel “not professional” (I13), “ashamed”, “disappointed”, “embarrassed” (I18), “bad” (I34) or worse: “You cannot teach what you want to teach. You only teach what politicians say. […] Always, when you teach, you feel hate” (I11). Yet, teachers who comply with the government’s ideology might not find the textbook problematic. One teacher described that the teachers’ attitude towards the government determines how comfortable teachers are with the textbook: “It is our approach, if we want to support [the government], then we say this textbook is good. And when we do not, we might say it is not good.” (I27)
As the textbooks were glorifying the situation in the country to praise the government, there was a palpable gap between what teachers were forced to teach and what was actually happening in the country (I2, I4, I6, I14, I18, I22, I23, I24, I33, I28, I36, I42, I43). Students observed the government’s violations of human and democratic rights such as unfair arrests, non-competitive elections or killings but were taught the positive contributions of the government to the country’s history, economy and democracy. Even though teachers generally stated that most students were too afraid to ask political questions, other participants provided examples of how students would address the \textit{theory-reality gap}:

“Sometimes, they ask me. ‘Is this right? Or is this just what the textbook says, but on the ground, it is not right?’” (I18)

“‘The Ethiopian election, is it correct for you?’, asked one student to me.” (I26)

In some cases, students would straightforwardly point out that they know that teachers are not teaching the truth, but disseminate stories that are manipulated by the government:

“‘Teacher, this is not practical. Because we are observing that the government is killing, the government is arresting, innocent people, polite people. There is no justice’, they say.” (I23)

“When we teach our students this [the rule of law in Ethiopia], they may refuse on that issue. 'No one respects the rule of law', 'there is no rule of law', they may say this, or: 'There is no democracy in Ethiopia’.” (I27)

“‘Teacher, you are telling us about democracy, but there is no democracy in Ethiopia.’” (I36)

Teachers described those moments as extremely challenging as they knew they were required to promote the ideas presented in the curriculum (I4, I6, I14, I23, I24, I26, I27), while on the other side they felt obliged engage with their students in what is really happening in the country (I4, I18, I23, I27, I28, I29, I36). One teacher from school 4 summarises this situation by saying “You play a reconciling role as a teacher. The text says ideology, the students say it is wrong, and you are in between.” (I36). Section 6.2 will show how teachers engage with politicised curricula and other constraints that EPRDF’s interventions poses in the classroom.
6.1.3 Ethnocentrism

Another constraint that teachers constantly coped with was the high level of ethnocentrism, that is closely connected with the political dynamics (see chapter 2) in which education is embedded (I5, I6, I8, I10, I11, I14, I17, I30, I40). According to teachers, the government’s implementation of ethnic-based politics plays out in schools in the form of fights and disagreements between students from different ethnic origins. Teachers described to be helpless about how to resolve those conflicts, as ethnicity is sensitive due to its strong connection with politics which cannot really be addressed due to political secularism.

Teachers were disappointed to see in their students the success of the government-initiated ethnocentrism and the lack of a sense of unity. Moreover, teachers were frustrated about how political elites were using ethnicity to pursue their agenda (I6, I10, I11, I14, I17, I18, I35). Since they deemed this issue as a holistic problem, they felt powerless and like they had no capacity to make a valuable contribution to lower those tensions. Teachers even felt “undermined” by the government in this regard (I6, I18, I28): they highlighted that the country needs decades of good rule after the current ethnic- and class-based politics and that their teaching will not “stop” the political elites (I10, I11, I18).

It can thus be concluded that the deep interconnection of ethnic tensions and political topics add to the governmental constraints on teachers’ instruction. Moreover, it reinforces the feeling of powerlessness in teachers. Similar to targeted EPRDF interventions in their teaching, ethnocentrism was another form in which the government’s presence was palpable in classrooms and schools.

6.2 Teachers’ strategic actions upon political interventions in the classroom

Based on all the structural restrictions that are caused by EPRDF’s intervention in the education sector (see 5; 6.1), this sub-chapter provides an analysis of how teachers interact with those constraints in the classroom. As research question d) seeks to explore how teachers reproduce or challenge the control structures, this first section will engage with strategic actions that are obedient and reproductive of the oppressive structures. The second section shows how a few teachers claimed to overcome those constraints.
6.2.1 Teachers’ strategic action as reproduction

In these past 20 years, all communities, including the teachers, are living with the fear of our politics. They are not interested to teach areas related with politics, like peace, conflict, elections, human right protection, and all like that. Even, the students asking the teacher: ‘Is there protection of human rights Ethiopia?’ ‘I don’t have any idea’, the teacher says. ‘Is there peace in Ethiopia?’ ‘I don’t have any idea’, the teacher says.

Coordinator for CEE at AAEB (I65)

In accordance with the general pattern of teachers’ choice to work “silently without interfering with the government’s politics” (I40) found in chapter 5, many interviewed teachers stated to avoid political topics completely (I1, I14, I20, I33, I39) due to fear (I2, I20, I26). This distress had different reasons. Firstly, teachers were afraid to “mislead” students, meaning to raise topics that would result in fights or questions that teachers could then not handle or control (I4, I24). Secondly, teachers were scared that students would keep asking questions about controversial topics and would take teachers replies as a statement for or against the country’s current politics (I6, I20). Likewise, teachers stated to choose avoidance to prevent discussions that might lead them to unwillingly reveal their political opinion (I4, I26). This fear demonstrates teachers’ awareness of student spies whose potential report on both violations of political secularism and suspicion of opposition can have serious consequences. Furthermore, the culture of avoidance has a larger history in Ethiopian schools: teachers who worked under the Derg regime stated to be used to strictly avoiding political topics for the sake of surviving (I11, I34, I38) as the military regime’s forces killed political dissenters in masses (see section 2.2). To prevent political discussions, several teachers asserted that they restrict their instruction to the exact content of the textbook (I12, I13, I14, I26, I32, I34). This strategic action reproduces dynamics of silencing discussion according to the government’s will. Confirming this, principals stated clearly that they want teachers to adhere to the curriculum (I42, I46, I48) to not “…create something that may create conflict or initiates students to [talk about] such topics. If they [teachers] stick to the subject then there will be no problem, involving politics in the classroom is not good” (I46). Similarly, teachers perceived it as their responsibility not only to refrain from imposing their political perspective (I2, I24, I41), but also to tell students not to become involved in political issues in order to protect them (I5, I13, I24, I26, I29). When avoidance of political topics was impossible as it was part of the textbook, or if students asked straightforward questions, teachers employed different strategies to limit their exposure to critical statements as much as possible. One was to present the political content very carefully (I35, I41), to be discreet with the words they use to not express political opinions (I6, I10, I11)
and to present the topics as neutrally as possible (I29). Others would also choose to shut down political questions of students directly (I5, I26, I34), by for example saying “I don’t like politics. So, leave this question, please” (I26). Several teachers expressed how unhappy and uncomfortable it made them to shut down their students and to avoid critical topics (I23, I26, I31, I40): “You cannot teach free! Sometimes, the students ask about the issue of the government. Simply, you drop it. You cannot speak. You cannot make it understandable for the students” (I5). Several teachers mentioned that avoiding dialogue with students and denying their questions restricted establishment of genuine relationships as students were disappointed by their teachers’ obedience (I5, I10, I11, I15, I18).

Besides carefulness due to potential accusations of opposition, teachers mentioned that critical thinking itself would be taken as an offense of the political secularism (I2, I3, I4, I20). During interviews, both teachers and the translator were amused or irritated by questions regarding criticism, as if it was obvious that critical dialogue on controversial topics is generally not welcome in Ethiopia. One older teacher said: “Growing up, we were told: You should beware of politics and fire!” (I40). A teacher at school 2 described that teachers lack knowledge regarding how to be creative, which is why they cannot spark criticism for students and added: “The curriculum, the teaching learning process and the policy of the teaching is not permitting the students to be creative” (I13). In this context, another teacher at school 2 insightfully explained the taboo that surrounds criticism and creativeness:

You know, creativity is important, and entrepreneurs are often leaders. But the problem is that the students are followers and not creators. […] Coming up with a new thing is taboo. […] The major problem is that they think in similar patterns. […] Creating a new thing is not normal. To go out of the box is considered rude. And always, they teach the students to be silent, to stay cool, to be hiding. It has a significant impact, not only on the students, but on us. (I18)

This section demonstrates the success of EPRDF’s infrastructural power when reaching in classrooms. The structural constraints created by the harsh control measures lead teachers to act in accordance with what is expected from them in classrooms. Following the SRA and the theory of resistance, teachers reproduce the control structures by (un-) consciously submitting to them.

The next section will give examples of actions that aimed for contestation of those control structures.
6.2.2 Teachers’ strategic action as attempted resistance

A few teachers who criticised the government in interviews found it relevant to provide opportunities for their students to question the government, its politics and to reflect on current issues. They regretted the limitations that the education system imposed over them (I2, I10, I11, I23, I31, I36): “The process of learning begins when you think ‘how does that happen, why does that happen, is that correct?’ They have to criticise the government. Even, they have to criticise their family and the teachers” (I23). Those teachers thought it was their responsibility to help students to develop their own reasoning to not directly be influenced by the ideas of others (I1, I29).

Despite the rigid control structures, those teachers found niches to take strategic actions that were not obedient. They stated to complement the biased curriculum with other material to add other perspectives. Teachers outlined to include topics by using own material from sources that they regard as reliable and truthful such as scientific articles, books from AAU and other pieces of information from the internet (I2, I13, I14, I17, I28, I29, I34). Other teachers mentioned to radically shorten the book and correct false information (I18, I29) and to modifying “political parts” (I18). Some prepared a new handout for students that combines the crucial parts of the book with knowledge from external sources (I13, I18). Concerning ethical and religious representation in books, teachers stated to add information about disadvantaged groups (I10, I26, I35). A few teachers even expressed that sometimes, they would even tell students straightforwardly that the textbook does not present the reality (I10, I11, I18). “I teach them, and finally, I say: ‘this is just what the textbook says. Not my perception. I am just a translator.” (I18).

Other strategic actions to work around political secularism was to present a concept, such as democracy or fair elections and then ask students what they observe in their own country (I23, I36). When students then concluded that the country’s situation did not comply with the concept, teachers would use this awareness as a starting point to highlight that students might become future leaders of this country and can initiate change. Also, teachers underscored that as Ethiopian citizens, they should start to respect rights of others (I16, I23, I27, I34, I36, I39). “‘If you are public agent or official, you should not add false votes, you should accept the decision of the people’, I tell them” (I23). Some teachers would urge their students to fight injustice by standing up for the rule of law:
I am advising my students: ‘You have to respect the principle of rule of law, you have to believe in law, because law is something that guides institutions, governments and everything. […] You are expected to do more. Some of you can guide their family’. (I27)

Moreover, a few history teachers disclosed to use topics in the curriculum for initiating reflections on current politics without addressing them directly. Very few teachers demonstrated similarities between Zemene Mesafent’s rule (1769-75) and EPRDF to point out the problematic results that the strong focus on regional governance can have (I2, I13). Other teachers stated to contrast the advantages and disadvantages of previous regimes with their students (I10, I11, I17): “I tell them: ‘Don't always blame the Derg Regime. Try to find out important measures taken by them’” (I11). Stories of Ethiopian ‘heroes’ such as Menelik, Tewodros and the Axum people who “built their own states” were brought up to show students that it possible for individuals to create their own nation (I13). International examples were found to be helpful as well. In some cases, Nelson Mandela’s quotes were applied to encourage students not to blame previous regimes for mistakes, but to look forward (I6, I8). Revolutions, such as the Russian revolution and the European industrial revolutions were also used to indicate the possibility of change (I2, I13). To tackle fights or other problems regarding ethnocentrism, teachers mentioned to demonstrate their impartiality and to promote the relevance of accepting diversity (I1, I6, I11, I14, I15, I24, I27, I29, I34). By doing so, teachers felt like contributing to interethnic tolerance. Teachers claimed to tell students that they are “all equal Ethiopian citizens” (I8, I15, I25, I34) and that they should not “politicise it [ethnicity]” (I8). History teachers mentioned to strategically use international examples from the textbook, such as European countries who unified after conflict, to demonstrate students that living in unity after division is possible (I2, I13, I17).

Those practices could be seen in relation to what Leonardo (2004) called the language of criticism and the language of hope. Through engaging with students’ critical questions or comments to point out the gap between the taught content and assisting them to realise this gap but to also see how this can be better in the future, teachers (un-)consciously promote criticism. It can be concluded that despite the overall culture of avoidance and “pervasive climate of fear”, a few teachers exercised their agency to use students’ questions as well as parts of the curriculum to spark reflections. Within the structural limitations, teachers found little niches for creative actions that challenge the dynamics (see section 6.1).
Nonetheless, there are problematics with those forms of criticism. Firstly, most teachers who claimed to employ the named strategies also complained about constant trouble with the school administration due to student spy reports, and two of them were imprisoned. This demonstrates that using teaching strategies that are not conform with the government’s instructions does not go without repercussions.

Given the structural constraints, the described examples appear bold and resistant. Nevertheless, those actions too took place under extreme caution and, as indicated, usually when students directly ask questions, or the curriculum allows for digression. It is thus questionable how often actions like those take place and to which extent they result in constructive dialogue. Furthermore, almost none of the observed lessons involved group work, discussions or questions asked by students. Instead, the same teachers who claimed to engage students in critical thinking as described above were traditionally lecturing the content of the class without asking open and interactive questions. Memorising by repeating the teachers’ speeches and copying the text on the blackboard were usually the only activities students engaged in. Even topics of CEE such as conflict resolution and acceptance of diversity were taught without examples related to the country. Those findings relate to what Freire (1970/1993) calls banking education, which refers to the imposition of knowledge instead of helping learners to come to conclusions and reflections that are relevant to them. According to him, applying these banking methods for liberation and criticism will achieve the opposite, as imposition and indoctrination are strategies of the oppressors “who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed” (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 73). From this perspective, the recommendations of teachers for students on how to be a better citizen and not blame previous regimes will not necessarily lead to criticism if there was no dialogue that led students to their own conclusions.

Furthermore, teachers’ ways of practicing the language of criticism as shown in the examples above are subject to limitations: a few teachers stated to portray Mengistu Haile Mariam (leader of the military regime Derg) as democratic (I5, I23) and promoting equality (I11) in their instruction and openly exalted the Derg. This points towards either false information or clouded judgement fuelled by the numerous shortcomings of the current regime. As outlined (see section 2.2), there is – to put it mildly – no record of a democratic, just Ethiopian government. Accordingly, the lack of positive examples on just and democratic rule led teachers to struggle with the language of transcendence, meaning that they have difficulties to help students to think beyond the government’s limitations and imagine a future without oppression. The reason for that might be that it is difficult for the teachers themselves to imagine
a just, democratic Ethiopia without oppression. However, teachers had ideas on how a school without ERDF’s intervention could look like, which will be presented in the next section.

### 6.3 Dreaming out loud: a school without EPRDF’s intervention?

“If there is no politics, the school would be heaven. You would talk openly. It would be a good place.”

Teacher from school 4 (I41)

All previous sub-sections have demonstrated how strong EPRDF’s intervention in the schools restricts teachers in their work. A few teachers have been directly asked how a school without intervention from the government could look like. This shows that even though teachers might struggle with implementing the *language of transcendence* in their classrooms, they have ideas and hope for a better future: Teachers described that students would be more active, teachers would be more determined to teach, and the relationships between all educational actors – students, teachers and the administration – could finally improve (I6, I11, I41).

Moreover, teachers described that it would enable them to finally teach about what is really happening in the country:

So, in a school that is free from politics, you would explain the reality. The relation between you and me has to be based on reality. Okay? Not based on suspicion, or hostilities. I suspect you, you suspect me. So, if you teach the reality, you could build a real relation and initiate new ideas for the students, which is what education means.

Teacher at school 1 (I11)

First it would give me comfort, to do my job interested and it would allow me to be free. Like I have said earlier, it limits us from telling the truth. So, I would be less reserved, and this time you know the economy, you have to be careful… so I would talk about the Ethiopian economy based on the science in detail, openly, and criticise it.

Teacher at school 4 (I41)

For another teacher in school 1, a *free* school meant academic freedom and finally leaving all fear behind: “You can teach your subject without any imposing powers, imposing officials. Academic freedom. I get academic freedom. I would start teaching my students freely without fear, without anything.” (I3)

One of the interviewed local UN workers described that EPRDF’s politics once and for all need to stop intruding in the Ethiopian education system and to create a genuinely
participatory political situation. He furthermore said that the entire education system and teacher training system must be able to function independently in the absence of politics (I66).

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in addition to the control structures described in chapter 5, EPRDF’s deliberatively intervenes in classrooms through political secularism and politicised curricula. The overall structures of fear and avoidance created by the political interventions posed significant constraints on teachers’ actions and are further reinforced by ethnocentrism. The most recurrent pattern of strategically selective actions was submitting to the instructions regarding the avoidance of political dialogue and teaching the politicised content as it is. Those actions were found to prevent the establishment of meaningful relationships between teachers and students as they involved shutting down questions and pretending that students’ observations or concerns were not relevant. The described actions of obedience largely reproduce the control structures since they comply with the government’s goals.

Yet, a few teachers went beyond the structural limitations by complementing or shortening the biased teaching material. In addition, they used occasions such as questions as well as examples and concepts provided by the textbook to spark reflection and give recommendations. Even those strategic actions are nevertheless unlikely to challenge the existing control structures as they only took place occasionally and under extreme caution. Teachers used teacher-centred strategies for their attempts of criticism and glorified previous regimes, which increases the ineffectiveness of their efforts. It can thus be concluded that teachers’ manoeuvring with the control structures generally lead to actions that were reproductive of those very structures. This again speaks for strength of EPDRF’s infrastructural power which successfully manipulates teachers’ actions in classrooms. Reproduction of the government’s power and control is the outcome of this manipulation.
7 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter points out key conclusions and final insights of this thesis. The first subsection will answer the main research question. In the light of Ethiopia’s current transition to a democracy, the collected data regarding teachers’ coping mechanisms with oppression have great implications. Regardless of which direction Ethiopia’s leadership will take and how EER will be structured, teachers are going to be the agents who put educational reform into practice. Therefore, the second sub-section discusses a few results with regards to Ethiopia’s democratic goals. Subsequently, section 7.3 outlines recommendations for both further research, Ethiopia’s educational reform and possible interventions in education.

7.1 Conclusions to the research question

How do teachers in government schools in Addis Ababa exercise their agency to cope with EPRDF’s political intervention in the education sector?

To answer the research question, it was first outlined through which political interventions EPRDF maintains control over the education sector. Firstly, EPRDF ensures spatial control by assigning leadership positions in education bureaus (AAEB, SEB, WEB) and in schools to citizens with EPRDF partisanship and/or commitment to work in line with ruling party’s goals. The school principal is responsible for guaranteeing that actors in the school comply with the government’s agenda, which includes the facilitation of political meetings and instructing teachers on how to deliver the government-imposed curriculum. Furthermore, EPRDF assigns students and teachers to monitor the school environment to identify potential government opponents. They then report suspicions to the school principal, education bureaus, directly to the party or to the police. For its social control, the ruling party thus relies on a system of instruction, surveillance and report within which agents closely collaborate to oppress any form of anti-government action. Suspected opponents receive threats from education bureaus or school administrators, can be suspended or allocated to a different school, or even imprisoned. Teachers barely have options to seek support as both education bureaucrats at higher levels and the school principal are part of the control system, and the ETA is a government entity as well. The mistrust and fear among teachers due to the presence of spies reinforces teachers’ helplessness and isolation. For coping with these rigid control structures, teachers’ strategically selective actions mostly include to avoid relationships with other teachers
as well as discussions that could go in depth and become counter government. Instead, teachers speak carefully about sensitive topics, isolate themselves and follow the instructions of their superiors. The few teachers who were critical in their interactions with teachers or students, or protested against the school principal or the government, were intimidated and demoralised by threats, imprisonment or allocation to a different school. As a result, they ended up engaging in similar obedient actions as their less critical colleagues.

EPRDF’s interventions in the education sector, particularly the presence of student spies and the tabooing of political topics (political secularism), make most teachers choose to avoid deviations from the curriculum as well as critical discussions in the classroom. They teach carefully according to the exact instructions of higher levels as they are aware of the possible consequences. This includes teaching politicised curricula, which however adds challenges as students notice the gap between the country’s reality and the learning content and sometimes address it. The teacher-student relationship, that is already harmed by mistrust and suspicion due to students’ potential monitoring function, is further damaged by teachers’ neglect of students’ critical questions and observations of reality. A few teachers attempted to resist the control structures by complementing the curriculum and carefully initiating reflections through explanations of principles and international examples, or examples from the country’s past. However, the rarity, caution and teacher-centred implementation of those strategies reduces the probability that those actions truly spark criticism and constructive reflections in students.

This study has revealed the lived experiences of teachers when coping with the control structures that Ethiopia’s authoritarian government installed in the education sector. Based on the findings, the answer to the main research question is that teachers exercise their agency to cope with EPRDF’s political intervention by avoiding criticism and political dialogue as well as through carefulness, isolation, silence about their concerns and obedience to higher levels. Those coping mechanism play in favour of EPRDF’s agenda as teachers are too scared and careful to (collectively) contest the ruling party’s control structures. Hence, they reproduce the oppressive system by obeying to it. This leads to the conclusion that Ethiopia’s government successfully organises and exercises its infrastructural power from the top to the micro-levels of the education sector.

The next sub-section will discuss what the findings implicate for Ethiopia’s democratic transition.
7.2 What do the findings implicate for Ethiopia’s democratic transition?

Before providing recommendations based on the study’s findings, this section will discuss selected insights and their implications for Ethiopia’s democratic transition.

As indicated in the introduction, Ethiopia is currently in a democratisation process which involves reforming the education sector so that it can support the creation of a just, peaceful and democratic society (see chapter 1). After the first waves of enthusiasm about Prime Minister Abiy’s strive for freedom have ebbed away, this “democratisation process” however has “hit a rough patch” (Horne, 2019, headline). The abrupt opening of political space “unleashed waves of dissatisfaction and frustration that had been crushed by the ruling party for decades” (Horne, 2019, para. 2). Throughout the country, open and violent conflicts about land rights, ethnic identity and self-determination of regions are taking place, which led to the displacement of millions (Horne, 2019; Dahir, 2019). On 25 June 2019, the governor of Amhara region, the army chief and four other senior officials were killed in an attempted coup (Aljazeera, 2019; Dahir, 2019; Yibeltal, 2019). Citizens seem less afraid to voice their concerns publicly, but unrest, insecurity and disorientation seem to be more present in Ethiopia now than before Abiy (Horne, 2019).

Ethiopia’s current struggles raise questions on how the education sector can realistically respond to the complex challenges that the country is facing in its state of transition. As Teressa (2018) outlines, “transition from authoritarian rule to democracy is not an “on-and-off” switch; it’s an inherently turbulent time” (para. 10). Ethiopia’s education sector could play an important role to guide the country’s large population in school age through this “turbulent time”. Harber (2014) points out that political learning that promotes democracy involves “open, balanced discussion of a range of evidence and opinions” (p. 89) instead of transmitting one-sided political perspectives. From this stance, Ethiopian teachers would need to listen to students’ various concerns, thoughts and views and allow them to voice confusions. Yet, the evidence of this study (see chapter 5 & 6) implies that the Ethiopian education sector is rather set up around the goal of indoctrination. Harber (2014) describes indoctrination as form of political learning in which the education sector intentionally inculcates the political and social views of those in power as truths or facts. The government’s surveillance and crackdown of dissent prevents the discussion of perspectives that deviate from its “correct” version of reality. Ethiopian teachers
are agents of this indoctrination. Not only as victims of control who reluctantly follow instructions due to fear of crackdown, the biased textbooks and the political secularism, but as perpetrators: teachers might choose to become governmental agents for financial benefits, job opportunities outside of education (Rawlence, 2010b) and power positions in their workplaces and communities (de Freytas-Tamura, 2017). All educational administrators interviewed for this study started their career as teachers, meaning that they climbed the ladder to positions that might require them to apply the same pressure that they experienced when being a teacher.

Moreover, teachers themselves grew up and received their education in an authoritarian system of control. Even though my study shows that teachers can criticise their government despite being used to autocratic control, it also demonstrated that EPRDF’s coercive intervention of monopolising political perspectives impacts teachers’ practices. Teachers are instructed to refrain from discussions and teaching that could be “counter-government” and to teach a pro-government curriculum. This implies that teachers are not used to deal with a diversity of political viewpoints that exceeds the binarity of either pro-governmental or oppositional opinions.

Given the current situation of the country, teachers might however be increasingly confronted with this diversity of conflicting political views. But how should teachers manage this “new” expression of different views in an education sector where political discussion is normally either demonised through political secularism and or involves praising the government? How can teachers, who have been told to disregard their students’ concerns about human rights violations and undermine their political questions for decades, accommodate a diversity of views? At the time of the fieldwork, teachers still oriented their actions on the deeply entrenched dynamics of silence and avoidance, indicating that the new strive for freedom of expression has not reached the education sector yet. Moreover, scholars have shown that in situation of crisis, education often turns into a space for preserving a rather unjust normalcy (Brandt, forthcoming; Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016; Pherali, 2013) which involves excluding political topics to give students a “time-out” (van Ommering, 2015; 2017). This implies that political topics will remain a taboo in the Ethiopian education sector to preserve stability25.

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25 This fieldwork took place in autumn 2018 when the enthusiasm about Abiy was still palpable, even though unrest was simmering. It is therefore possible that dynamics regarding freedom of speech in the education sector have due to the fast pace of current political changes already evolved by the time of writing.
However, silencing political topics belongs to EPRDF’s authoritarian agenda of monopolising of political speech. Currently, citizens’ hate speech on social media and violent insurgencies are widely condemned as signs that Ethiopia is becoming “ungovernable” (Horne, 2019). In the context of this study, those actions merely indicate that Ethiopians have never learned how to voice their concerns peacefully, let alone how to accept a diversity of political opinions, as a result of harsh, autocratic control (see chapter 2). The current unrest and disorientation of the Ethiopian population calls for an education that finally addresses the complex needs of the diverse society instead of following the tradition of oppressing them in the name of stability and security.

Chapter 7.3.2 will provide several recommendations on how the education sector can be changed to contribute to a peaceful transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

7.3 Recommendations

This section engages with recommendations that derive from this research. Based on the limitations and lessons learned of this research, suggestions for further research will be made the first sub-section. The second sub-section describes general education policy recommendations and recommendations on educational intervention that emanate from the findings.

7.3.1 Recommendations for further research

The topic of teachers’ position as representatives of the state in conflict-affected societies has “only recently begun to be a topic of focus for research” (Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016, p. 331). Generally, more research on how governments of different (post-)conflict countries intervene in the education sector and how teachers interact with those interventions is needed for this research field to develop further and for better educational planning in difficult situations. In this research, the concept of infrastructural power by Mann (1984, 1986, 1993) has allowed for the determination of measures of the government’s control. Moreover, a combination of critical educational approaches with the practical four key areas developed by van Ommering (2017) have enabled the determination teachers’ interactions with concrete structural constraints. Further studies on teachers’ agency in authoritarian states or states in a transition from autocracy to democracy could complement this theoretical framework with
theories of democracy in education (Davies, 1999; Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth, 2002; Harber, 2014) to investigate potential barriers and (non-)advantages of deconstructing authoritarian structures in education systems for the purpose of democracy.

Drawing from the lack of female voices as a shortcoming of my study, I strongly advocate for the targeted inclusion of women in similar research projects. This could reveal potential connections between gender dynamics and the dynamics of oppression. To delve deeper into how teachers reproduce or challenge dynamics of oppression in Ethiopia, an ethnographic study that involves protracted classroom observations and includes students’ voices could be beneficial (van Ommering, 2015).

Since the data collected in this study does not represent the situation of teachers in rural areas, the conduction of similar studies in rural Ethiopia would contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic. Furthermore, this could allow for an identification of an urban-rural divergence regarding the strength of Ethiopia’s infrastructural power and teachers interaction with control. Moreover, I recommend investigating teachers’ interactions with control in particularly conflicted regions such as areas in Oromia, Amhara and Somali regions. In the light of current unrest (see chapter 7) and the remarkable pace of change in Ethiopia, it is likely that both the way how EPRDF exercises its infrastructural power and teachers’ coping mechanisms will drastically transform in the following months or years. It is therefore relevant to make the topic of EPRDF’s (or future government’s) control in education a continuous priority in educational research in Ethiopia to understand educations’ capacity to contribute to conflict transformation.

7.3.2 Recommendations for educational reform (EER) and educational interventions

As discussed in chapter 7, its current dynamics of fear and avoidance limit Ethiopia’s education sector to address citizens’ disorientation and conflict in the transition from an autocracy to a democracy. Enabling a trustful environment in which teachers can provide a safe space and accommodate peaceful discussion about political topics will require EPRDF to give up a large amount of control over the education sector. The following recommendations suggest steps for this purpose:
Filling leading positions with competent educationalists: The draft of EER indirectly addresses the issue of the politically appointed educational leaders by admitting that those bureaucrats do often not have sufficient qualification for their assignment (Teferra et al., 2018). To tackle this problem, positions of bureaucrats in educational offices on regional, zonal and woreda level as well as of school and vice principals should be newly assigned to qualified candidates without EPRDF affiliation. This implies a time-consuming and complicated process, but it would prove to both teachers and students that the government takes its promises to end oppression seriously. It could further be the starting point for the deconstruction of political power dynamics in schools. Concrete standards on the assignment of educational administrators at all levels based on experience and qualification rather than political affiliation will sustain the deconstruction of those power dynamics.

De-politicising curricula: De-politicised curricula would reflect on advantages and shortcomings of all regimes including EPRDF, instead of (wrongly) praising EPRDF’s achievements and deliberatively portraying past regimes negatively. Furthermore, the inclusion of perspectives from different regions and interest groups to not exacerbate conflict is crucial. For CEE, this will mean that EPRDF’s violations of democratic and human rights become part of the curriculum, but future visions should be incorporated to enable a language of hope. In general, many open can be added to textbooks to initiate discussions.

Stopping surveillance and politicisation of school environment: The ruling party needs to refrain nation-wide from using the school environment for political meetings and recruitment. Moreover, the surveillance structure should be uprooted. EPRDF must make a public statement that the education sector will no longer be monitored by its spies. The 1-5 system needs to be banned from schools, no matter how efficient it might be to monitor students’ learning. Its political connotation will keep seeding mistrust. School clubs and extra-curricular activities should take place without the political intervention of the police and the woreda.

Banning political secularism and making clear commitments to meaningful dialogue: EER should state that targeted intervention of political parties and indoctrination of one-sided political ideas in education are strictly prohibited. In addition, it should clearly point out that secular education refers to the separation of educational and religious affairs. Moreover, EER needs to indicate that education’s mandate is to facilitate peaceful discussion of viewpoints from different interest groups.
(Re-)Building trust: Rebuilding trust is interlinked with the above-mentioned recommendations of assigning capable leaders without political mandate and creating a spy-free education sector. However, special initiatives such as payed team-building activities in the teaching force, a school counsellor for teachers and regular meetings to discuss issues can further support the building of trust. Likewise, regulations on those activities can be part of EER.

Uproot the teacher training system: Even though teacher training has not been directly investigated in this study, the findings indicate that teachers did not acquire competencies on how to deal with conflicting and diverse political viewpoints. Curricula for both pre- and in-service training for all subjects should not only include topics regarding conflict management in classrooms, student-centred methods and managing discussions, but should also be taught in an interactive way. Teachers should learn how their own beliefs impact their teaching and how they can create a peaceful learning environment by addressing students’ concern and questions. This will contribute to the country’s long-term goals: “…teachers trained […] to support democracy and the voice of their students, respect and value diversity and promote peace and reconciliation – are far more likely to deliver transformational learning that can build peace, social justice and social cohesion” (Sayed & Novelli, 2016, p. 66). While this clearly involves the restructuration of the pre-and in-service training system and curricula, international organisations like UNESCO and UNESCO-IICBA could facilitate large-scale training interventions for in-service teachers.

The named interventions seem idealistic or even unrealistic in light of the current political unrest and the strong vested interests of normalcy with regard to long-enduring mechanisms of control. But so was Abiy’s abrupt transition to a strive for democracy. And this transition will not happen without the support of teachers and the education sector.

Political unrest in the country should not be used as an excuse to relapse on authoritarian strategies, as it is the oppressive autocratic rule itself that has established the grievances and tensions than citizens express now loudly (Horne, 2019; Teressa, 2018). The long-term solution for peace will require Ethiopia’s leaders to do what barely happened in Ethiopian history: Hearing and acknowledging the concerns of the voices that were silenced for decades and addressing the complex conflict dynamics instead of ignoring and suppressing them. An Ethiopian education sector that enables citizens to deal peacefully with political diversity and voice their concerns accordingly is a very distant goal. Whether it will turn from a goal into a utopia depends on EPRDF’s will to abandon oppressive strategies once and for all.
Literature


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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview list

For this thesis, 64 interviews, 4 focus group discussions and 39\textsuperscript{26} classroom observations have been conducted. As complete anonymity was ensured to the participants, the following list will specify neither the locations of the schools nor the subjects that teachers were teaching.

Locations or functions where further specification is not possible due to anonymity concerns are marked with*. The addition (+CO) stands for classroom observation, meaning that at least one of the interviewed teacher’s lesson have been observed. Columns in red refer to interviews that have not been directly used in the findings but are added as they are part of the research project and have contributed to a larger understanding of the context. The interviews with local education experts that are marked in blue have not been used for the findings but have inspired the research methodologies for schools. Numbers that refer to focus group discussions are in bold.

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<td>Physics Laboratory</td>
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<tr>
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<td>09-10-2018</td>
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<td>English</td>
<td>12-10-2018</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Focus group discussion with four teachers of school 1</td>
<td>Physics laboratory</td>
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\textsuperscript{26} Three of the 39 observed teachers (two from school 2, one from school 3) were not interviewed due to logistic problems (last-minute drop out, not available anymore etc.). They are thus not mentioned as participants of this study in the interview list.

\textsuperscript{27} The two imprisoned teachers have been interviewed twice: one general interview and one about the imprisonment.
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**Other school staff**
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<td>Zambezi building, UN Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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<td>Founder of OneAfricanChild Foundation</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2: Interview schedule for teachers

### Interview schedule for teachers

- Introduce researcher, translator and research project
- Ensure that participant read and signed information letter
- Remind participant that participation is voluntary, consent can be withdrawn at any time, questions can be skipped, and interview can be interrupted/ended at any time
- Ensure that participant agrees with recording and switch voice recorder on

#### General information:

- Please tell me about yourself, your work and your responsibilities.
- Please tell me what you like about being a teacher. Do you still wish to be a teacher in 5 years?
- What motivates you every day, how do achievements in your everyday work look like? What makes you feel proud about yourself and the work you do?
- Please tell me about the school(s) you work in and the teaching/learning material that is available. What tools do you mostly use to support your instruction?
- Please tell me about your work conditions. How much time do you spend teaching per day? Do you work in other jobs alongside? Is the salary satisfactory for you?
- Please tell me about your contract conditions, the type and the duration of your current contract (if any).

#### Support

- Who helps you to realize your rights as a teacher?
- Do you have a mentor at the school or are you mentored by an experienced teacher? If yes, how helpful do you find the mentoring system?
- Who do you report challenges or issues to? Who do you talk to about problems or dissatisfaction in relation to your job?
- If applicable: please give an example of how and with the help of whom you once tackled a problem (tried to tackle a problem).
- Please describe your relationship to other teachers: do you have many close friends within the teaching force? Do they discuss employment conditions? Do you share recommendations about pedagogy and dealing with difficult situations in the classroom?
- How often do meetings with school principals and other teachers take place? If yes, what are recurrent topics?
- How comfortable do you feel addressing problems to vice principals and the school principal? Are supervision and guidance available?
- Please describe your relationship with the vice principals and the school principal.
- Please describe to which extent your pre-service training prepared you for the challenges you face in your everyday work as a teacher.
- Please describe the opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD). How often are you participating in trainings? Who decides that you participate in a training? How satisfied were you with those trainings?
- If you could participate in a training of your choice, what would you want to learn and why?
- Please describe your relationship with the students’ parents. Are you involved in a teacher-parent association? Please describe the frequency of interactions with parents, the main reason for those interactions and the challenges/advantages that come with it.

**Challenges:**
- Please describe your workload as a teacher.
- Please describe what challenges you face as a teacher in general.
- Please describe what challenges you face regarding your relationships with students, parents, other teachers and the school administrators?
- What would you improve in your school if you could and how (Infrastructure, textbooks, management, atmosphere)?

**Ethnicity and politics**
- Please describe your involvement in your community. How do issues in your community affect you?
- Do you have examples on which strategies helped to overcome issues in your community? If yes, which role did you play?
- Are there children from different ethnic groups/areas of Addis Ababa in the classroom? If yes, how does the diversity affect your work?
- Are students in your class often absent? Do you know the reasons for it? How do you deal with student absenteeism?
- Do you talk about the political situation in the country with your students? If yes, how? If not, what restricts you from addressing it?
- Do you think that it is okay for teachers to talk about problems of the country openly with their students? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- Can you talk openly about different political opinions with colleagues and in front of students? Have teachers in your school been fired because of political statements or political engagement?
- Are you politically engaged and if yes, how?
What skills are important for Ethiopian citizens to acquire and how do you as a teacher contribute to the development of those skills?

What is your definition of peace? How can education contribute to it? What can you as a teacher do to contribute to it?

Practices:

- Please explain how you prepare lessons.
- Please describe the teaching methods you use the most frequent and why you use them.
- Give an example of a difficult situation in the classroom and how you have solved it
- What is your conception of misbehaving? How do you tackle misbehaving students in your classroom?
- Which student-related problems occur in your classroom (bullying, violence against each other) and how do you address them?
- Are there patterns regarding who is misbehaving in your classrooms?
- What disciplining strategies do you use if students are not listening to you?
- What is your definition of a successful lesson? What teaching strategies are the best to deliver a successful lesson?
- What discipline strategies always work for you and which ones would you recommend to other teachers?
- What problems do your students have (drug abuse, violence, early marriage)? What is your responsibility in paying attention to those problems?
- How do you address the personal problems of your students? What are your limitations?

Political questions added during research:

- How satisfied are you with the textbook? In your opinion, does it portray the country’s reality and equally represent ethnic groups? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- (If teacher points out that government manipulates students:) To which extent and how do you try to go beyond those limitations and give opportunities for critical thinking?
- To which extent do you feel politically observed?
- To which extent is there mutual trust among teachers? If there is suspicion, what are the reasons?
- (If stated to have problems:) To which extent can the ETA help you with your issues?
- (If pointed out that all teachers face the similar problems:) Is there collective protest or resistance of teachers regarding the pressures of the government/other political problems? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- (If spoken about political intervention): How do you think a school without EPRDF’s intervention could look like? What would you do differently if there was no political intervention by the government?
Closing:

- Is there anything else you would like to share?

*Thanking participant, reminder that results of research project can be sent to school and that all information is handled confidentially.*
# Appendix 3: Interview schedule for school principals and vice principals

## Interview schedule for school principals and vice principals

- Introduce researcher, translator and research project
- Ensure that participant read and signed information letter
- Remind participant that participation is voluntary, consent can be withdrawn at any time, questions can be skipped, and interview can be interrupted/ended at any time
- Ensure that participant agrees with recording and switch voice recorder on

### General information:
- Please tell me about yourself, your work and your responsibilities.
- What were your reasons to become a vice principal?
- Please tell me what you like most about your work. Do you still wish to be a principal in 5 years?
- What motivates you everyday, how do achievements in your everyday work look like? What makes you feel proud about yourself and the work you do? How does your work get rewarded?
- Please tell me more about this school. Which part of the city are most of the students from? What projects, competitions, clubs and associations does the school accommodate?
- Please describe the school in terms of infrastructure and resources. Are you satisfied with the learning and teaching material? What do you want to improve and the future and what has already been achieved?
- Please name a major competency you want your students to acquire in this school.

### About teachers:
- How often do you have team-meetings with teachers and what are the major purpose of those meetings?
- What do you expect from your teachers?
- What makes a good teacher for you?
- How do you assess the performance of your teachers?
- How often do you have individual meetings with teachers to discuss their work?
- How often do teachers come to seek help from you? What are their main concerns?
- What opportunities do teachers have to seek support if they have a concern?
- Please describe the work conditions of teachers (pay, overworked etc.)?
- Is there a high fluctuation/turnover of teachers? If yes, what are the reasons for that?
- Please give an example of a situation in which you successfully addressed the concern of a teacher in need.
- Please describe the work climate at the school. How would you describe the relationships among all actors in the school ((vice) principals, teachers, students, eventually parents)?

Teacher recruitment and teacher training
- Please describe the recruitment process of new teachers.
- Please describe how you introduce new teachers to the school. Are there any mentoring programmes?
- Please describe which training opportunities you offer teachers. Who decides if the receive training and what they learn, who trains them, what are important topics, how often do the trainings take place?
- How do you award outstandingly good teachers?
- Please describe the cooperation with the AAEB, SEB and WEB for teacher observation, training and recruitment.

Teachers’ strategies
- What teaching methods do you want teachers to use and why?
- What material have teachers at their disposal to support their instruction?
- What is a successful lesson for you and how can teachers deliver them?
- What values do you want your teachers to promote in the classroom?
- What skills should students acquire to become good citizens and how can teachers assist them in developing those skills?
- How do you want teachers to resolve issues in the classroom?
- How should teachers engage in dialogue to students about the country’s political past and present? If they should refrain from doing so, why?
- What issues do your students bring to the school (bullying, early marriage) and how should teachers address them?

Education policies
- What is your conception of peace? How can education contribute to peacebuilding? How can your school and the teachers in it contribute to peacebuilding in Ethiopia?
- What role do current policies and teacher standards play in your work? How familiar are you with the current education policies and governmental programmes?
- Has the school been consulted for the EER? What changes did (or would, if not consulted) you suggest for EER?
- What are current gaps in education policies regarding teaching and learning?
- What are the biggest challenges government schools and their teachers face and how can they be addressed?
- If you could ask for more support from educational authorities in an area of your choice, what would you ask for?

Closing:
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

*Thanking participant, reminder that results of research project can be sent to school and that all information is handled confidentially.*
Appendix 4: Interview schedules all other actors

“Other actors” refers to other school staff (ETA personnel, school counsellors), the ETA president, AAEB and FMoE education officials and UN and NGO actors. Each interview schedule was manually prepared based on the individual actor’s role, area of work and connection to teachers. For AAEB and FMoE, concrete questions were conceptualised according to the directorate’s or department’s current programmes or work on education policies. However, the following topics reoccurred in most interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consent procedure for all other actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce researcher, translator and research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure that participant read and signed information letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remind participant that participation is voluntary, consent can be withdrawn at any time, questions can be skipped, and interview can be interrupted/ended at any time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure that participant agrees with recording and switch voice recorder on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General information on actor’s role and responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Please tell me about yourself, your work and your responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Please tell me what you like most about your work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What motivates you everyday, how do achievements in your everyday work look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes you feel proud about yourself and the work you do? How does your work get rewarded?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Please tell me more about your school/organisation/institute/office. What are tasks, current goals, partners, donors? What projects or programmes do you currently implement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are major challenges you face in your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How does your work relate to teachers (and their role in conflict transformation)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The education sector and teachers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What skills should Ethiopian citizens acquire in education for a peaceful and democratic future? How can Ethiopian teachers contribute to this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is your conception of peace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In your view, is there peace in Ethiopia? Is there peace in Addis Ababa? If yes, why? If not, why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How can education contribute to peacebuilding in Ethiopia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are in your opinion major barriers to peacebuilding in Ethiopia?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - What role do current policies and teacher standards play in your work? How familiar are you with the current education policies and governmental programmes (EER)?
- What are current gaps in education policies regarding teaching and learning?
- What are the biggest challenges government schools and their teachers face and how can they be addressed?
- What can Ethiopia do to contribute to a well-functioning education sector?

**Closing:**
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

*Thanking participant, reminder that results of research project can be sent to school and that all information is handled confidentially.*
Appendix 5: Focus Group discussion guide

Focus group discussion guide schedule
- Introduce researcher, translator and research project
- Ensure that participants read and signed information letter
- Remind participants that participation is voluntary, consent can be withdrawn at any time, questions can be skipped, and interview can be interrupted/ended at any time

Lay out ground rules
- This is a safe space. Nothing what is said during this discussion will be communicated to third parties.
- Everyone’s opinion matters. Please let your colleagues finish their sentences. If you want to directly respond to a statement before it is finished, raise your hand.
- For the voice recording, please do not speak at the same time.
- This is a discussion and not an interview. You should react and engage rather than solely answer my questions. I am not interested in consensus, but discussion, so feel free to voice disagreement with other statements.
- Please put your phones on silent.

Ensure that participant agrees with recording and switch voice recorder on

Introduction round:
- Please make a quick introduction round by stating the subjects you teach, how long you teach at this school and sharing one thing you like about being a teacher

This school:
- Please discuss what you like or dislike about this school. Think of its infrastructure, leadership, the students and the relationships between colleagues.
- Discuss your level of satisfaction with this school in general.

Support and Challenges
- Please discuss what you like about being a teacher and what you find challenging.
- Please discuss your options to seek support in case of problems.
- Please discuss the shortcomings and advantages of training opportunities for your profession.
- Please discuss the opportunities for exchange of good practices and support from other teachers.
Ethnicity and politics
- Please discuss advantages and challenges in relation to ethnic diversity in this school and in your teaching.
- Please discuss if you would address current political events, such as Abiy or unrest in the streets in the classroom.
- Please discuss which skills are important for Ethiopian citizens to acquire and how you as teachers contribute to the development of those skills.
- Discuss definition of peace and how can education contribute to peacebuilding.

Practices:
- Please discuss how you prepare your lessons and what helps you when doing so.
- Please discuss teaching methods that you like to use.
- Please discuss measures to tackle misbehaviour of students.

Closing:
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thanking participants, reminder that results of research project can be sent to school and that all information is handled confidentially and will not be discussed with third parties in the school.
### Appendix 6: Classroom observation guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher code, date, time of period, grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom equipment (used by teachers):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching strategies** (methods, variety of activities used, exercises given)

**Classroom climate** (inviting, engaging, atmosphere)

**Class structure and organisation** (Introduction, homework, closure, learning objectives clear?)

**Teachers’ strategies related to students** (reactions to replies, disciplining, different treatment of students)

**Student observation** (Participation, asking questions, engaging in answering, disturbing, fights etc.)

**Type of questions asked by the teacher** (Open/closed, engaging and striving for understanding, aimed at finishing sentences/replies in choir?)

**Topic and Ethiopian/ethnic examples:**

**Other remarks:**
Annex 7: Confidentiality agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidentiality agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a confidentiality agreement between Annika Weigele, student researcher, who seeks for translation and transcription assistance of ______________________ for her research project in Ethiopian government schools. This agreement will lay down the conditions for this collaboration with the purpose of protecting both the confidentiality of participant data and the researchers’ identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, name of translator, hereby testify that I will not share any information mentioned in the recorded interview files with anyone expect the researcher (Annika Weigele). I moreover assure that I will not share any information about the research project, the participants and the researcher with third parties. I strictly promise to not store any written or recorded files of the research on my computer. I will destroy any kind of notes taken for the transcriptions (no matter if manually or electronically) before handing the transcripts over to the researcher. With my signature below, I confirm to fully commit to the named conditions of this collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place and Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
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</tbody>
</table>