Chapter 2
How to Make Sense of “Developing a Sense of Belonging” Through “Feeling Like a Family” in the Light of Cultural and Societal Backgrounds

Abstract In this chapter, I first provide the reader with geopolitical and historical information which is meaningful for the study that is presented. It enables potential readers to deepen their background information and hence get a view on the results of the study that is rich in content.

Regarding history, this chapter goes back to the time before the “modern” Ethiopia. It has been regarded as important to present glimpses into the rich Ethiopian history and political developments as this explains lots of the current developments, values, attitudes and the main characteristics of the Ethiopian society. These aspects are of major importance to the main topic of this book which is disability and education.

Furthermore, the chapter is discussing the main results of the study in the light of relevant literature. Thereby aspects like belonging and ethnicity, self-concept, disability and collectivist cultures, family and disability, special needs education, teachers’ attitudes and community, religion and belief and last but not least the role of poverty are considered. This leads towards a broader picture regarding the most important results of this investigation. Additionally, it embeds the single outcomes into the framework of cultural and societal realities.

In this chapter, I introduce the main outcomes of my study in order to illustrate how important it is to look at the background of certain phenomena like the meaning of belonging and family but also religion and other essential aspects in a different culture and especially in the context of disability. My study was an in-depth exploration of the situation of children with disabilities in their educational environments in Addis Ababa. Looking at barriers and facilitators in their daily lives helped to get a clearer picture of cultural issues influencing inclusion. In this context, it is very important not to settle for generalisations about the differences within certain cultures, as Sen states: “The recognition of diversity within different cultures is extremely important in the contemporary world. Our understanding of the presence of diversity tends to be somewhat undermined by constant bombardment with oversimplified generalizations about ‘Western civilisation’, ‘Asian values’, ‘African cultures’ and so on” (Sen 1999, 247).
With this in mind, the results of my research proved once more the importance of looking closely at cultural and societal aspects when it comes to disability and education. The core category which finally emerged from the data was *feeling like a family*. This reflects the positive aspect which was described especially by teachers and parents referring to their relations at school. In some schools, this feeling helped the parents greatly to cooperate and to support the child in being successful at school, even if they were illiterate themselves. In the context of the core category, the children with disabilities mostly referred to the internal family relations. In other words, the children spoke very much about their goals of being able to support their families after school and the importance of being able to help their parents. The final title of my theory was “Developing a sense of belonging”. This refers to belonging to a family, to school, to a community and to society as such. I will go into more detail about the development of the theory and the different perspectives of the participants later in the book.

In regard to culture, the following quotation helps to understand the specific aspects on which I want to place my focus:

> Cultural conceptualizations of difference must be seen in relation to social contexts. Cross-cultural literature on disability employs two general ways of doing this: examining features of social organization, and focusing on the implications of specific social characteristics (gender, age, class) within a society. (Ingstad and Whyte 1995, 12)

This is precisely what I aim at: to identify special cultural, social and societal characteristics that influence perceptions of disability in the environment I studied. Seeing the results within the social context makes the model of “developing a sense of belonging” more specific. Thereby, the cultural conceptualisation of disability is also further clarified. I undertook a literature review in order to be able to discuss and embed the theory in the already existing research environment related to important aspects like belonging, family, attitudes, self-concept, beliefs, etc. in the light of cultural and societal aspects in the Ethiopian and the majority world context.

The following discussion of literature demonstrates how the book at hand adds new dimensions to existing research rather than verifying the results (Stern 2007, 123). However, the reviewed literature often also confirms the findings, which strengthens the backbones of the theory developed in this book.

While going through existing research, it became evident that studies about Ethiopia often refer to single ethnic groups. Looking for the above-mentioned main topics of this research (family, belonging, religion, etc.) in relation to Ethiopia led to considerably fewer results than when adding different ethnicities in the search fields (e.g. Amhara, Oromo, Tigrinya and Gurage, which also represent the different ethnicities of the parents interviewed in this study). Published research on disability and culture in Ethiopia could not be found extensively in peer-reviewed journals. Yet, I know that students at the Department for Special Needs Education at the University of Addis Ababa conduct a lot of unpublished research in the field for their Master theses, Bachelor theses or Seminar papers etc., which is a resource that is not yet widely accessible. Finally, I am also addressing historical aspects. This is the case because cultural and societal factors usually have to be elaborated starting from their historical roots.
Regarding the aim of this chapter, which is to discuss the results against the background of societal and cultural aspects of Ethiopia, one challenge becomes essential. Ethiopia is a country that unites people of various ethnicities, religions, language families, etc. Therefore, it is also difficult to speak of “the” Ethiopian culture or society, as Ethiopia exhibits a colourful set of these aspects, comprising people from various ethnicities and cultural characteristics. Also in the capital, Ethiopia’s ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity is reflected by its inhabitants. Even though the results of this book can only be seen in relation to Addis Ababa, considering some topics a restricted perspective only on the capital is not sufficient for explaining certain cultural or societal aspects that have grown historically within one or the other ethnic group. Therefore, the development of the whole country had to be regarded.

Even though strong policies exist in the field of inclusive education, Ethiopia has failed to implement these policies satisfactorily to date. The problem – like in other countries – is “a disconnect [sic] between what is taught to pre-service teachers and actual knowledge and skills necessary to implement inclusive education in the classroom” (UNICEF 2013, 2). This is the case because the understanding of inclusive education often varies on the different levels (government, teacher training institutions, schools, teachers, etc.) (UNICEF 2013). Yet, the education of children with disabilities in the existing settings (integrative and special) still led to changes in attitudes and opportunities.

By starting with Ethiopian history, I want to emphasise the fact that I consider it as indispensable to become familiar with the history of a country and a people in order to be able to understand the particular features. This brief historical excursus will open a new window to look at the people, their country and their way of life.

### Understanding the Context: Ethiopian History, Politics and Education

In Ethiopia, geographical, social, and cultural differences between people and regions that are typical for the whole continent of Africa are united in a unique way. Christianity, Islam and a high number of animist cults can be found here as well as technical know-how and illiteracy, nomadism and urbanism. It seems as if the geographical variety of the country supports this diversity. Ethiopia has mountains of up to 4000 m, lake areas in the African Rift Valley and the salt desert in the Danakil.

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1The Ethiopian year consists of 365 days, divided into 12 months of 30 days each plus one additional month of 5 days (six in leap years). The Ethiopian year starts on September 11 and ends the following September 10, according to the Gregorian (Western) calendar. From September 11 to December 31, the Ethiopian year runs 7 years behind the Gregorian year; thereafter, the difference is 8 years. Hence, the Ethiopian year 1983 began on September 11, 1990, according to the Gregorian calendar, and ended on September 10, 1991. This discrepancy results from differences between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church as to the date of the creation of the world.
Depression. All these geographical features reflect the beauty and the richness of the country as well as its problems and possibilities (Wartenberg and Mayrhofer 1999, 69). This short description of Wartenberg and Mayrhofer offers a vivid picture of the country at the focus of this research. The ambivalence between advantages and disadvantages of the rich and diverse culture and landscape of the country becomes particularly clear.

I am using the name Ethiopia throughout the text instead of changing between Abessinia and Ethiopia even if the denomination “Ethiopia” was not known or used in the early periods when Ethiopia was still called Abessinia. Abessinia actually comes from the word “habashat”, a tribe living in the regions of Ethiopia during the times before Christ. The term “Ethiopia” originates from Greek and was used to describe the approximate landmass in the South of Egypt (Bahru 2001, 1). Ethiopians still call themselves “Habesha” today.

In connection with the history of the country, King Solomon plays an important role. It has been told that the Queen of Sheba (also Saba or Shaba2) had a son, David, together with Solomon. David later became the king of Ethiopia with the name Menelik I.

Accompanied by the first-born sons of the Israeli tribes, he travelled to his father’s court to get the ark of the covenant and bring it to Ethiopia (Phillipson 1998, 141). Now, so Ethiopians believe, the ark is situated in Axum, in the North of Ethiopia, sheltered by one monk, and no one but he is to see the ark.

King Solomon can be seen as the embodiment of wisdom. Even though wisdom and education are different terms with different meanings, there is a certain connection between them: knowledge. Throughout the history of Ethiopia, one always stumbles across the importance of this aspect and the connection to growth, prosperity but also poverty in the country.

The story of Solomon and Queen of Sheba, which takes place in the tenth century B.C., represents an important aspect for most Ethiopians in connection with the history of their people. This is the reason why the time around the tenth century B.C. will be discussed briefly. Nevertheless, the underlying historical framework for this book starts with the “modern Ethiopia” (Bahru 2001, 270). The modern Ethiopia begins in the second half of the nineteenth century.

I want to present a general overview of the “modern Ethiopia”, which is the most important part. Within this time frame, the Ethiopian history can be illustrated also regarding important political and educational developments that are relevant here.

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2 The vowels of names and certain terms, are translated differently from the Amharic in diverse publications. This is the reason why translated names and terms differ slightly when used by different authors.
The Time Before “the Modern” Ethiopia

The fact that Ethiopia looks back on 3000 years of history can be explained by the overall accepted tracing back of the beginning to Queen of Sheba and her visit to Solomon, king of Israel. However, the scientific foundations for this story are very low (Bahru 2001, 7). Many chronicles lead to the assumption that the Abyssinians are one of the oldest civilisations of the nations existing today. Although they constituted their own kingdom, they were geared to the Egyptian religion and were using the same language and script (Erlich 2005, 84). Even though there are clear connections from Ethiopia to Arabia and the Middle East, Ethiopia does not count as part of these regions. Also regarding other aspects, it cannot be classified into many of the existing categories. As a consequence, Ethiopia, situated at the Horn of Africa, is mostly viewed separately from the rest of Africa. Ethiopia sustains one of the oldest Christian civilisations. Alone for that matter the history of the country is a very meaningful one. The fact that it was not known in “the West” for thousands of years, up to the nineteenth century, makes this kingdom even more interesting. Only a few travellers made it to Ethiopia before the second quarter of the twentieth century (Phillipson 1998, 7).

History, Politics and Education During “the Modern” Ethiopia

A vast diversity of people, speaking many different languages, live in the country. These languages are separated into four groups: Kushitic, Omotic, Semitic and Nilo-Saharan. All of them can be traced back to the common mother tongue of the “Proto-Afroasiatic”. Three of them, Kushitic, Omotic and Semitic languages, are spoken in Ethiopia and are seen as the oldest language families in Ethiopia. Semitic languages are the younger ones. The fourth group, Nilo-Saharan, developed independently from the others (Bahru 2001, 5). It is important to point out this diversity at this point, as language diversity is still an issue in Ethiopia.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ethiopia was in a state of political fragmentation. Bahru sees this disunity together with the presence of the Europeans, who were in Africa during this period, as determining factors for the development of the history of the modern Ethiopia. During this period, the ruling kings of Ethiopia reacted in different ways, and with different outcomes, to the internal and external challenges of the country. The political emphasis had been put on centralisation and consolidation of the country (Bahru 2001, 270).

While the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been described by historians as the modern period of Ethiopian history (Bahru 2001, xvii), Tekeste Negash (2006, 12) adds that in regard to education, the golden era of modern education has to be seen in the years between 1941 and 1970.
Nevertheless, the time before this golden era for modern education has to be considered as well. Until the time of Menelik II (1889–1913), education was determined mainly by the church (Pankhurst 1990; Tekeste 2006). In most sub-Saharan countries, education and school meant learning from books in big classes. The traditional primary schools in the churches taught how to read and write in Ge’ez and Amharic. Some basic arithmetic was also taught. Nevertheless, the focus was on reading and writing in Ge’ez, as this was the original language of the religious rituals. School lasted for 6 years and was for children aged 4–10. The six school years were divided into four phases:

- Learning the syllabus (similar to the Western alphabet).
- “Fidel Hawaria” (alphabet of the apostles): the letters of the apostles were read, and writing and arithmetic were taught.
- “Gabre Hawaria”: the deeds of the apostles were studied, and writing and arithmetic continued.
- “David” (Dawit): psalms of David were read by children and explained by the teachers.

The beginning of the last phase (David) by the child was always celebrated by the parents (Pankhurst 1955, 234f.). Young people who decided to undergo higher education through the church had to leave their home and move into the school of their choice. There, they shared their life with other students, learnt to fast, etc. (Pankhurst 1955, 237). Until the end of the nineteenth century, the church had the strongest influence on education in Ethiopia. Curricula did not develop or change a lot and were based on old standards for quite a long time.

The following Tables 2.1 and 2.2 developments regarding education against the background of historically and politically relevant events in modern Ethiopia (second half of the nineteenth to beginning of the twenty-first century) (Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1 Overview of developments regarding education on the background of historically and politically relevant incidents in the modern Ethiopia

| Year   | King/ emperor          | Policies/event                                                                 | Consequences/meaningful events regarding education                                                                 |
|--------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1855–1868 | Tewodros II first modern king of Ethiopia | The king is seen as a uniting, reconstituting and modernising power of Ethiopia (imperial idea). He founded a school in Gafat | He was very impressed by the European technologies and the military power that these technologies would give him. Hence, he had teachers teach techniques of production of arms in school. (After the battle of Adwa in 1896, it was possible to have more intensive relations with Europe. Therefore, modern education was also spread in Ethiopia) |

(continued)
| Year          | King/emperor | Policies/event                                                                 | Consequences/meaningful events regarding education                                                                 |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1872–1889    | Yohannes IV  | He follows a “politics of controlled regionalism”; like Tewodros II, he also has friendly relationships with the European powers | He also supported Catholic missionaries, as he saw their teaching as a basis for support from powers outside the country |
|              |              |                                                                                  | Education is determined and influenced mainly by the church                                                          |
| 1886         |              | Addis Ababa (new flower) was founded                                             |                                                                                                                   |
| 1889–1913    | Menelik II   | He successfully combines the imperial idea of Tewodros and the tolerance of Yohannes |                                                                                                                   |
| 1889         |              | Treaty of Wuchale                                                               | Ethiopia is subdued to the Italian protectorate                                                                     |
| 1892         |              | Addis Ababa becomes the capital of Ethiopia                                      |                                                                                                                   |
| 1892         |              | Famine “Kefu Qan”, thousands of people die because of hunger                    | Because of the adversity, Italians are experiencing fewer difficulties to get access to the Ethiopian kingdom       |
| 1896         |              | Italy attacks, battle of Adwa, Ethiopia defeats Italy                            | Treaty of peace of Addis Ababa in October 26. October 1896: Independence                                           |
| 1898         |              | End of the consolidation of Ethiopia and of its expansion                         |                                                                                                                   |
| 1908         |              |                                                                                  | Menelik founds the first school according to modern terms of reference: Menelik II school. The medium of instruction is French |
| 1913–1916    | Iyyasu       | He is Muslim and therefore dangerous for the hegemony of the Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia | Iyyasu is dispossessed in 1916                                                                                   |

(continued)
| Year          | King/Emperor               | Policies/Event                                                                 | Consequences/meaningful events regarding education                                                                 |
|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1916–1928    | Zawditu                    | The daughter of Menelik takes over the regency. Ras Tafari Makonnen (later Haile Selassie) becomes fully authorised crown prince | Zawditu does not seem to be dangerous for the nobility. Tafari on the other hand, with all his relations abroad, is In the 1920s new phase: many students are sent to foreign countries, mostly to France |
| 1923/1924    |                            | In 1923 Ethiopia becomes part of the United Nations                           | In 1924 Tafari leaves for his tour in Europe                                                                       |
| 1928–1930    | Zawditu + Ras Tafari       | Zawditu shares regency with Haile Selassie                                     |                                                                                                                  |
|              | (Haile Selassie)           |                                                                                |                                                                                                                  |
| 1930–1935    | Haile Selassie             | Absolutism, 1931 new constitution                                             | The absolute power of the king is legalised in the constitution                                                    |
| 1931         |                            |                                                                                | Many schools are built in the provinces and in Addis Ababa                                                        |
| 1935/1936–1941| Italians in power          | Italy attacks Ethiopia under Mussolini. Fascism                               | 5 years of Italian occupation. Exploitation, Italians as “Herrenrasse” feel superior. More than 760,000 Ethiopians die Educational efforts are stagnating. Ethiopians are prevented from being educated |
| February 19–20, 1937 | Big massacre             |                                                                                | 75% of the educated class of Ethiopians are killed by the Italians                                                 |
| 1941/1942–1974| Haile Selassie             | Imperialistic phase, the majority of the budget goes to the Ministry of Education | Italy has to leave Ethiopia. Haile Selassie resumes governmental work Educational efforts are resumed; schools, uniforms and food are usually free |

(continued)
| Year   | King/emperor | Policies/event | Consequences/meaningful events regarding education |
|--------|--------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1940s/1950s |              |                | A surplus of schools can be observed. Western education systems and teachers are coming to the country |
| 1950s/1960s |              |                | Universities try to usurp students with vocationally and technically oriented education. There are sufficient jobs and salaries are oriented on academic qualification. In this period, high investments seem to be very understandable |
| 1958   |              |                | First voices notice that the way curricula are developed does not create citizens who will be able to interpret the heritage of the country, to enrich it and to adapt it to the new conditions and needs |
| 1960s  |              |                | The golden era of education is over |
|        |              |                | Many school leavers cannot be accommodated by the labour market. The consequences are unemployment and demand for reforms |
| 1974   | Revolution of students and military | Downfall of Haile Selassie I. – last king |
| 1974–1991 | Dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam | Derg, socialist–communist regime, Ethiopia is proclaimed republic | Endeavours for education are rising, as is poverty |
|        |              |                | Alphabetisation is rising, whereas quality of education is getting worse. While there was a little number of students with a good education under Haile Selassie, now there are many with a bad quality of education |

(continued)
| Year       | King/emperor | Policies/event                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Consequences/meaningful events regarding education                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1980      |              | Many wars are fought within the country, as the spectrum of political groups and independent movements reaches from monarchists to Marxists                                                              | Consideration of changing from Amharic to English as language of instruction                                                                                                    |
| End of the 1980s |              | Kokebe Tsibah primary school is the first one to offer education for children with “developmental retardation”                                                                                           | Children with intellectual disabilities are gaining first possibilities for education. More schools are developing which are offering special programmes for those children |
| 1990      |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                           | In 1990, English is only to be found in textbooks, but no more as the language of instruction                                                                                  |
| 1991      |              | Insurgents overwhelm the socialist government; EPRDF (Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front) comes into power                                                                                 | Mengistu Haile Mariam flees after 17 years of military dictatorship; end of civil war between the Amharic dominated central power in Addis Ababa and the rebellious people of 80 nationalities. Eritrea leaves state alliance. Ethiopia becomes the “Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia”. Reconstruction of the educational system is getting utmost priority |
| 1994      |              | Proclamation of new constitution; federal system; design of “Education and Training Policy”                                                                                                                  | Decentralisation and democratisation                                                                                                                                            |
| 1996      |              | “Education Sector Development Programme”                                                                                                                                                                    | Respective ethnical languages are introduced in primary schools as language of instruction                                                                                 |
Table 2.1 (continued)

| Year                  | King/emperor | Policies/event                                                                 | Consequences/meaningful events regarding education                                                                 |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2004                  |              | Implementation of “Ethiopian Satellite Education Programme” (ESEP)               | 450 schools get 8000 plasma screens                                                                                           |
|                       |              |                                                                                    | Difficulties at the beginning, as lots of teachers in television are speaking English. At primary schools, local language is spoken |
| Beginning of          |              | Efforts to develop inclusive education aiming at the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular school system | There is an increase in special classes in regular schools for children with visual/hearing and intellectual disabilities |
| the twenty-first      |              |                                                                                    | Most special schools as well as regular schools suffer from a high number of students, limited material for support and lack of teachers with appropriate education |
| century               |              |                                                                                    |                                                                                                                         |

Bahru (2001), Bartnicki and Mantel-Niećko (1978), Brogini Künzi (2006), Dawit (1994), Donham (2002), Haile Selassie I (1937), Hrbek (1993), Krylow (1994), Mockler (2003), Mulugeta (2009), Ottaway and Ottaway (1978), Pankhurst (1955), Rønning Balsvik (1994), Rubenson (1976), Tekeste (2006), Tirussew (2005), Wartenberg (1999a, b), Wartenberg and Mayrhofer (1999), and Zegeye and Pausewang (1994a, b)

Relevant Legacies and Developments in Ethiopia Today

Article 10 of the Ethiopian Constitution from 1994 clearly states the human and democratic rights of the people. “Human rights and freedoms are inviolable and inalienable. They are inherent in the dignity of human beings. Human and democratic rights of Ethiopian citizens shall be respected” (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) 1994). Article 25 additionally underlines the equality of all citizens. Education is considered to be a fundamental human right. Hence, the state of Ethiopia commits to providing education as a human right to all citizens, who also have to be considered as equal.

The next chapter examines the year 1994 (see table above). This year is of importance for the current developments of policies regarding education in Ethiopia.
1994: The Training and Education Policy of Ethiopia

The policy of 1994 has been chosen as the starting point for this chapter as this policy was to be implemented after the fall of the military DERG regime in 1991 and hence marks a new era in Ethiopian history.

After 1991, the Ethiopian government changed and educational reforms were one important step the transitional government had included in its agenda. “The educational reforms include a new education policy, decentralization of educational administration, new school curricula, and the use of vernacular languages of nationalities as media of instruction” (Belete 2011, 35). Amongst the changes, the media of instruction was one very important aspect as children could study using their mother tongue. Other major reforms of the policy included:

- Extension of primary education from 6 to 8 years in all schools, to increase the schooling received by the majority who do not go beyond the primary level,
- Automatic promotion of children in primary grades up to grade 3, to reduce repetition and dropouts,
- Use of local languages as media of instruction in primary grades to facilitate children’s adjustment to school, increase the relevance of school work to their home environment, and facilitate cognitive growth,
- Development of a new teaching career structure based on professional growth, performance, and experience to motivate teachers,
- Elimination of fees for grades 1–10 to reduce the financial burden on parents,\(^3\)
- Development of cost sharing for grades 11–12 and higher education. (Mamo 2000, 85)

Additionally, the education policy mentioned special education as one main point to be specially regarded. “The policy encompasses overall and specific objectives, implementation strategies, including formal and non-formal education, from kindergarten to higher education and special education” (Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) 1994, 4). The terms used here show that on the one hand special education is seen as separate from other education levels. On the other hand, the term inclusive or special needs education had not yet found its way into the new policy. In chapter 3.2 “Educational structure” on the policy for training and education, the last point 3.2.9 declares: “Special education and training will be provided for people with special needs” (TGE 1994, 17). Furthermore, the chapter on “Teachers” includes point 3.4.11: “Teacher training for special education will be provided in regular teacher training programmers [sic]” (TGE 1994, 22). The last point where special education is mentioned can be found in the chapter “Educational support inputs” point 3.7.6: “Special attention will be given in the preparation and utilization of support input for special education” (TGE 1994, 29). Having such acknowledgements by the government on paper in the three areas of educational structure, teachers and educational support inputs reflected a change in the general

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\(^3\)“Free primary education was introduced with the adoption of the new Education and Training Policy in 1994 as a major strategy towards achieving the EFA goals. This has led to rapid increase in the net enrolment rate, which currently stands at 83% of primary school aged children” (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2011b, 13).
approach towards education for people with disabilities. Still, the implementation can be seen as problematic and did not lead to general changes of attitudes in society (which might not be surprising).

All in all, the 1994 policy for training and education mentions special education on four occasions and special needs only once. Still, the concessions of the Ethiopian government did not involve the teaching profession as an employment possibility for persons with disabilities. Article 3 point 4.1 clearly excludes people with disabilities from this occupation. It says that teachers have to have “physical and mental fitness” as a requirement for being able to teach (TGE 1994, 20). Furthermore, the whole policy lacks detailed directives for implementation. Even though this led to major problems considering implementation, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) tried to make the goals of the new policy accessible for its people in 2002. This was the year in which the Ministry developed a handbook where it explained the education and training policy and its implementation. The intention was to bring it close to the people, as without the people’s participation, implementation would not be possible.

Education is all about people. It is, therefore, imperative that students, teachers, parents, and the public in general have a firm grasp of the essence of the policy. Hence, this booklet has been prepared to help the public understand the education and training policy, grasp its basic concepts, realize its background and over all contexts, comprehend its content, its merits as well as its practical application. (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2002, f.)

This shows that the government has been aware of the problematic aspects of implementation. It furthermore highlighted the challenges of a policy statement:

Since a policy statement never spells out all the elements factored in its formulation, but only indicates the salient strategic directions and objectives couched in the concept-laden language of short phrases, it is difficult to grasp its basic rationale. The 1994 education and training policy statement is no exception to this general truth. In fact, the inadequacy of all previous work done to raise public awareness of the education policy has compounded the problem. As a result, numerous accurate and inaccurate statements regarding the policy are heard from time to time. (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2002, 2)

The MoE’s statements had been reactions to some ongoing displeasure throughout the population. Obviously, there had been public discontentment throughout the process of development of the 1994 policy. In the booklet of the Ministry, it reads: “Contrary to what certain people and groups allege, the process of formulating the education and training policy was not shrouded in secrecy. It was rather conducted in a transparent fashion where the draft proposal was openly submitted for the consideration of representatives of a wide sector of the society” (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2002, 6).

The Ministry emphasises that a big group of people contributed and participated in the process and that it was a democratic and public discussion (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2002). It is interesting that this issue seems to require special attention. It indicates that there were tensions around the government that had to be dealt with.
Since 1996: “Education Sector Development Programme”

The last chapter illustrated the beginnings of the new era regarding changes in education policy on the level of the new Ethiopian government. More important developments in this process have to be mentioned like the ESDP (Education Sector Development Programme) starting in 1996.

The five year plan (ESDP) is said to be comprehensive for it consists of all components, in particular primary, secondary, adult and non-formal, special needs, distance and tertiary education, technical and vocational education and training, teacher education and training, instructional materials, curriculum reform, capacity building, educational assessment, information management and policy analysis. (Mamo 2000, 86)

Since its first version, the ESDP has been under constant development. The latest version before this book that was ready for publication was ESDP IV, which was used for the years 2010/2011–2014/2015. It focuses on areas like achievement, reaching the unreached and disadvantaged, adult literacy, higher education and technology as well as an improvement of administration in educational environments. In short, these are merged under the priority themes: quality, equity and improved management. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on female students (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2011b, 9). The goal of ESDP IV is “[… ] to make sure that all children, youngsters and adults […] acquire the competencies, skills, values and attitudes enabling them to participate fully in the social, economic and political development of Ethiopia […]” (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2011b).

When highlighting social, economic and political participation as a main goal of education in Ethiopia, emphasis must also be placed on children with disabilities. Otherwise, they would most probably be excluded from the possibility of participating in forming the state of Ethiopia in the future. Even though gender and equal rights are already a very known and famous topic in this respect in Ethiopia and the agendas of different organisations, the aspect of disability is not considered enough. The mechanisms that exclude girls from schools are in some regards the same for children with disabilities: attitudes, traditions and beliefs usually put a barrier to children’s school access.

Looking at the UNESCO country information on Ethiopia, we find that there are special schools run by government and religious organisations. “In 1996/97 there were twenty-two schools for the blind (1,020 pupils enrolled with ninety teachers), twenty-eight schools for the deaf (1,274 pupils enrolled with 136 teachers) and nineteen schools for the mentally retarded (411 pupils enrolled with fifty-seven teachers)” (UNESCO 2006). Thus, in some regions, there are no special schools at all (Afar, Ethio-Somali, Benishangul–Gumuz, Gambella, Dire Dawa) (UNESCO 2006). These data were collected two decades ago, meaning that the number of special schools might have changed. In the report on the implementation of the UNCRPD of Ethiopia, we find that “[… ] most parents tend to prefer to send their children to such schools [special schools] for lack of facilities in their localities” (FDRE 2012, 2/40). It is further stated that special schools only allow a small number of students to access education, while the rest have to stay at home because of a
lack of options (FDRE 2012). These facts show that a special school system has already started to develop. However, we cannot say that these developments are the basis of a strongly institutionalised separating system and comparable to some Western countries.

The Ethiopian Education System Today

This chapter intends to give a short overview of the prevailing Ethiopian education system. Currently there are five types of schools in Ethiopia for children from 7 to 19 years of age:

The two cycles of the 8 years of primary education (each 4 years) provide basic education (years 1–4) and general education (years 5–8). The earlier existing junior secondary schools do not exist any longer (years 7–8) as they have been integrated in the second cycle of the primary education. The secondary education also consists of two cycles: general secondary education (grades 9–10) and preparatory secondary education (grades 11–12).

Since the education reform, completion of Grade X results in the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE). It used to be at the end of Grade XII. The second cycle prepares students to continue their studies at the higher education level or select their profession. It offers a science option and a social science option. (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2011a)

After completion of the preparatory secondary education (second cycle of secondary education), the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination entitles students to access higher education systems. Institutions for technical and vocational education are separated from the regular education system (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2011a).

Table 2.2 Ethiopian education system (Ethiopian Ministry of Education 2011a)

| Type/level of education | Type of school providing this education | Duration of programme in years | Age level | Certificate/diploma awarded |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| Primary                 | Primary school                         | 8                             | 7–14      | –                          |
| First cycle secondary   | General secondary school               | 2                             | 15–16     | Ethiopian General School Leaving Certificate Examination (EGSLCE) |
| Second cycle secondary  | Preparatory secondary school           | 2                             | 17–18     | Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination (EHEEE) |
| Technical               | Technical school and junior college    | 3                             | 17–19     |                            |
| Vocational              | Vocational school and junior college   | 3                             | 17–19     |                            |
Special Needs Experts in the Ministry of Education

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) has reacted on the high number of children with disabilities that is excluded from primary education. Within the MoE, it has established a team of special needs experts. Especially the Finnish government supports this department with additional experts and further support. Even though there has been considerable investment in the educational sector in general, problems remain.

In spite of this desirable trend, the education system is still facing the challenges which were identified before the policy reform. To repeat the essentials: most of the problems associated with the sector, such as low enrolment, disparity between the two sexes and high dropout and repetition rates, still remain pressing issues. Poorly trained and unqualified teachers, lack of supportive structural leadership and capacity, scarcity of resources and lack of interest in education on the part of parents and students, are also associated with the low quality of education. (Mamo 2000, 89)

In an interview I conducted on November 23, 2011, Ato Demeke Mekonnen, the Ethiopian Minister of Education, stated that the main goal of Ethiopian education politics is quality assurance. For him, the three main challenges regarding education are quality assurance, equity issues in pocket areas like the pastoral areas of Ethiopia and realising inclusive education. The Minister further mentioned the high number of students that have to be managed and the sustainment of the capital intensive programmes in general (personal interview, November 23, 2011). The Ethiopian special needs expert in the Ministry, Ato Alemayehu, spoke about the main problems for the implementation of inclusive education. His first point was the attitude of people. Furthermore, he mentioned a lack of budget and a lack of commitment as main barriers for the education of people with disabilities (personal interview, December 16, 2011). Another interview with the Finnish senior advisor in the Ethiopian Ministry of Education showed that the main reason for the low access to schools for children with disabilities is also to be found in parents’ attitudes. Secondly, she mentioned teacher education as a big problem. According to the senior advisor, the compulsory course on special needs education for students in teacher training institutions does not give enough information to be able to teach in an inclusive classroom. The last challenge she mentioned is the financial situation of the schools. They often do not have the budget to supply classrooms with adequate material (personal interview, December 16, 2011).

In his opening speech of the ninth UNESCO high-level group meeting on education for all in February 2010, the Ethiopian Minister of Education, Ato Demeke Mekonnen, stated: “In conclusion, may I assure you that the Government of Ethiopia remains unequivocally engaged and committed to meet all the aims and goals of

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4 For further information, see the homepage of the Finnish foreign ministry at http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=78516&contentlan=2&culture=en-US

5 She is working in the Finnish funded “Special needs education programme in Ethiopia”.
Education for All” (Demeke 2010). Hence, the MoE seems to be very engaged regarding issues of the inclusion of people with disabilities.

The Department of Special Needs Education at Addis Ababa University

In 2007, the Department of Special Needs Education was established at Addis Ababa University. Before, issues concerning special needs and disability had been allocated in the Department of Psychology (Addis Ababa University 2011). Through the step of devoting a separate department to the topic of special needs, the University showed a clear move towards taking the challenges of people with special needs as a serious issue.

All in all, it can be observed that there are positive developments and attitudes towards a more inclusive society through approaching inclusive education also on the governmental level in Ethiopia. However, the implementation is still held back by several barriers.

Disability and Poverty

Disabled people have lower education and income levels than the rest of the population. They are more likely to have incomes below poverty level, and less likely to have savings and other assets than the non-disabled population. These findings hold for both developing and developed countries. (Elwan 1999, iv)

The following elaboration of the interconnectedness between poverty and disability and its consequences explains why disability and poverty are often referred to as a “vicious circle”. This is how it is known that poverty can cause disability and disability can cause poverty as well (Barnes and Sheldon 2010; Campbell 2010; Elwan 1999; Lustig and Strauser 2007; Palmer 2011; Peterson et al. 2011; Skiba et al. 2005). It makes the results of this study more meaningful, as children with disabilities want to break free from such repressions by supporting their families and developing a sense of belonging to society. In their “poverty disability model”, Lustig and Strauser (2007) define four aspects that increase the risk of disability: environmental risk factors, social role devaluation, negative group membership factors and a weakened sense of coherence. All of these factors lead to exclusion and loss of income (Lustig and Strauser 2007, 195). Consequently, poverty leads to “disempowerment at all levels of daily life […]” (Lustig and Strauser 2007, 199). Disability in this context poses even more challenges to an already difficult situation if society is not able to build inclusive environments.

Parents who were involved in the study at hand but who were not experiencing supporting structures in the schools were often struggling with more problems resulting from the situation of their child with a disability attending a school than
the other parents, who received support in the school. However, poverty played a major role for both groups. “Without income maintenance and other programs available in developed countries, the disabled in poor communities are usually the responsibility of their families; without family support, a disabled person’s condition can be very precarious” (Elwan 1999, v). This is an interesting point, as this book is concerned with feeling like a family. The difference is that the focus of my research lies on educational environments. In both cases, however, the main aspect lies in supportive structures.

Being poor in some cases meant that time was needed to earn a living and could not be invested in the “luxuries” of education for the child with a disability or education in general. Therefore, poverty prevented parents from going to school. This, according to my theory of “developing a sense of belonging”, had an influence on parental support and on the quality of education for the child. In these “nonsupportive” cases, teachers and parents were not able to develop a feeling like a family amongst themselves within the school context. However, as the research shows, most parents from poor backgrounds were able to come to the schools and develop a feeling like a family towards the institution and its staff.

Hypothetically, in the cases where parents did not have the possibility to be involved in school, the result would probably be a lower quality of education and hence less opportunities for the child on the labour market and thus, again, poverty. However, the fact that a child with a disability could attend a school at all also relieved those parents who did not get involved in school-related issues at all. Hence, education also supported those parents in such a way. In the cases where it was poverty that prevented parents from, e.g. going to schools, developing a closer relationship with the teachers, etc. – which is what mostly applied – it can be identified as a major barrier for “developing a sense of belonging”.

Yet, poverty can also prevent children with disabilities from going to school, which has further consequences for the general opportunities in their lives. The labour market offers better opportunities for people with disabilities who are educated. Hence, contributions to the community are less likely without education. Additionally, such barriers will lead to social exclusion (Elwan 1999, v).

This emphasises the importance of the children’s striving for being a valued member of society by contributing to it. This adds not only to the “development of a sense of belonging” for their psychological well-being but also to possibilities of earning income, becoming independent and avoiding poverty.

Belonging and Ethnicity

The topic of belonging is a very old one in the Ethiopian context. There are a number of different ethnic groups living in the landmass that today is known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Markakis 1998; Poluha 1998; Salih and Markakis 1998).
In North Ethiopia, the highlands of Eritrea and Tigray are currently occupied by the Tigrayans and others. The Amhara, to the south, are in the majority in the highlands of Wollo, Gonder, Gojam and northern Shoa. Further south, Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group is found: the Oromo and the Southern Nations. These three major ethnic groups have not always lived under the same rule. (Michael 2008, 394)

Considering that Ethiopia is a conglomerate of different ethnic groups and nationalities (far higher in number than the mentioned ones), conflicts and challenges can appear. Oromo people, for example, have often felt excluded from the Ethiopian polity as they did not adapt to the mainly Amharic coined system. They developed a national identity with “a distinctive shared memory and history” (Michael 2008, 399). Elements of this identity are the common language, Gada⁶ tradition and democratic values. According to Michael, some Ethiopian nationalists are not ready “to accept the existence of a separate Oromo nation and promote an image of ethnic harmony” (2008, 399). The tensions that still exist in the country amongst different ethnic groups are not to be underestimated (Markakis 1998). This also became visible in the latest unrests in the Oromo region near Addis Ababa, which started in November 2015 and were still ongoing by the end of the year 2016. Consequently, a state of emergency for 6 months was declared in the country on October 8, 2016 (for further information, see media reports and comments on Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, etc.).

But how did Ethiopia come to be what it is today? The expansion from Northern Ethiopia to the South can be related to the Solomonic dynasty. Various ethnic and religious groups were integrated in what later came to be Ethiopia (Michael 2008, 394). This shows that regions that had been inhabited by different populations belonging to different ethnicities and peoples were conquered.

Throughout the Ethiopian history, kings and emperors tried to unite the country. The aim of creating a multiethnic state that provides a feeling of belonging to one nation for every ethnicity rather than belonging to a certain ethnic group has not worked satisfactorily up to this day. The reason for this failure might be found in the fact that “there was no clear sense of ethnic national identity” (Michael 2008, 394). Additionally, Michael states that the “question of ethnic equality has never been answered” (Michael 2008, 394). These explanations make the basic issues clear. It is hence not surprising that people of different ethnic groups have different feelings of belonging regarding the state of Ethiopia. In this context, Michael distinguishes between “ethnic identity” and “ethnic consciousness”.

Ethnically a person can be an Oromo, Tigray or Amhara, but may have no nationalist consciousness or may consciously reject the nationalist construction per se. In other words, a person who is an Amhara by birth may not subscribe to Amhara identity and the Amhara nationalist consciousness. Amhara identity can be defined from the ethnic perspective at the level of consciousness. (2008, 403)

⁶Gada is the traditional political organisation system of the Oromo. It is based on the “age-set system […] with five grades, each lasting 8 years. Males initiated together constituted a distinct group which passed as a bod from one grade to the next. Each group, when it reached the fifth grade, exercised governing power for 8 years” (Markakis 1998, 76).
The complexity of ethnicities and their influence on building up identities becomes visible at this point. What I want to highlight here is that a question of belonging related to ethnicity and nation prevails. The problematic aspect in this context is the fact that “several ethnically identifiable peoples assert their ethnic identity, not as part of a cohering nation-building enterprise but, on the contrary, to seek a collective identity that will ultimately be recognised as a sovereign nation-state” (Michael 2008, 394). Due to the historical developments, the Amhara are often characterised as a dominating and oppressive ethnic group.

Amhara became the culture of an educated elite. To advance in administration one had to be educated and those who had an Amharic education had the best chance of administrative advancement. (Michael 2008, 96)

These historical developments often led to conflicts amongst different ethnic groups. Poluha also states that people who aimed at being powerful and becoming members of the ruling class had to fulfil certain requirements like adopting the Orthodox Christian religion. Furthermore, she remarks that class interests continued to be an essential factor regarding political alliances throughout the centuries (1998, 31). This indicates the pre-eminence of ethnicity in Ethiopia that, according to Markakis, rose to be such an important factor during the political changes in 1974 and led to “a period of political instability, economic dislocation and social unrest in Ethiopia […]” (1998, 136). He mentions the Eritrean revolution as a first incident during this period which was followed by several other rebellious and armed movements amongst ethnic groups like the Tigray, Oromo, Afar and Sidama striving for ethnic liberation. Simultaneously, changes took place also in the field of religion. While the Christian Church lost some of its significance and power, the Islam gained recognition. Amharic was kept as the official language but other indigenous languages started to be used in broadcast and print (Markakis 1998, 136). “[F]irst tentative attempts to study the history and culture of subordinate groups were made. Ethnic cultural associations proliferated. The celebration of cultural diversity was officially encouraged, and a season of cultural festivities, featuring mostly songs and dances, followed” (Markakis 1998, 136). This could also be observed in the schools of the sample of this study, as they celebrated the day of nations and nationalities where children were encouraged to wear their traditional clothes.

Hence, the question of belonging to a certain ethnic group in Ethiopia grew important historically. Doornbos (1998) sees two sides of ethnicity. On the one hand, enforcing ethnic identities can be perceived as positive because it might lead towards a “rediscovery of meaning, a recapturing of cultural identity and recreation of solidarity […]” (Doornbos 1998, 28). On the other hand, ethnicity is sometimes used in a negative way and “presents itself in narrowly parochial terms over which powerful political patrons claim to be the sole legitimate interpreters” (Doornbos 1998, 28). However, there seems to be a need to create a shared identity in Ethiopia which is the “pan-Ethiopian” identity. In this context, Tegegne emphasises the importance of common symbols that are able to build a democratic culture as a basis for a peaceful and enduring Ethiopian future incorporating different ethnic groups.
in one nation (1998, 124). However, the ethnic group which an individual belongs to might be more important for some than for others.

[...] [That] everybody belongs to one ethnic group or ‘nation’, whose language they speak and with which they identify, seems to be relevant for certain groups in Ethiopia. For others it would be remote from, even contradictory to their life experience, especially since the meaning and implications of ethnic belonging have changed over time and continue to do so. (Poluha 1998, 37)

The same is true for the participants in my study. For some people, ethnicity might have more meaning than for others. Nevertheless, it is a feature loaded with significance in certain situations. When seeing the result of this research against this background, “developing a sense of belonging” for children with disabilities gets even more complex. It means that belonging to society can have different shapes if ethnicity is considered additionally. In other words, identity and self-concept are influenced by a historically grown significance of belonging to a certain ethnicity.

At this point, it might be interesting to mention that the fact that they conquered the Italians in the battle of Adwa in 1896 and have never been colonised is very meaningful for the people of Ethiopia. It can be observed that regarding this aspect, “Ethiopians” feel like “Ethiopians” regardless of any ethnical background. Another unifying factor can be seen in the international success of Ethiopian sports men and women (e.g. the marathon runner Haile Gebrselassie). Also Tegegne concludes that “[b]eing Ethiopian is not an identity that only the Amhara carry. It is an identity shared by many Ethiopians, despite language differences. Hence, one can argue that it is an identity which is a synthesis of many cultures” (1998, 124). Michael states that ethnicity, identity and nationality have to be discussed openly to enable “a better society by managing conflicts and differences” (2008, 397). Discussing issues and differences openly can also be applied to issues of exclusion regarding people with disabilities. It would lead to a better society by managing conflicts and differences also in this case. Additionally, it would prepare the grounds for children with disabilities to be accepted and respected as well as treated equally. Hence, differing ethnicities add a further domain of complexity to the process of children with disabilities finding a place in society. Thereby identity, self-concept and belonging are influenced to a great extent. To enable the social inclusion of people with disabilities focusing on equality and equity, a change of attitudes in society is required. “The common objective is to build a society based on mutual respect and equality, a society that is responsive to the interest of all. It is essential to redress the social, economic, political and cultural imbalances inherited from the past” (Tegegne 1998, 125). Even though Tegegne refers to ethnic groups in this quotation and pleads for a society which recognises the rights of different ethnicities, the same wording could be applied for differences regarding people with disabilities, as inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities need similar developments. In other words, a society built on mutual respect, equity and equality should be able to include persons with disabilities on these same grounds as integrating different ethnicities. Similarly, to see differences in people and make normative distinctions is usually learnt by growing up in a certain environment and community with certain attitudes. Ethnic
differences as well as disabilities are issues that can be referred to in this same context; children become members of different groups by exhibiting certain features, be it aspects of ethnicity (language, culture, traditions, etc.) or disability (observed differences that do not fulfil the expectations of people in a certain culture). Hence, belonging to certain groups leads to the experience of different barriers or facilitators in society. Poluha (1998) describes the development of belonging to certain ethnic groups as a process of enculturation. “From birth they [individuals] learn to recognize similarities and differences and in this context develop a specific competence of behavior, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. The unconscious, on the other hand, is often made up of norms and values that have become part of our way of being” (Poluha 1998, 32). Such norms and values also influence attitudes towards people with disabilities. Therefore, belonging to an ethnic group and belonging to society can be considered as highly related and hence important regarding the children’s process of “developing a sense of belonging” by feeling like a family.

Self-Concept, Disability and Collectivist Cultures

“Everyone, disabled or not, who interacts with disability is engaged in producing its meaning and its social identity. A ‘disability identity’ does not belong strictly and only to those of us who are identified as disabled” (Titchkosky 2003, 4). The whole community as well as the society in which the children with disabilities live produce their disabilities. This influences the children’s self-concept to a great extent. Wei and Marder (2012) criticise the lack of research that is conducted on the role of self-concept and learning regarding children with disabilities. They emphasise that typically research is done on students with learning disabilities compared to non-disabled peers. Other types of disabilities are usually left out although it is known that the development of a positive self-concept is important for many aspects of life for all children, amongst them academic achievement, social and emotional competence, mental health, etc. (Wei and Marder 2012, 247).

This chapter does not elaborate theories on self-concepts as such. This would be too extensive and go beyond the scope of this book. Instead it aims at exploring how the self-concept of children with disabilities is influenced and how the outcomes of the research at hand contributes to and can be integrated into existing research.

Support at school (teachers) and family life (parents) helps children to build up a positive self-concept (Wei and Marder 2012, 253ff). Aspects that are listed as supportive in this context are “positive feedback, express acceptance and a nonjudgmental attitude, listen, care, respect, and support the child and reduce social comparison” (Wei and Marder 2012, 255). The question now is how such findings can be related to Ethiopia as a country of the South that can differ to a great extent from Western cultures especially regarding topics such as self-concept and identity. Referring to Hofstede (2001), Eaton and Louw state that self-concepts of people from collectivist cultures might be more concrete and interdependent than
self-concepts of people from individualist cultures (2000, 210). In this way, according to Triandis (1989), African cultures can usually be defined as collective cultures (see also Eaton and Louw 2000). However, Eaton and Louw limit this statement, as “the [African] continent has been ignored almost entirely, and assertions of collectivism have not been empirically tested” (2000, 211). In the case of Ethiopia and the sample studied, it became clear that community, family and relationships played major roles in the lives of the participants. This leads to the assumption that a collectivist culture prevails. Yet, it cannot be assumed that this is true for the whole population of the country.

People in collectivist cultures, compared to people in individualist cultures, are likely to define themselves as aspects of groups, to give priority to in-group goals, to focus on context more than the content in making attributions and in communicating, to pay less attention to internal than to external processes as determinants of social behavior to define most relationships with in-group members as communal, to make more situational attributions, and tend to be self-effacing. (Triandis 2001, 907)

Such generalisations are problematic as they might tempt to simply adopt them to own research, without closer examination. Triandis also makes a relativising statement in noting that individuals do not possess all the characteristics of either a collectivist or an individualist culture. He describes that people, depending on the situation, rather refer to the “cognitive structures” of both types (Triandis 2001, 909). Additionally, also within cultures, there might be domains that can be characterised as being collectivist, whereas others might be individualist.

Regarding the research at hand, the result has many features that can be related to collectivism, and the core category feeling like a family clearly points into this direction. This means that in the situation of education for children with disabilities, especially parents but also teachers refer to the cognitive structures of a collectivist culture. My conviction that such a culture prevails in the situations analysed in the book at hand was enforced by the aspects mentioned by Triandis (in-group goals, communication and relationships) (Triandis 2001) as they are overwhelmingly applicable in my research. Aspects like supporting parents and people in need (from the children’s perspective) and the way in which parents and teachers communicate were pivotal. On the other hand, the importance of relationships, which is reflected especially in the core category feeling like a family, was very clear. Eaton and Louw also stress that “members of collectivist cultures tend to [...] experience relatedness with others as a fundamental part of themselves, to the extent that the self is defined very specifically (i.e. concretely) and uniquely within each social relationship” (2000, 211). Furthermore, it has to be stated that the kind of sample that is studied in the respective culture usually determines the social affiliation to a collectivist or individualist culture. “Specifically, age, gender, social class, education, amount of contact with other cultures, and exposure to the modern mass media can change the position of a sample on any of these dimensions of cultural variation” (Triandis 2011, 7). Triandis furthermore explains that “lower class” samples are usually more collectivist than “upper class” samples from the same culture. This leads to the situation that people that are well off might be more individualist in a collectivist culture than people that are not that well off in an individualist culture (2011, 7).
is important as the sample of the study at hand included almost only people – and principally parents – from lower classes, of whom, according to Triandis’ argument, one could expect more collectivist tendencies. As “[p]eople in collectivist cultures are especially concerned with relationships” (Triandis 2001, 909), it makes sense that the feeling like a family emerges more easily.

Following this discourse, the results of the study can be seen in a new light. Given that the children of the sample grow up in a collectivist environment, the aims of being part of the society and developing a sense of belonging receive a new meaning. It becomes clear that being part of society and contributing to the community are of major importance. These are also aspects that constitute the children’s self-concept to a considerable extent. Thus, in contrast to individualist cultures where one’s own goals and achievements are more important, being excluded from participating in society has quite a different influence on children’s self-concepts, even though exclusion also has major influences on the self-concept of children with disabilities in individualist cultures. “In individualist societies people are autonomous and independent from their in-groups, they behave primarily on the basis of their attitudes rather than the norms of their in-groups, and exchange theory adequately predicts their social behaviour” (Triandis 2001, 909). Hence, norms of people’s in-groups are more important for members of collectivist cultures. Consequently, “developing a sense of belonging” and feeling like a family within a certain group or society become comparably more significant for developing a positive self-concept for children with disabilities in a collectivist culture. Combining this with the aspects discussed in the previous chapter on ethnicity and belonging, the picture of social and cultural influences on children with disabilities in Addis Ababa becomes even more complex. Certainly, future research on the specific aspects that are of importance in making a difference in collectivist or individualist contexts for the self-concept and feeling of belonging for children with disabilities in the majority world – but also in the minority world – would be very interesting. In such a context, ethnicity would also have to be considered.

Family and Disability

In Ethiopia, it is common to have the father’s name in addition to the name one is called by; hence, descent is reckoned to be patrilineal. However, the use of a first and a second name, as is customary in most Western cultures, is not common there (Crummey 1983; Hoben 1973). This is also the reason why Ethiopian scholars are usually cited by using their own (first) name and not their father’s (second) name.

Article 34 of the Ethiopian Constitution states that the family is the basic unit in society and deserves special attention and protection by society and the state. Furthermore, a family is conceived of as natural and fundamental in the state of Ethiopia (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1994). What actually is defined as family (extended or not) does not become clear here. The family, being such an important entity, however, must receive special attention also regarding disability.
I think we need to think harder about the role of families. The CRPD [Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities] hardly mentions the non-disabled family members whom most of us rely on, wherever we live in the world. When someone has an impairment, often the whole family is disabled, not just the individual. None of us wants to be dominated by or spoken for by our family. But I think that our parents and partners and children and siblings need to be supported and included and listened to, as well as us disabled people. (Shakespear 2014)

Naturally, families react differently to a disability in their family. Yet, for most families, the disability of a child poses serious challenges. In cases where negative attitudes and lack of awareness prevail and neither coping strategies are available nor additional support is given, sometimes violence against children with disabilities can also be observed.

In her study on violence against children with disabilities in Ethiopia, Boersma found that many children reported that they were treated unequal to their siblings and that they felt excluded. Furthermore, the parents seemed to try not to involve their child with a disability in the immediate community because of feelings of shame (2008, 48f). “The lack of access of the child to the social networks of the family relates to the fear of the family to damage their networks with the community around them because of their disabled child” (Boersma 2008, 49). Furthermore, conflicts are described between the families taking the side of their child and at the same time trying to maintain good relationships with their neighbours (Boersma 2008). In my study, some examples also reflect conflict laden relationships with neighbours and community. One of those examples is described by a mother, who spoke about fighting with her neighbour and losing one eye in the fight. Another mother told a story of young people in the community who made her son drunk and her arguing with them about that. In these cases, the violence was not directed against the child with a disability in the family but in relation with the community. It was argued earlier that shame develops especially in regard to the nearby community. Hence, it is clear that tensions might develop and make life in the community difficult.

In this paragraph, the category walk of shame, which emerged during the analysis of my data, receives special attention. The feeling of shame and having to decide whether to profess to the child with a disability or not lead to a great conflict for parents. Belonging is an important aspect in this context. Parents sometimes believe that they risk their place in the community and hence their place of belonging if they officially give their child with a disability a place in their family. This again supports the theory of parents developing the feeling like a family and looking for a place of belonging at school if the situation in the community and neighbourhood gets complicated. In the South-African/American study of Yssel et al. (2007), the authors emphasise that the philosophy of inclusive education stands for exactly this: the sense of belonging and shared ownership. This applies to all people involved in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, they state that this “yet has to be experienced by many of the parents in our study” (Yssel et al. 2007, 363). One could say that some parents in my study already experienced the sense of belonging in the schools their children attended. In this way, the sense of belonging can be experienced by the
children as well as by the parents. What is interesting in this context is that I observed the feeling of belonging and the feeling like a family mainly in special settings. Not many integrative\(^7\) settings seemed to exhibit such feelings. One reason for such developments might be that it was not inclusion that was practiced but integration, and hence the main issues of the mentioned philosophy of inclusion (sense of belonging and shared ownership) could not unfold in those schools. The reasons why it developed anyway in the special settings are elaborated in the chapter on the core category feeling like a family.

Changing the point of reference and moving back into the families, we already know that children with disabilities, like other children, need their place in their family and need the feeling of being valued. “Not being part of family life can result in a child that feels useless to the family” (Boersma 2008, 28). An example from my research that is interesting in this context is about a child with an intellectual disability who was already able to prepare everything for his mother to make coffee for the family. It became clear that he was very proud of the fact that he could contribute to daily life in the family. It was his task, and he felt needed in this specific situation because he was helping his mother. Furthermore, culturally, there are certain expectations of children to undertake certain tasks. What is interesting in this case is that it was a boy doing the tasks that are culturally assigned to girls. According to Camfield and Tafere (2011), there are differences between urban and rural environments. In an urban environment, girls are expected to start working at the age of 5. Tasks at this age are taking messages, carrying babies and the like. From the age of 7, girls help at home. They clean the house, fetch water and carry babies. Between 7 and 9 years of age, girls usually start to cook; they make stew and coffee. Only at the age of 10 are girls expected to be able to bake injera.\(^8\) As soon as they are around 12 years old, girls are considered as mature enough to take on responsibility and perform all household activities (Camfield and Tafere 2011, 255). It is important to mention that drinking coffee is a cultural tradition in Ethiopia and has its own ceremony. Preparing coffee therefore is more meaningful for children.

The Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony, which is one of the most respected and colorful social rituals, gives the local people both a frivolous entertainment and congenial atmosphere to get together and discuss about various issues ranging from politics to minor personal issues. As an essential and an integral part of almost all Ethiopian social life coffee is drunk not only for its stimulating effect but also for getting together and having conversations. While the coffee ceremony is liked and cherished by all people regardless of differences in culture, social class, age and sex, in many cases it is women who spend much of their time on it. Many women make coffee and call each other turn by turn and exchange information. In the Ethiopian society, where male chauvinism seems to exist, coffee ceremonies give women the chance of discussing issues with men relatively on equal basis. (Tefaye 2011, 123f)

In the above-illustrated case, preparing coffee seemed to give the boy satisfaction. This illustrates the significant meanings that a traditional coffee ceremony can

\(^7\) The author does not use “inclusive” at this point, as the schools involved usually had not reached the levels of inclusion but rather integration.

\(^8\) Traditional Ethiopian bread made of teff, a special Ethiopian grain.
have for the people involved. Even if children “only” help to prepare coffee at home for their family, they are aware of the cultural significance of drinking coffee, as it is a very visible tradition practiced a lot in daily life in Addis Ababa. This also led to the fact that the coffee ceremony as a social ritual was employed by lots of organisations (NGOs and GOs) to “foster participatory problem-solving schemes at the grassroots level” (Tesfaye 2011, 122). How is education for children with disabilities related to this aspect? Lots of parents – mostly, but not only of children with intellectual disabilities – reported that they observed the children improving in doing house chores but also in dressing and washing themselves when instructed by the parents after they started attending a school. Thus, parental support was an important aspect in this process of supporting children in acquiring more functionalities. From the perspective of the capability approach, as the capability to do certain tasks was there, it only required the environment (support) to turn the capability into a functioning. It seems that often children discovered their potentials by getting access to school as their self-esteem got promoted at the same time. These potentials are obviously not restricted to capabilities related to school education.

However, in the already cited study involving parents from South Africa and the United States, the researchers found that parents from both countries were critical towards teachers who lacked training and preparation (Yssel et al. 2007, 361f). The same cannot be said of the sample of my study. Instead, the parents were very content with the teachers and did not complain very much. On the other hand, the study on South Africa and the United States also reports about parents’ praise for teachers. The reason for this result in Ethiopia is above all the meaning that it had for parents that their child with a disability had the possibility to attend a school. In other words, for most parents in the Ethiopian sample, it was already overwhelming that their child was attending a school at all. Teachers were one of several important factors making this possible. The question about the quality of education might not have come to their mind at all at this point – especially in cases where they had not received education themselves.

**Special Needs Education, Teachers’ Attitudes and Community**

“In countries like Ethiopia, teachers are the main indispensable resources for promoting special needs education. If teachers have a positive attitude towards the teaching profession and children and are able to attend to all children, then the requirements of inclusive education can more or less be fulfilled” (Mamo 2000, 84). First it has to be stated that teachers are probably indispensable resources for special needs education in most countries. However, the problematic part of this quotation is the “more or less”, as even with positive attitudes it is problematic for teachers to implement inclusive education without proper training, knowledge and material, as the research at hand shows. “I am new, only three years. Still, I don’t know how to write and how to read Braille. This is one barrier for them [the children]. Just I am teaching them orally and […] we have, we have […] Braille teachers, they help
them not in their class [but] in the resource room. But for me this is a barrier. I don’t know how to teach them with Braille” (Mamite, 2E–VI–E–10–GIT).9

In other words, lack of support and possibilities hinders the successful implementation of inclusive education. “More or less” does not exist in inclusion. Education either is or is not inclusive. Yet, positive attitudes are still the first step towards making inclusive education happen at all.

In the development of the categories for teachers and consequently in the model of “developing a sense of belonging”, it can be seen that feeling like a family leads towards a positive attitude regarding the teaching profession. This statement is supported by other studies undertaken in different countries of the South. Ingrid Marais (2010), for instance, conducted research in two primary schools in South Africa focusing on the school community. “One of the reasons that teachers at these two schools remain in the profession is that they have a sense of belonging in the school, a sense of community […]” (Marais 2010, 27). Relating this to the results of this study, it becomes clear that the same is true for the teachers of the Addis Ababa sample but that feeling like a family seems to reach even beyond a sense of community. In the chapter on the teachers’ perspective, it becomes clear that solidarity, exchange and mutual understanding amongst teachers might be the most important aspects for teacher motivation. Furthermore, the thus produced feeling of togetherness and belonging becomes crucial. What became visible through this research, however, is that especially the feeling of family and community between teachers and parents is important for enhancing teachers’ commitment to quality education for children with disabilities.

Looking at another study that focused on the quality of education in Ethiopia, the results show that quality depends on resources, teachers and the community. In this context, the importance of including parents was emphasised:

They [teachers and principals] view community involvement as an important determinant of quality education, including teachers’ interactions with parents as well as the communities’ financial and other contributions to schools. (Barrow and Leu 2006, 2)

Hence, community involvement is seen as supportive for quality education. The building of strong relationships with students and communities was also emphasised in all the interviews with teachers and headmasters of that study (Barrow and Leu 2006, 2f). This points towards the importance of community in Ethiopia. It could be argued that community and parental involvement is an important aspect of education also in Western societies. The subtle distinction in the case of this research is the feeling like a family, which might not prevail in such dimensions in Western cultures. However, building up relationships with students was not emphasised as much as building up relationships with parents in the results of my research. This might be due to the fact that this study had a focus on children with disabilities, whereas Barrow and Leu focused on regular classrooms. That would indicate that there might still be differences in how children with disabilities are perceived and included compared to children without disabilities. This is not really surprising. As

9Interview conducted in English.
regards the establishment of relationships between teachers and students, it is actually a fact that children with disabilities usually cannot be included as much as students without disabilities.

In the South-African study that was mentioned before, Marais states “how social integration can be enabled through the school as a community” (2010, 19). Even though the focus was not on the disability in her research, the aspect that Marais raises here is of major importance. Schools might support social integration in the school communities as children are enabled to build up relationships with peers.

In many of the schools of the sample, the attitudes towards disability have already changed. Especially teachers tend to develop positive attitudes towards children with disabilities during the teaching learning process. Thereby, also the school climate – which is definitely influenced by feeling like a family – plays an important role (Peters 2007, 127).

Referring to Arbeiter and Hartley (2002), Peters states that “[i]n Uganda, teachers reported that ignorance, fear, and a lack of confidence were the causes of their attitudes towards children with disabilities before these children entered their classrooms. As they ‘got used to’ these children, they reported increased confidence, coping strategies, and a positive attitude change […]” (2007, 127).

Next to attitudes, as discussed before, appropriate teacher training is essential for enabling inclusive classrooms. By referring to research that includes countries from around the world, UNICEF reports that “the level and standard of learning for children with disabilities rises, and so do the levels of their non-disabled peers” (2013a, 2) if teachers get equipped with knowledge about how to manage inclusive classrooms. In Ethiopia, teacher education for inclusive education is still not sufficient. General teacher training starts after the completion of the 10th grade. For the lower grades in primary schools, until 2008, 1 year of training and, for the upper grades, 3 years of training were allotted. In 2008, however, the duration for the lower grades was also raised to 3 years (Alemayehu and Temesgen 2011).

Because of the low level of awareness of the field of special education and a shortage of professional educators and institutions until recently there was not any organized system of special needs teacher training in the country. From our own experiences, we know that the teacher training for special needs education was dependent on intermittently organized short seminars, workshops almost totally based on the support of donors from various voluntary organizations, and scholarships from abroad. (Alemayehu and Temesgen 2011, 132)

This again illustrates the challenging situation in which teachers find themselves when suddenly having to teach in a so-called inclusive classroom, meaning that they have to think about how to integrate one or more students with disabilities in their regular classroom. Without proper training in the teacher education programmes, teachers are usually overburdened. However, also regarding teacher training, an “atmosphere of departure” can be observed in Ethiopia regarding special needs education. “There have been recent encouraging developments with the initiation of new programs on special needs education in different universities and colleges as well as a mainstream course in special needs education across all teacher education and training institutes in the country” (Alemayehu and Temesgen 2011, 132). The quality of education strongly depends on the quality of the teachers. That is the
reason why it is essential to train teachers in teaching and managing inclusive classrooms. This is the only way in which children with disabilities will have the possibility to receive educational equity and quality education.

Religion and Belief

[...][T]he very notion of disability as a cultural concept, comprising a wide range of cognitive, physical, sensory, and psychological states of being, is understood quite differently in varying religious communities and even within those communities. The very notion of disability as a cultural concept may be unfamiliar to a range of communities; in fact, some languages do not have a word for disability. (Stoltzfus and Schumm 2011, xiii)

It is interesting to discover that diversity and not uniformity is a common aspect of religion and disability (Stoltzfus and Schumm 2011, 12). It became visible in my research that religion and traditional beliefs can have a great influence on attitudes towards disability in Ethiopia. Disability, as a concept that cannot really be unified on a global level, manifests itself in a number of ways, depending on the respective culture that defines in which cases, how and why people’s expectations of what people should be able to do are disappointed (Weisser 2007). Disability is a topic in different religions but also traditional beliefs that is typically addressed in multiple ways. Thus, the perspective on disability in each religion is difficult to grasp. “Disabilities and disabled people appear in Christian contexts and literature across a wide spectrum, generating a plethora of views, in an on-going, accelerating process. It is even more difficult to summarise confidently how the major Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam have addressed disability” (Miles 1995, 50). At the same time, religion as an essential aspect of culture influences views on disability.

It is widely recognized that religious teachings and practices help to establish cultural standards for what is deemed ‘normal’ human physical and mental behaviour and in establishing a moral order for the fit and healthy body and mind. Religion, in its multiple manifestations, plays a critical role in determining how disability is understood and how persons with disabilities are treated or mistreated in a given historical-cultural context. (Stoltzfus and Schumm 2011, xi)

This means that while views on disability in different religious traditions and texts take on varying forms, the religious beliefs define disability to a great extent for certain groups and communities. Thereby, it can be observed that religion and ethnicity are usually interconnected. However, in the Ethiopian context, it is interesting that “[w]hile in many countries outside Ethiopia, religion is an important ethnic criterion, as it provides yet another tie between members of the same ethnic groups, this is not yet the case in Ethiopia where many ethnic groups remain religiously divided” (Poluha 1998, 31). This means that in one ethnic group people can be members of different religions. Therefore, people can also have the same religion while belonging to different ethnicities. Furthermore, it is interesting to state that in
certain aspects religion is more important than ethnicity in Ethiopia. As a consequence, marriages between couples from different ethnicities take place quite frequently. “[M]arriages between Christian Amharas and Christian Oromos [are] more frequent than between Christian Oromos and Muslim Oromos” (Poluha 1998, 37). Poluha concludes that this proves that “homogeneity and similarity of interests” is not a given fact within one ethnic group (Poluha 1998, 37). This indicates that religiously influenced perceptions of disability might coincide also between different ethnic groups in Ethiopia when they follow the same religion. In this book, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church received more attention than other religious traditions in the country. Even though some participants of this research were members of the Islam and other religions, the majority were followers of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, I concentrate on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church “is the only pre-colonial Christian Church in sub-Saharan Africa; it has been formed from a distinct mix of cultural traditions and has developed in comparative isolation from the rest of the Church for most of its history. As a result it has taken a very different shape and way of life from other churches” (Binns 2013, 34). In this quotation, one interesting aspect for this chapter is the “mix of cultural traditions”. This suggests that already during the development of the Ethiopian Church, traditional beliefs were involved in the doctrine. Furthermore, it is oriented on the Semitic culture and follows the Old Testament’s suggestions for daily life (circumcision, dietary laws, etc.) (Binns 2013).

Religion and traditional beliefs have a great influence on attitudes towards people with disabilities in Addis Ababa. In this respect, it could be observed that especially parents of children with disabilities combined what seemed to be traditional and religious beliefs. Looking for explanations for the fact that disability is perceived as a curse by people who are deeply religious, even though the Church does not teach such a misconception (according to my interview with a representative of the Orthodox Church), various sources were found.

Addis Ababa is located in an Amhara region, surrounded by Oromo area. The main Amhara regions, though, are located in the central and northern provinces in the highlands of Ethiopia (Young 1977). Even though the sample of the research does not only consist of people of Amhara descent, I put my focus on this ethnicity because it is the predominating one in the area of research. Additionally, the majority of participants were of Amhara descent. Young’s study on Amhara Ethiopian medical divination, conducted in the 1970s, resulted in the outcome that “[a]ccording to Amhara, people can tap extra-ordinary powers with which it is possible to perform certain medical works” (Young 1977, 185). These medical works include divining events, healing or preventing sickness and misfortune, etc. What was interesting for the research at hand is the fact that ecclesiastic persons are mentioned as one of the four categories of people who were able to possess these powers: “Any ecclesiastic can anoint sick people with sanctified water, with the hope that this will repel sickness causing demons […]” (Young 1977, 185.). The mention of holy water in this context makes it clear how religious beliefs and traditional “medical works”
might be connected. Hence, it makes sense for parents to use holy water for a child with a disability if disability is perceived as something that should be healed. This is the case even though disability is generally not considered as an illness but as a misfortune and curse. Following the interview in the Orthodox Church, however, this view on disability being a curse is not held by the Church. But the logic behind combining the Church, “holy waters” and “healing” becomes transparent. Additionally, it is obvious that parents’ hopes, needs and desires enforce their believing in the healing powers of holy water and holy springs and, beyond that, in God. Triandis states that “God is an excellent example of self-deception. What would be more consistent with our hopes, needs, and desires than to have an omnipotent entity support our battles, whether they are to grow better crops, to reach health and happiness, or to eliminate our enemies?” (2011, 4). Most of the parents of the sample felt that God was almighty and deciding about disability, health, fortune and misfortune. It is not my intention to judge how much of this might be self-deception and what might not be. It is a fact that God seemed to exist in the views of the participants and had great influence on their lives. The quotation above emphasises the hidden persuasion that lies in believing in God as almighty and in healing powers for parents of children with disabilities who cannot accept their child’s impairment. It can be understood as support to keep up hopes for their child, as disability constitutes a challenge and a disturbance in their lives. Therefore, I defined going to holy waters as support for the children with disabilities in the category parental support, as the parents experienced it as something that they did for the child.

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