

**OUTCOMES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT  
PROGRAM IN SIDAMA ZONE SCHOOLS, ETHIOPIA**

by

**Dawit Legesse Edamo**

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Supervisor: **Dr. Tshilidzi Netshitangani**

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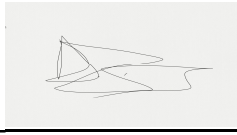
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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that **'THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY WITH REGARD TO THE OUTCOMES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN SIDAMA ZONE SCHOOLS, ETHIOPIA'** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Name: Dawit Legesse Edamo

Signature



Date: June 2015

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my parents, for they gave me the foundation to reach this stage, and to my children, for they missed the opportunity of spending their time with me during my long study period.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of a school improvement program (SIP) on the effectiveness of Sidama Zone schools.

It was primarily a qualitative study, which explored the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP. Four schools were purposefully selected. The data were collected by means of interviews, focus-group discussions, observations and relevant documents, and analyzed focusing on thematic categories.

The findings indicated that in schools where there existed a strong collaboration of the school community in the planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation processes, the improvement initiatives were owned by all in the school and the performance of the schools was enhanced. On the other hand, the lack of collaboration in the school community negatively affected the performance of those schools. Besides, in all the schools the CPD was challenged by the resistance of the teachers, the lack of resources and poor implementation strategies.

It also became apparent that the teachers' commitment to support each other and their students, to implement active learning methods and continuous assessment contributed to the effectiveness of the better-performing schools. Findings further revealed that to the contrary, these actions were loosely implemented in the poorly-performing schools. Though the peer-learning approach was implemented, it became evident that there were mixed views regarding its benefits. The availability of the necessary facilities created an environment conducive to learning in schools one and three. Although there were attempts to implement extra-curricular activities for the social and emotional development of the students, its implementation was negatively affected by a lack of coordination and resources in the schools. In the poorly-performing schools, the school environment was found not to be conducive to teaching and learning.

In the better-performing schools, the feedback from the school community was used as an input to make adjustments to the improvement process, and this created a feeling of ownership that led to the effectiveness of the schools. The outcomes of the study indicated that the promotion-rate of the students to the following grade was considered as a measure of the effectiveness of the schools. Conversely, the lack of proper participation of the school community in the school's affairs, the lack of proper leadership support, the teachers' resistance to participate in CPD, the non-existence of training opportunities and workshops for the teachers, and the shortage of resources were reported as challenges.

From the findings it has been concluded that the SIP has contributed to school effectiveness in the schools that have properly managed the change process as opposed to those schools which remained poorly performing due to low level of SIP implementation. Finally, monitoring the SIP cycles, building trust between the principals and the teachers, creating a link between the schools and other institutions, introducing recognition mechanisms, and providing support to the poorly-performing schools were indicated as strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the school.

Key terms: school improvement; school effectiveness; school community; leadership; teaching and learning; community participation; school environment; decision-making; Ethiopian education; quality of education.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ESDP - Education Sector Development Program  
ETP - Education and Training Policy  
CPD- Continuous Professional Development  
GEQIP - General Education Quality Improvement Package  
KETB - Kebele Education and Training Board  
PTA - Parent Teacher Association  
MOE - Ministry of Education  
NLA - National Learning Assessment  
QA - Quality Assurance  
REB - Regional Education Bureau  
SAF- Self Assessment Form  
SIC- School Improvement Committee  
SIP - School Improvement Program  
TGE - Transitional Government of Ethiopia  
UPE - Universal Primary Education  
WEO - Woreda Education Office  
ZED - Zonal Education Department

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces issues which are covered in the study by giving an overview of them. It begins with a general background that leads to the specific issue being investigated, and deals with the problem, taking the study's context into consideration. This is followed by what the study intends to achieve, and also its contribution. The chapter also briefly explains the scope, theoretical framework and the methodological approach used to do the study. Finally, the chapter presents the conceptualisation of the terms and the organisation of the study.

#### **1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The quality of education is an important component of any education system. Researchers have stated that quality is the heart of any educational system and it influences what students learn, how well they learn and what benefits they draw from education (Derebssa 2008:1; Leu 2005:v; Solomon 2008:2). Noting that education contributes to the national economic growth and development, UNESCO (2007:1) emphasised that education is the right of all children and it is the main contributor to development. The document further argued that the education provided to school children should be of good quality. Quality education is necessary because it plays a critical role in improving the living condition of citizens. The MoE (2005a:5) explained that *quality* involves the achievement of relevant knowledge, skills and the endowment of democratic attitudes, and it helps to reduce poverty.

Ayalew (2005:1) and Joshi and Verspoor (2013:1) noted that the anticipation and ambitions to universalise primary education and rural development remain a matter of great concern in Ethiopia due to the small the access of learners in schools and their high dropout before acquiring the basic skills, and also the low quality of education. The causes of insufficient achievement in education are related to the fact that Ethiopia has been a country of internal conflict for a number of years. The Imperial Regime had policies changing from time to time. The education system was not stable and did not have good policies. After the Imperial period, the Dergue Regime directed most of the resources to the war front. Education expenditure was insignificant, and it resulted in the reduced quality of education (Negash 2006:7-8; Solomon 2008:54). After the introduction of the current education and training policy, the Ethiopian Government developed a range of strategies to expand access to education at all levels. The access to education at all levels increased highly with Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs) I and II which were introduced 1997 and onwards (MoE 2008:3; UNICEF 2010:12).

The MoE (2008:1), in its document in respect of the general assurance of quality education, indicated that Ethiopia implemented a plan for reducing poverty. The document elaborates that the reduction of poverty will be achieved through the development of human resources. Consequently, the expansion of educational opportunities is chosen as a key to develop human resources and to achieve the other millennium development goals as well. It is evident that a high rate of the expansion of schools has taken place throughout the country considering the importance of education to lever the people from poverty. However, schools could not provide quality education due to their poor condition. This was because of the fact that as the access increased, the resources were distributed to many schools and classrooms, and the quality of education deteriorated (UNESCO 2007:23). The expansions were in the underprivileged school settings where there were neither satisfactory resources to run the school activities nor favourable environments for the students to learn.

Thus, in ESDP III, it was noted that the achievements in access have not been accompanied by adequate improvements in quality. In some areas, quality has deteriorated at least partly as a result of the rapid expansion (Ethiopian Academy of Sciences 2012:12; MoE 2007:1-3; MoE 2005b:6; Joshi & Verspoor 2013:34). The MoE's documents further indicated that

students' achievements in the 2007 National Learning Assessment (NLA) (grades 4 and 8) were below the required levels (MoE 2007:3). As the document indicates, it was found that the low student learning outcomes were due to problems related to school organisation and management, school supplies, the availability of curricular and instructional materials, and the language of instruction.

Realising this, the MoE has given the improvement of the quality of education high priority at all levels. To address quality issues at the primary and secondary levels, MoE (2008:5) developed a General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) that comprises six programs namely, a school improvement program (SIP), a teacher development program, curriculum, textbooks and assessment, a management and administration program, an information and communication technology program, and a civic and ethical education program. It was also indicated in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) of the country that improving and ensuring the quality of education at all levels would be an important priority (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2010:16; Joshi & Verspoor 2013:4).

The MoE (2008:4), in the GEQIP document, states that in spite of the fast expansion of the education system, Ethiopia's education sector faces the following four critical challenges: Firstly, access to education opportunities persists to be an obstacle, especially for females and other "most vulnerable children", poor students and children from the pastoral areas. Secondly, inequities in access to quality education are widespread, as better resourced schools are generally located in urban areas and in the non-emerging regions. Thirdly, there is only limited physical access to education in some regions. Finally, socio-cultural barriers exist to participation, together with financial constraints with the households having to pay a large share of non-salary recurrent education expenditures.

Hence, the overall objective of GEQIP is to improve the quality and variety of instructional services to be delivered to Ethiopian school children at the general education level and to maximise their achievement (MoE 2007:4). Currently (since 2008), GEQIP is under implementation and there are a range of reports from various sections and regional states which demand the proper investigation of the programs.

The SIP, as stated in the GEQIP document (MoE 2008:6), is meant to improve student achievement by implementing the four domains, which are teaching and learning, the learning environment, school leadership, and community participation. These domains focus on:

- improving the capacity of the schools to prioritise needs and to develop a school-improvement plan;
- enhancing school and community participation in resource utilization decisions and resource generation;
- improving the government's capacity to deliver specified amounts of school grants at the woreda level; and
- improving the learning environment by providing basic operational resources to the schools.

Although there are six programs, as indicated above (section 1.1) in the GEQIP document, all of the other five programs are intended to strengthen SIP as they are inputs for SIP which is considered as the core for the improvement of the students' achievement.

When new programs are implemented, it is necessary to investigate their effect and to make the necessary adjustments if there are any weaknesses. This also helps to sustain the improvements achieved as success. This calls for research based investigation that ought to come up with a sensible understanding of the outcomes of the program that may lead to the consideration of the various issues regarding the remaining implementation of the program. Moreover, I am convinced that the effectiveness of any educational program should only be judged and considered effective on the basis of appropriate critical research. One of these issues is investigating the outcomes of SIP on the effectiveness of schools.

This study employed the adapted Theory of Change model which was originally developed by Gold, Simon and Brown (2009) to investigate the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on the functioning of the selected schools. This model takes into consideration the issues in the implementation of SIP that would lead to the end-result. The model incorporates elements such as empowering the school community, decision-making as a key leadership role, playing different roles, public accountability, improving teaching and learning, and the learning environment. The improvement in all these

components, then, is expected to result in school improvement which will enhance school effectiveness.

Thus, the intent of the study was to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in the Sidama Zone schools and to come to conclusions that will help everybody concerned to understand the reality regarding what has been achieved through the program.

Therefore, the study aimed at exploring the outcomes of SIP on the schools' functioning and to identify issues for discourse to help policymakers and implementers understand the outcomes of the program at school level.

The next section presents the motivation for the research under the sub-sections, Contribution of the study, and Motivating the study.

### **1.3. MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH**

Ethiopia is one of the developing nations which is trying to lever its population from poverty. This required spending much of the country's resources on education to improve the development of human resources with the assumption that it will be the basis for development in other sectors. With this aim, the government has designed GEQIP and implemented it by spending scarce resources to improve the quality of education. Investigation of the outcomes of SIP (a program on which much of the scarce resource has been spent) would help to take measures if there are weaknesses and help to set up ways to sustain the achievements reached so far.

### **1.3.1. Contribution of the study**

The study explored what is experienced by the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness and devised strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

### **1.3.2. Motivation for the study**

This study intended to clarify confusions about the outcomes of SIP, as there are various arguments regarding what the program has contributed to school effectiveness. The study may also help policymakers and educational officers to reconsider the SIP (including how it has been implemented) and provide them with strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness. Methodologically, the study would be significant by helping those who want to use the qualitative approach for the investigation of quality improvement programs like SIP instead of focusing only on the quantitative approach. In relation to this, it has recently been reported by a group of researchers who carried out a study on school effectiveness research, that "...the absence of qualitative studies on the area is one of the problems" (Reynolds, Sammons, De Fraine, Van Damme, Townsend, Teddlie & Stringfield 2014:197). Thus, this study would contribute its share by bringing qualitative study to the area. Finally, the approach used and the results would also be significant in giving clues to those who want to conduct studies on other programs or on the same program in different areas.

## **1.4. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section provides a glimpse of the literature on quality of education, school effectiveness, school improvement in general and in Ethiopian context.

### **1.4.1. Quality of education, school effectiveness and school improvement**

Education systems in different regions aim to provide quality education to citizens. However, quality of education is a subtle concept and there is no consensus on how to define it (Leu

2005:v; Telli 2013:3). The subtlety of the concept resulted in incomplete list of indicators of quality of education (Doherty 2012: 98). Chapman and Adams (2002: 2) and Grift (2014: 297) elaborated quality of education by looking into input, process, output and outcomes. Other authors like Leu (2005: 16) focused on the importance of shared leadership and vision, orderly learning environment and focused teaching and learning as determinants of quality of education.

Improving the school leadership, teaching and learning, and learning environment require establishing a quality assurance (QA) mechanism by availing organisational structure that takes responsibility of ensuring quality of education (Sallis 2002: 17). QA mechanisms help to solve encountered problems through the process of constant monitoring and evaluation (Alaba 2010: 157; Johnson & Fargo 2014: 847). The GEQIP, in Ethiopian context, is designed to assure quality of the general education by mainly focusing on school improvement processes which are meant to enhance school effectiveness.

Scholars agree that school effectiveness is about effectiveness and efficiency of the school (Beare 2007: 33; Scheerens 2000: 20). It focuses on functioning of schools, and requires considering factors which determine functioning or effectiveness of schools. Busher, Harris and Wise (2000: 191) and Putman (2012: 17) agree that researchers have been focusing on reasons why some schools are more effective than others. Various research reports also indicated that more effective schools are characterised by effective leadership, conducive learning environment, effective classroom management, high level monitoring, staff development, parental involvement and outside support (Early & Weindling 2004: 157; MackBeath 2007: 66). Besides, factors contributing to school effectiveness can be assessed by using the goal model, the process model, the satisfaction model, the ineffectiveness model, the organisational learning model and the total quality model (Cheng 1996: 22; Ncube 2002: 112). These models are discussed under section 2.3.2. The availability of various models also shows that there is no single model that can be satisfactorily used to assess school effectiveness.

Moreover, it is important to note that effectiveness of schools needs to be linked to students' performance. Performance of students' can be higher if there are strong improvement and monitoring processes as part of the overall QA. Unless there is constant improvement, school



effectiveness is unlikely. Thus, Schools focus on improvement processes to make themselves comfortable places for children to learn (Hopkins 2005: 2) and this occurs if they devise strategies to manage change through capacity building (Arlething & Tornsen 2014: 856; Makoelle 2011: 23). The literature further indicates that school improvement is a policy issue or a reform which leads to enhanced effectiveness of the school (Reezigt 2005: 359).

In addition, it is noted that leadership which can manage change is a requirement for school improvement (Cravens & Hallinger 2012: 159; Dumay & Galand 2012: 703; Marsh 2015: 72). It is critical for the leadership to build trust among the staff and create collaborative environment where decisions are made through the participation of the school community (Gordon 2004: 166; Pine 2009: 99). Above all, schools need to use various improvement strategies with a clear understanding that there are a number of ways to work for improvement (Ng 2011: 463; Wallace 2005: 147). Some of the strategies to be used are formulating a clear improvement plan (Ontario Ministry of Education 200: 6); professional development opportunities for the staff (Sweeney 2005: 2), and monitoring and evaluation of the school improvement process (MoE 2010a: 14; Rabichund 2011: 114).

Regarding the link between school improvement and school effectiveness, research indicates that school improvement enhances school effectiveness (Makoelle 2011: 7; Townsend 2007:3), and they ran parallel to each other. Creemers and Reezgit (2005: 359) distinguished that students' outcome is effectiveness criterion, and capacity of schools to manage change is improvement criterion.

This subsection has provided a glimpse of quality of education, school effectiveness and school improvement. These issues are presented with much detail in chapter two. The next subsection gives a brief account of school improvement in Ethiopian context.

#### **1.4.2. School improvement in Ethiopian context**

Historically, the Ethiopian Education system was too traditional and it was mainly influenced by religious institutions. Modernising the traditional education system required the country to launch different educational reforms (Shinn & Ofcansky 2013: 135; Teshome 2013: Teshome 2012: 15). In spite of efforts to modernise the education system, education policies in the

country were influenced by the ideology of the regimes (Negash 2006: 7). The attempts to reform the education systems during the three regimes (the Imperial, the Socialist and the Federal System of Governance) were mainly initiated due to the systems failure to satisfy the development needs in the country (Negash 2006: 18; Tefera 1996: 15).

Education which has been characterised by low access, poor efficiency and quality required the Federal government to launch successive education sector development programs (ESDPs) (Watson & Yohannes 2005: 2). Though there was high access to education during ESDPI and ESDPII (MoE 2007: 3; UNICEF 2010: 1-2), the quality of general education deteriorated to a greater extent (Ethiopian Academy of Sciences 2012: 12; Shinn and Ofcansky 2013: 135). Quality has been compromised due to poor economic condition of the the country to afford the costs of quality of education (Negash 2006: 35). Engel (2011: 24) observes that the Ethiopian government realised that quality of education is becoming a problem and gave attention to it during ESDPIII. In ESDPIII and the GEQIP document, the government prioritised quality of education. Thee GEQIP which consists of SIP, and other programs is introduced with the hope of ensuring the quality of the general education (MoE 2008: 5).

The SIP as one of the components of GEQIP aims at improving capacity of schools to develop improvement plans, enhancing community participation and improving learning environment (MoE 2008: 6; MoE 2011a: 5). Thus the SIP focuses on leadership, community participation, learning environment, and teaching and learning. This study focuses on exploring the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness with respect to the above domains.

The next section presents the statement of the problem by focusing on issues which triggered the consideration of the topic to be researched.

## **1.5.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This section presents the research gap and the problem statement.

### **1.5.1 The research gap**

Researchers in the area of education in Ethiopia indicated that there is a shortage of studies on the quality of education (Derebssa 2008:3; Solomon 2008:5). It is also true that when new programs are under implementation, it is likely that challenges will be faced, though the programs result in certain benefits. This entails that the outcome of a new program should be investigated to sustain the positive outcomes, and to identify areas of weakness for further improvement. International research also shows that more attention is given to theoretical traditions and the development of models than to practical aspects related to the school improvement processes while research is being done on school improvement and school effectiveness (Scheerens 2013:1-2; Wikeley & Murillo 2005:355). These initial ideas seem to be relevant for me to select the topic for study being SIP a quality issue and a new program. In addition, my experiences described below also initiated me to select the topic for the study.

As a researcher for community service in the area of education in selected Technology Villages of Hawassa University, I have come across schools with various standards, some with better environments where it is somehow comfortable for the teachers and the students to engage in the teaching and learning process, while some other schools are not that much conducive to the same process. However, one usually hears in the media as well as from various reporters that almost all the schools are showing great improvement since the implementation of GEQIP of which one of the components is the SIP.

On the other hand, from the discussions I had with principals and supervisors continuing their studies at Hawassa University, I received two incompatible ideas, which can be grouped as those appreciating the achievements of the program (namely the program is successful) and all the school community members are equally benefiting, and others complaining that there are defects (shortcomings) on the ground, and most of the successes are mere reports. The latter group also reflects that there is less participation by the school community. These contrasting ideas are the basis which initiated the current topic for a study.

### **1.5.2. The problem statement**

I believe that researchers should not depend on mere reports about the outcomes of the program (SIP), its successes and challenges. There have to be data from the various sources that can be used to understand the outcomes of SIP on the effectiveness of schools. This

helps to come up with implications that show what the program (the SIP) meant for the schools and how the community expected to benefit from it. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on the effectiveness of schools of Sidama Zone by finding answers to the following main research question, followed by the sub-questions.

- What are the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia?

This main problem leads to the following sub-problems.

- What is school effectiveness and how can it be assessed?
- What role can the SIP play in improving school effectiveness?
- What are the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools?
- How do the school community experience the role of the SIP in improving school effectiveness?
- According to these experiences, how can the SIP be improved to enhance school effectiveness?

## **1.6. AIM OF THE STUDY**

### **1.6.1. Main aim**

The main aim of this study is to explore the school community's experiences of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia.

### **1.6.2. Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- discuss school effectiveness and to determine strategies to assess it;
- identify the roles SIP can play in improving school effectiveness;
- identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools;
- explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school effectiveness, and

- devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

How the above questions were answered and the objectives were addressed is described in the table below.

**Table 1.1: The research questions, the objectives and the chapters used to address them**

No	Research question raised	Objective	Method used to answer the questions and address the objectives	Chapter in which the topic and the objective are addressed
1	What is school effectiveness and how can it be assessed?	Discuss school effectiveness and determine strategies to assess it	Literature study	Chapter two
2	What role can the SIP play in improving school effectiveness?	Identify the roles the SIP can play in improving school effectiveness	Literature study	Chapter two
3	What are the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools?	Identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools	Literature study	chapter Three
4	How does the school community experience the role of the SIP in improving school	Explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school	Empirical study	Chapter five

	effectiveness?	effectiveness		
5	According to these experiences, how can the SIP be improved to enhance school effectiveness?	Devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness	Contribution of the study	Chapter six

### 1.7. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study assumes that school improvement and school effectiveness continue to be important concerns of schools as quality assurance processes, and studying school community's experience regarding the outcomes of SIP contributes to school effectiveness. I assumed that:

- SIP is contributing to effectiveness of schools in Sidama zone;
- The school community has experiences regarding outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness;
- All participants, who are purposefully selected for interviews and focus group discussions, will voluntarily participate and give appropriate responses to the questions raised;
- Education level of participants and their specialisation do not affect the responses provided by the participants of the study;
- Participants in the study reflect their views honestly and the information they provide regarding their experiences will be kept confidential by the participants as well as by me, and

- Participants in the study construct meaning regarding the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness and these meanings serve as basis for analysis of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness and thereby provide answers to the research questions.

## 1.8. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted at two primary and two secondary schools in Sidama Zone. The participants who took part in the study were SIP experts in the Regional Education Bureau (REB), the Zonal Education Department (ZED) and the Woreda Education Office (WEO) who are in charge of directing and following up the SIP implementation, and purposefully selected members of the school community. The SIP as a GEQIP component is a wide program. However, the study aimed at exploring the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness at Sidama Zone schools. It focused on investigating what the SIP domains contributed to school effectiveness and what the outcomes were of the students' achievement because of the program. This is done through the use of the qualitative approach as it is convenient for exploration.

## 1.9. DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS

This study deals with the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on the effectiveness of the schools of Sidama Zone. SIP is a quality assurance (QA) mechanism that was introduced as a means of reform in the Ethiopian general education system to improve the quality of education. Therefore, I will present the relevant definitions of the terms in this study by referring to various sources.

- **Quality of education:** Researchers indicate that it is difficult to define *quality of education* (Chapman & Adams 2002:2; Doherty 2012:98; Sallis 2002:11; Telli 2013:3). Doherty (2012:98) defines *quality of education* by explaining that education is different from other businesses, and a definition of quality of education should be related to

teaching and learning. It is this notion that guides the meaning of quality of education in this study. It is linked to input, process and output.

- **Quality assurance (QA) in education:** Alaba (2010:157) explains that QA is a strategy that is used to make quality of teaching and learning processes better so as to maximise the quality of education. Besides, Sallis (2002:17) defines the term as "... designing quality into the process to attempt to ensure the product is produced to a predetermined specification". SIP is one of the QA programs of GEQIP, and it involves processes which are designed to assure quality in education.
- **School improvement:** *School improvement*, in simple terms, can be considered to be a change to the whole school system that results in the improvement of the school's functions. The MoE (2011a:2) defines *school improvement* as a process that focuses on reviewing and improving the performance of schools so as to increase the students' performance. School improvement, therefore, is a process that reconsiders the school's functions so that the students may learn in a better environment and achieve better. This entails a change in the existing culture of the school and creating an environment conducive to learning so as to maximise the students' achievement.
- **School effectiveness:** This refers to the functioning of schools in their attempt to produce an output. Scheerens (2000:18) defines the concept as, "the performance of the organisational unit called 'school'". Here, performance is considered to be the overall functioning of the school to produce the desired output.
- **School community:** Redding (1991:9) refers to school community as the "is capable of functioning as a community...students, teachers, parents and staff who associate with one another".
- **School culture:** The internal practices of schools and how they influence the school community can be referred as *school culture* (Harris 2002:7).
- **Decision-making:** It is a leadership role which involves different stakeholders in the implementation process as a means of empowering the school community. Decision-making is a component in the change processes like SIP, as the school community



needs to indicate a sentiment of ownership for its successful implementation. The “school community needs to be involved in planning, implementing, and integrating changes aimed at continuous improvement” (Gordon 2004:164).

- **Supervisors:** They are professionals in respect of education assigned by woreda education office and responsible for assisting the principals and the teachers in the schools.
- **Zone:** A sub-division of a region/regional state and consists of a number of woredas.
- **Woreda:** A sub-division of a zone and is considered as equivalent to a district.

## 1.10. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

In this study I adapted and used a model of the Theory of Change as developed by Gold et al. (2009). School improvement as a change process or a reform requires active participation of the school community by changing the existing school culture, and making the school community take the initiative to bring improvement in the schools. This requires the school community to take responsibility with an understanding that they are accountable for the outcomes. The theory of change model depicted that acting responsibly and accountably, the school community can run school improvement activities which will enhance school effectiveness. Thus, the theory of change model has enabled the researcher to explain the variables school community, educational outcomes, school improvement and school effectiveness.

The model indicates that there is strong link between school community capacity and school improvement. School community includes the students, teachers, parents, administrators and the other staff at the school (Gold et al. 2009:244; Redding 1991:9). Empowering the school community for effective participation in the implementation of school improvement requires changing the existing culture. This is stated as, “One source of school’s resistance to reform is their culture and power structure” by Gold et al. (2009:243). Unless the school culture is changed, it will be difficult to achieve the intended targets of the change process.

Studies indicate that awareness-creation workshops and training that aim at changing the existing culture and awareness need to be presented to those who are involved in the change process. For example, Alaba (2010:159) recommended that for school improvements to be effective, “relevant workshops and training should be provided to teachers”. This recommendation again entails that the students' achievement will be maximised if those who implement the change receive appropriate training and participate in the process of change. As part of building the school community, Gordon (2004:191) suggests that to ensure the full commitment of the school community and to make them play their roles effectively, there must be shared decision-making, and the majority of ideas should be implemented. Letsholo (2006:6) emphasised that parents need to support their children. Unless the parents/guardians work together with the school and follow up their children's education, it will be difficult to maximise the students' achievement, which is assumed to be achieved through school improvement efforts.

The Theory of Change model also takes into consideration that there must be public accountability while the school community members play the roles assigned to them. Nash (2012:7) stressed that *accountability* makes the schools responsible in relation to what the country needs in terms of social, economic and moral targets. This is the notion that guides the school communities when they play their roles. This calls for the full support of the community and creating an environment conducive to learning that facilitates teaching and learning in the school. The accomplishment of these interrelated tasks will contribute to the improvement of the school and its effectiveness. These views are used as a basis to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness.

The next section presents the methodological approach used to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP in the selected schools.

## **1.11. THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This section briefly discusses the philosophy that guided the research, the approach used to conduct the study, the design of the study, the study area, sampling, the data-collection instruments, the techniques of data-analysis, and ethical issues.

### **1.11.1. The research paradigm and approach**

For an in-depth investigation of the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness, I made use of the qualitative case study design. The study was guided by constructivist paradigm/philosophy; this philosophy guided the research process (Scott & Usher 2011:10). Taking as the case Sidama Zone, the qualitative approach enabled me to get multiple views about the outcomes of the program from the participants of the study. Here the epistemological view is that there are multiple realities regarding the outcomes of the program (Koro-Ljunberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith & Hayes 2009:693). I decided to go to the field with an open mind to find out those realities. The participants' meaning of the events was considered as important to construct knowledge.

To come up with an interpretive explanation of these multiple views, there has to be an understanding of the specific outcomes of the program. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013:24) also suggest that interactions with people help to construct meaning. Accordingly, the focus of the study was to understand the meaning of events related to the outcomes of SIP in relation the domains of the program in the words of the participants, and to come up with an interpretive explanation.

### **1.11.2. The design of the study**

In simple terms, *design* can be considered to be the structure of the study. Solomon (2008:28) defines *research design* as "... the logical sequence of events that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusion". He elaborates by saying that a research design is a plan that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting observations. Marvasti (2004:9) indicates that a design is the steps the researcher uses in the research process. The exploration of the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on schools' effectiveness involves various parties within the school system. This led to a multiple case study design which required involving various parties within different schools. Solomon (2008:30) elaborates that data from multiple case studies are considered as more robust. Furthermore, Burton and Bartlett (2009:64) suggest that case study research can be used to explain an account of an experience, and Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013:23) say, "Case study usually takes place within the qualitative paradigm". I hoped that these ideas would be in line with the intent of the study as the study aimed to explore and interpret the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP by making use of thick descriptions which come from natural settings. Thus, the study of multiple cases (which are the schools and the different parties involved) helped me to get ground for comparing information from various sources. The design of the study is shown in a figure in chapter 4, section 4.2.

The following section presents the description of the study area.

### **1.11.3. The study area**

Sidama Zone is found in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) in Ethiopia. I selected Sidama Zone for the study as I know the area as being the zone of one of the research centres of Hawassa University where I am working. I have been conducting educational research with other staff members of the university, and recognised that there is a

need to carry out research on the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in those areas. Two primary and two secondary schools (from Dale and Loka Abaya Woredas, which are shown on figure 1.2) were purposefully selected for the study. The criterion for the selection of these schools was the data in ZED about the performance of the schools. The schools which were labelled as performing better were selected so that their good practices can be disseminated to other schools, and ways can be suggested to carry on those practices. Poorly performing schools were selected because the exploration of such schools helps to come up with strategies that might help to improve their weaknesses. The following figures show where SNNPR is located in which Sidama Zone is found, and the woredas in the zone.



**Figure 1.1: The regional states of Ethiopia**

Source: U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OHCA).



#### **1.11.4. Sampling**

Qualitative studies make use of the purposive sampling strategy. I used this technique to select information-rich cases. This enabled me to get thick descriptions about the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP. This method was used to select the schools, the principals, the teachers, the students, the supervisors, the PTA members and the SIP experts. Sample size is explained in chapter 4, section 4.4.

Data from the sample population was collected using the instruments discussed under the following section.

#### **1.11.5. Instruments for data-collection**

The intent of qualitative research is to get a deep insight into the topic under study. In case studies the data can be collected from various sources (Burton & Bartlett 2009:64). Case studies employ two or more types of data-collection instruments (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:11). Moreover, Dawson (2007:15) states that interviews and focus-group discussions can be predominantly used in qualitative studies, in addition to other instruments. I found that a literature study, interviews, focus-group discussions, observations and document analysis are important means of obtaining the essential data for the study.

I present a concise justification for using each instrument below, and more information is given in chapter 4, section 4.5.

##### **1.11.5.1. Literature study**

I made use of a study of the literature from various sources to answer three of the research questions and to produce the theoretical framework for the study.

#### 1.11.5.2. Interviews

Interviews are considered important to discuss the experiences related to the practices (Alvesson 2011:21) and it provides rich data (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:104). I used in-depth interviews with the principals, selected head teachers, SIP experts and supervisors as this would help me to get a deeper insight into the experiences of the participants, and also more reliable data (Marvasti 2004:21). This advantage of in-depth interviews is clearly emphasised by Woodside (2010:263) when he wrote its uses as "...learning the thinking, feeling, and doing processes of the informants, including an understanding of the informants' worldviews of the topic under study in their own language". The interviews were conducted using the Amharic language to explore the experiences of the participants regarding the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness.

#### 1.11.5.2. Focus-group discussions

Focus-group discussions help to bring a larger group of people together and to get a large amount of data about a topic. I found it important to carry out discussions with students, teachers and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members in their own groups about their experiences with regard to the outcomes of SIP. At the same time, when the participants discuss their viewpoints in groups, whether they reflect similar views on the issues raised or indicate different views, it was important to get all aspects of their experiences regarding the topic.

#### 1.11.5.3. Observations

Investigating the outcomes of SIP required observing the school environment, namely how conducive it was for teaching and learning to take pace. Observation helps to obtain information that describes events (Cipani 2009:7). I made use of observations to look into the improvements in the school by means of an observation protocol (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:97). I also considered Gordon's comment important to go beyond observing the school



environment. " We need to spend time in school talking to teachers, watching decision-making in action, and observing who makes what type of decisions" (Gordon 2004:166). Observations, I believed, give a good account of what has been experienced by the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness.

#### 1.11.5.4. Document analysis

Documents can be sources of information in case studies (Tobin 2010:288). SIP involves the use of various documents such as reports, letters, minutes, memos and plans regarding implementation and achievements. I analysed the available documents which I obtained from the education offices and the schools.

#### **1.11.6. Data-collection procedures**

Before collecting the data, I produced data-collection protocols. In addition to the electronic devices to be used, I used a pad to write down evidences and personal notes in the field to capture what might otherwise be missed (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:96). In following this procedure the ethics requirements of the study were adhered to. These are indicated under the heading 'Ethical considerations' (See sections 1.8.8 & 4.9).

The data that were collected were analysed using the techniques described below.

#### **1.11.7. Data-analysis techniques**

In qualitative studies, it is good to start the data analysis at the beginning of the data-collection process. This analysis is inductive (Guest, MacQueen & Namey 2012:107). I made use of this suggestion. This was important in making clear what I was going to do next. Chilisa and Preece (2005:31) suggest that in qualitative studies the analysis of the data begins at the

beginning of data-collection and continues up to the end. Besides, a case study invites the researchers to use thematic analysis (Mabry 2014:215). Thematic analysis helps researchers to explain what the data imply (Guest et al. 2012:107). I had an open mind to include emergent issues while also focusing on the research questions which I stated earlier. Categories were produced according to the research questions, and data were placed in the relevant category. Then, this was followed by the discussion of the findings using a theoretical lens. It was also critical to ensure validity and reliability. This is discussed in the following section.

#### **1.11.8. Reliability and validity (Trustworthiness)**

In qualitative studies researchers ensure validity and reliability by making use of information-rich data. I used triangulation as a means of ensuring that the data are trustworthy and credible. I triangulated the instruments and the participants, and used different sites to make the information rich regarding the outcomes of SIP on the effectiveness of the selected schools. While carrying out interviews, I used probing to get in-depth information from the participants (Bogdan & Biklen 2006:48). In addition to making the data rich, checking the consistency of the responses through the use of probing can be used to ensure the validity of the qualitative data (Seidman 2006:25). Researchers indicated that credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability can be used to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Chilisa & Preece 2005:171; Guest et al. 2012:83) and as a substitute for validity and reliability in quantitative research. These were the principles that guided the study.

The following section briefly presents the ethical considerations in the study.

### **1.11.9. Ethical considerations**

Ethics in research needs attention from the beginning of the study to its finish (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:64). Gallagher (2009:15) also stresses that ethics in a research project continues throughout the research process. Thus, the ethical considerations begin with the selection of the topic and it continues during all the actions in the research process. The literature also indicated that any research should not lead to the participants experiencing any discomfort, psychological or physical (Rapley 2007:24). In this study ethics referred to caring for the participants during the whole study. I received permission from the Education Departments and the schools before contacting the participants for the study. I tried to show them the necessary respect after accessing them. This was because relationships affect the quality of the data (Seidman 2006:40). After establishing rapport, I explained the intent of the study and the possible consequences of the study. Then I received the consent of all the participants that they would take part in the study voluntarily (Mitchell & Jolley 2010:52). Moreover, I informed the participants that their names would not be revealed, and that the information they gave me would be kept confidential. I also explained the possibility that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. Moreover, I ensured not to indicate the identity of the participants in the study (Fisher & Anushko 2008:100).

On my part, I was very careful while reviewing the related literature, in collecting the data, and analysing and reporting the results.

The details of the ethical considerations are presented in chapter 4, section 4.9.

### **1.12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In any research process, weaknesses are likely to be found. In qualitative studies flexibility and the evolving nature might be sources of weaknesses in the study. During fieldwork and the analysis of the data, I realised that the ideas forwarded by the principals were not that genuine as they were reflecting only the positive aspects discarding what they felt was

negative about their schools. During the triangulation of the data with other sources and using other instruments, I noticed that there were critical issues which the principals did not want to reflect upon, for their own reasons. However, I have taken the necessary caution regarding issues related to ethics, data-collection and data-analysis in the study.

### 1.13. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is divided into six chapters. The contents of each chapter are described below.

- **Chapter 1** contains the background to the study; the statement of the problem; research questions; the aim and objectives of the study; the contribution of the study; the motivation for the study; the scope of the study; limitations; the theoretical framework of the study; a description of the methods used, a definition of the terms and the organisation of the study.
- **Chapter 2** presents a review of related literature on quality of education; quality assurance in education; school improvement and school effectiveness and how the latter can be assessed; the link between school improvement and school effectiveness and the theoretical framework of the study.
- **Chapter 3** presents a brief historical context of education in Ethiopia (to show why it became important to reform the education sector); the general education quality assurance package in Ethiopia, and SIP in Ethiopia
- **Chapter 4** discusses the research methodology focusing on the research paradigm, the design of the study, the study area, sampling, data-collection instruments and procedures; data-analysis techniques, validity and reliability (trustworthiness), and ethical considerations.
- **Chapter 5** gives the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data regarding the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness. It discusses the cross-site results by focusing on what the participants reflected and relates it to the research findings on specific issues and the broader literature.

- **Chapter 6** deals with a synthesis, conclusions, and the implications of the study based on the main themes of the research questions and the contributions of the study.

#### **1.14. SUMMARY**

In the first chapter, I presented a preamble to the study, explained the origin and importance of the problem and what should be done to find answers to the research questions. This was followed by the scope of the study, a description of the method to be used, the limitations and the theoretical framework of the study, data-collection instruments, reliability and validity issues and ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter provided a definition of the terms and an elaboration of the chapter divisions of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

School improvement is a QA mechanism, and it has been introduced to Ethiopian school system as part of GEQIP. In this chapter I present what is meant by the quality of education, QA in education, school effectiveness and the strategies to assess it. The chapter also presents the concept of school improvement and the determinants of its success; the focus of school improvement initiatives and approaches, and strategies of school improvement. Then, it will be indicated how school improvement can enhance school effectiveness. The chapter furthermore concentrates on explaining the theoretical framework for the study through the adapted Theory of Change model as it fits the purpose of the study. The information on these topics is blended from the relevant literature and research.

#### **2.2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) IN EDUCATION**

This section discusses the concept of quality of education and QA in education. These concepts are important as school improvement and school effectiveness are issues directly linked to it.

### **2.2.1. Conceptualising the quality of education**

The quality of something is often judged on the user's experience. The quality of education has many facets depending up on the requirement of the user. It is difficult to give a generally agreed-upon definition of the quality of education (Telli 2013:3). After reviewing various sources, Leu (2005:v) indicates that though there are some general principles, there is a common and universally-accepted definition does not exist. This makes developing a complete list of quality indicators a challenge. Besides, Doherty (2012:98) explains that education is different from other types of businesses, and defining its quality is a challenge to researchers.

It is problematic to define quality of education for three different reasons. These are indicated in the words of Hoy, Jardine and Wood (2000:11) when they justified the confusion regarding a definition of quality of education on the basis of the three distinct groups involved in the judgment of the quality process: those who cover the costs of the process, the learners and the employer or the general community. This justification enlightens the fact that a quality requirement by those who cover educational costs (who are actually observing the functions of the schools from the inside or the outside), by the students in the system and by those who use the product such as employers, is quite different. These differences are sources of the various explanations of the quality of education.

Leu (2005:12) analyses quality of education as becoming effective in achieving the educational objectives in relation to the local contexts. It is also true that objectives are always in local contexts, and their achievement shows that quality exists for that particular context. However, this definition does not capture the importance of looking beyond narrow situations through benchmarking while using the limited context as a base for effectiveness.

In their attempt to elaborate on quality of education, Grift (2014:297) and Chapman and Adams (2002:2) explain that quality requires looking at the input used in the education system, which includes teachers and their background training, the accessibility of learning materials; the process which refers to the teaching and learning time used, and the extent of participatory learning, and the output which is reflected in the performance in tests and the

graduation rates. They extend the issue of quality to the level of outcomes, i.e. the employability of the graduates from the education system.

This approach looks at the quality of education from the perspective of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. Quality can be realised if there are qualified teachers in the schools, adequate materials for teaching and learning, and if the teaching and learning process is well-organised. These are expected to result in improved student-outcomes which extend to better performance in the areas of employment. While attempting to indicate the meaning of quality of education, Leu (2005:16), listed the following issues as determinants:

- shared leadership (firm and purposeful, participative, headed by a leading professional);
- shared vision and goals (unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration);
- a learning environment (an orderly atmosphere, an attractive working environment), and
- concentrating on teaching and learning (maximisation of learning time, academic emphasis, focus on achievement).

As a determinant of quality of education, leadership in educational environments, especially at school level where most of the operational activities take place, should be shared among all who are concerned with school actions (Hofman & Hofman 2011:621; Hopkins 2005:2). This should be done with the aim of attaining quality of education through the cooperation of all the members of the school. Under such circumstances, visions and goals will be equally understood and owned (Harris & Muijs 2005:27). This, in turn, helps to construct a favourable learning environment that enables the intents of teaching and learning to get done without difficulty (MoE 2010a:15). The emphasis, then, will be on teaching and learning so that all the students can benefit from what the school system has to offer them.

Furthermore, Leu (2005:10) extends the elucidation of the quality education to devising mechanisms such as the provision of crucial supervisory support to the teachers and the schools through practical policies, effective administration and community participation. This



entails that the teachers and the schools need to be assisted by means of supervision systems which would help them to perform their roles through the full participation of the community (Smith & Engel 2013:107). Besides, ensuring quality requires the administration to be competent enough to assist the teachers in their endeavour to achieve quality of education. Finally, it is crucial to note that issues discussed to elaborate on the quality of education are important to understand the underlying assumptions behind school improvement and school effectiveness, which are the core subjects of this study.

This section indicated what is meant by quality of education and how it is conceptualised in the literature.

The next section deals with the concept of QA in education.

### **2.2.2. The concept of QA in education**

In the definition given in chapter 1 (section 1.9), QA was presented as a mechanism to ensure the service provided is a quality one. It has also been linked to teaching and learning as it is a mechanism to follow up the teaching and learning processes which are at the heart of the school improvement initiatives. In a more concrete way, Alaba (2010:157) explains QA as a mechanism to identify and solve problems within an educational setting with the aim of bringing quality to the system. QA involves monitoring and finding solutions to encountered problems. It also involves using various communication channels to make those concerned with its process know about what is happening to the quality of the educational services provided. Sallis (2002:17) explains the QA process as a system that gives direction on how a product should be produced and the expected level of standard. QA requires an organisational structure to take responsibility and to carry it out in accordance with certain norms and principles established for the purpose. Thus, the QA system needs to ensure that activities are carried out properly and according to the requirements set as standards.

The elaboration shows that QA involves a system and how the process of QA should take place during the delivery of educational services. The workforce accountable for QA in

schools is the school community and the other stakeholders, for instance, those who support the schools by providing training, school grants or other resources. Those who work to assure the quality of education need to understand that the educational service rendered can be affected by their level of involvement and commitment in the QA process, and they have to play their roles according to accountability principles (Nash 2012:7).

However, it is also important to note that the end-products of the education system are the learners, and it is difficult to determine their standard achievement level (Sallis 2002:19). This does not mean that QA cannot be applied in educational settings. Rather, it means that the learners in the process may have various levels of achievement which, in fact, can be maximised by means of QA mechanisms. Moreover, researchers also explain the term QA, relating it to the teaching and learning process. For example, Alaba (2010:157) asserts that QA is "...a mechanism used to evaluate the efficiency and appropriateness of teaching and learning ... so as to ensure the delivery of high quality education". In this study, these views are relevant as the school community is expected to provide quality service to produce quality learners, and are also involved in the activities of teaching and learning (Johnson & Fargo 2014:847). This takes place in the light of the need to help the students to gain the maximum possible benefit from their school experience. The QA process can also help those who oversee the education system to judge the effectiveness of that particular education system.

It is apparent that the aim of QA in education is to bring about improvement in the education system and to produce high quality learners. What becomes imperative then, is sustaining the QA mechanisms. Chapman and Adams (2002:55) emphasise that it is not sufficient to initiate QA mechanisms, but the participatory process needs to be enacted through "critique, evaluation, analysis, and feedback at the school and local levels" to ensure its sustainability. This implies that QA is not a one-time process. It is cyclic process that involves review, appraisal and feedback at different levels. Besides, QA as a system should be data-based, and subsequent strategies should be designed, based on the results of the data and the feedback obtained from the stakeholders. This entails that there should be management, based on evidence, to bring quality to the education system (Sallis 2002:28).

In respect of their history of education countries have been using various QA mechanisms in education depending on various factors and local contexts. Ethiopia has launched a QA package for the general education program, which is referred as GEQIP. The package has been developed and implemented after realising that the education system is facing quality problems due to the high expansion in poorly-resourced school environments (MoE 2008:4). GEQIP has six different programs and one of the programs, SIP, is the focus of this study. The study explores the school community's experiences of the outcomes of SIP, which is a QA mechanism, on the effectiveness of the selected schools.

The next section provides an account of school effectiveness, the characteristics of effective schools and strategies to assess school effectiveness.

## **2.3. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

This section discusses school effectiveness and the characteristics of effective schools, and it explains how school effectiveness can be assessed.

### **2.3.1. School effectiveness and the characteristics of effective schools**

Schools are social institutions which are meant to serve the public. As the public spends funds on them, there should be a system that makes them accountable and responsible for what they are doing. This requires an understanding of what is meant by school effectiveness and the characteristics of effective schools. According to Scheerens (2000:18), "School effectiveness refers to the performance of the organisational unit called 'school'". Besides, Beare (2007:33) recognises school effectiveness as the effectiveness of the school as well as the efficiency of the school. The former indicates that the school produces an effect, whereas the latter tells us that the effects or outcomes are achieved by spending the resources wisely. This view is also stressed by Scheerens (2000:20), namely that school effectiveness may refer to the economic aspect used to produce the output.

School effectiveness can also be explained by using set criteria, and it is checked against those criteria. This necessitates identifying the characteristics of effective schools. Sullivan (2009:463) argues that the characteristics of effective schools positively affect the learning of the students and their performance. Besides, it is noted in the literature that there factors exist that particularly affect a school's effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Busher, Harris & Wise 2000:191; Putman 2012:17).

Hence, Putman (2012:17) describes the focus given by researchers to examine the factors of effective schools by stating that many researchers gave attention to the study of schools which are more successful than others. These studies attempted to assist the educators in identifying the features of schools which demonstrate success. Besides, it seems logical to argue that effective schools give much attention to students' learning (Sullivan 2009:463). In this connection, Busher, Harris and Wise (2000:191) also claim that the quality of teaching and learning is a central issue in the improvement process of schools, and effective schools are characterised by the special attention they give to teaching and learning. They also invest significant time and resources in the development teachers to contribute to the performance of the schools.

School effectiveness is concerned with outcomes and output. These end-results will be impressing if the focus in schools is on teaching and learning, and on equipping teachers by developing their capacity to manage and implement change. Edmonds (1982, in Earley and Weindling 2004:156) described some of the characteristics of schools where children achieved 'more than expected' as:

- strong leadership;
- high expectations for the children's achievement;
- an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning;
- an emphasis on the acquisition of skills; and
- the frequent follow-up of the students' progress.

Earley and Weindling (2004:157) further highlight eight factors on which consensus has been reached as the characteristics of more effective, or high-attaining schools as:

- an emphasis on learning: ensuring that the curriculum they employ has significance for all the learners, and the teachers have high anticipations and values, and reward the most excellent performances;
- classroom management: ensuring that time is spent on the subject matter of the lesson, ...and teaching strategies are appropriate to the topic and type of lesson, and proper feedback is given to students;
- discipline school climate: keeping high-quality order and promoting a protected and orderly climate;
- school leadership: the leadership functions are extensively distributed all the way through the school, and an administrative approach which encourages collegial work and shared decisions ;
- vision and monitoring: owning comprehensible and achievable targets for school improvement, and utilising regular monitoring;
- staff development: there exists a school-wide and efficient school development plan;
- parental involvement: the parents are respected as full partners in the learning practice, and there is constructive home-school links, and
- outside support: securing support from other external agencies.

It can easily be recognised that the five-factor model for school effectiveness as developed by Edmonds (1982) has some similarities with the ideas of Earley and Weindling (2004:157), as there are common issues such as school leadership, an environment conducive to learning, and the monitoring of the students' progress. However, these researchers also included the contribution of staff members and whole-school development and the involvement of the parents and the outside community as important factors in increasing school effectiveness.

A more comprehensive profile of effective schools has been described by MacBeath (2007:66), which incorporated ten items of the profile of an effective school such as " a learning school; high expectations; shared goals; ownership of change; effective leadership;

effective communication; focus on student learning; home-school partnership; positive relationships and staff collaboration". This list suggests that schools can improve and become effective if they are ready to learn, have the expectation that their students can achieve to the maximum of their abilities, and focus on the students' learning. This is likely to take place if the schools have shared goals with members of the school community, transparent communication strategies, space for community engagement, and a smooth working environment.

Besides, effectiveness in planning is also one of the factors that characterise school effectiveness. Buser et al. (2000:191-192) confirm that planning is found to be one of critical factors that determine school effectiveness. They further emphasise that in improvement planning at school level, proper planning is an instrument to stir the school's performance forward (Buser et al. 2000:192). Besides, Earley and Weindling (2004:158), MacBeath (2007:66) and Buser et al. (2000:187) highlight that leadership effectiveness is one of the requirements of effective schools as it helps people to be collaborative. Effective leadership facilitates collaboration among the members of the school community, and sets teamwork and collaboration among the staff as criteria to ensure school effectiveness (Buser et al. 2000:187). Consequently, effective schools are characterised by a leadership that influences the context of the school for improvement.

Furthermore, a number of studies focused on identifying and elaborating on the models of school effectiveness. Makoelle (2011:63-65) summarised three models of school effectiveness from various sources. These include:

- Received model: stresses that the school, as an organization, influences the students' performance, and their performance can be influenced by external factors.
- Heretic model: identifies that there are interdependent factors in the school environment, and that the schools are composed of stakeholders and systems that rely on one another for their smooth operation.
- Contextual model: focuses on the context of each school as a unique institution, and identifies the conditions under which schools could perform better.

Schools are organisations which can be influenced by external factors, such as the ideology of the governing body, and socio-cultural and economic factors. The factors that affect the school's improvement efforts may also be related to the school environment, as there are a number of interest groups, which include teachers, students, administrators, and other stakeholders. It is also crucial to consider specific contextual issues which might affect the performance of the schools. In addition, in a meta-analysis study of effective school evaluation, Wikeley, Stoll, Murillo and Jong (2005:399) outlined four factors that emerged from improvement models. The factors include the context in which change is taking place, the roles played by the change agents external to the school, the relationship and complexity of the internal factors and their impact on school improvement and effectiveness.

On the other hand, the models by Creemers and Reezigt (2005:399-404) take into account the national context and history of the education system, agents who are not part of the school system (including whether the system is centralised or decentralised), the need for those in the school system to become accustomed to planned improvement (the teachers, students and the community), the internal agent-participation in decision-making (having a shared vision), readiness to accept reform, and the need for an interactive model that considers the interrelation among different factors. A similar analysis of these factors was also undertaken by Scheerens and Demeuse (2005:373-385). The factors seem to be important as having a significant impact on the implementation of new programs. An analysis of school effectiveness and improvements requires the realisation of existing facts in the country and issues related to the education system, including its history.

The above explanations show that while introducing new innovations to any education system, it is important to consider the country's economic, political and historical context as well, as the trends the education system has passed through in the history of the country. It is also equally important that those in the school system are well aware of the planned change and are ready to accept it. This demands creating a proper awareness about the new program, and changing the existing culture so that the targets will be realised in the end. Conversely, change is unlikely to take place if the parties to be involved in the process are not ready to accept it and participate in it.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness is to be explored in relation to those factors which characterise effective schools and the descriptors of school effectiveness. This also requires understanding the ways to assess school effectiveness.

Thus, the next section presents strategies to assess school effectiveness.

### **2.3.2. Assessing school effectiveness**

Studies indicate that there are different strategies to assess the effectiveness of schools. Scheerens (2000:20) explains that school effectiveness can be assessed by looking into the production process of the outputs. In this case, the production of the outputs requires inputs which include the students and other resources (human, material and financial) used in the process. Recently Scheerens (2015:14) indicated that school effectiveness and its functioning can be assessed by looking into the ecology of the school, the school leadership factors and the external environment of the schools. A comprehensive study conducted by Ncube (2002:112) identified models of school effectiveness as the goal model, the resource-input model, the process model, the satisfaction model, the ineffectiveness model, the organisational learning model and the total quality model. The researcher discussed the fact that the effectiveness of schools can be assessed based on these models, and no one model is complete by itself to assess school effectiveness.

The goal model of school effectiveness assumes that schools need to be assessed on their performance of the stated/outlined goals (Cheng 1996:20; Ncube 2002:112). The goals indicated in the school improvement plans can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the school. Cheng (1996:22) also suggests that school effectiveness can be assessed by considering the inputs used in the school. However, Ncube (2002:114) refutes this notion by arguing that, "...over-emphasis on acquisition of inputs may reduce the school's effort to educational processes and outputs" (Ncube 2002:114). The latter argument sounds



reasonable as the presence/availability of inputs alone does not guarantee that the process will be effective and will lead to better results. Thus, assessing school effectiveness depending on a single model cannot give a comprehensive account of the factors that contribute to the success of the school. This entails that all the factors that affect the performance of the school and its outcome should be considered as criteria to assess school effectiveness. Besides, Creemers and Kyriakides (2015:102) suggest that school effectiveness can be assessed by using a multi-level model which consists of factors related to the student, the classroom, the school and the system. This indicates that the use of a one level factor to assess school effectiveness does not give a complete account of what the school looks like.

As schools monitor and improve their functions, they have to focus on checking whether the students' results have improved or not, while and after implementing the improvement initiatives and those matters that lead to better the students' achievement, which are used as criteria to assess school effectiveness. Parallel to this, Makoelle (2011:65) maintains that the students' achievement can be used to measure school effectiveness. The students' results are likely to improve if the environment is conducive to learning; if leadership is shared, and if the school has a clearly shared vision and improvement goals. This can be achieved if the stakeholders are committed and the parents are involved in the improvement process.

Above all, school effectiveness needs to be assessed by considering the effectiveness of planning and the successful implementation of what has been planned, the quality of the school governance, the conduciveness to learning of the school's environment for both the learners and the workers, and a strong commitment on the part of the stakeholders and the parents to take part in school activities. The assessment of school effectiveness should also consider the determinants of the school's success.

In addition, Chapman and Adams (2002:55) indicated that the success of a school can be determined by looking into the information on the internal and external environment of the school; the availability of support structures that can facilitate teaching and learning and increase student achievement; the level of community participation in school affairs; the strength of monitoring and the evaluation of improvement activities; the acceptance of reform

by the teachers; the level of the ownership of the improvement plans by the school community, and the effectiveness of communication channels and decision-making processes.

On the other hand, the schools need to be assessed, and they should get the feedback of the assessment. This helps them to take corrective measures based on their level of effectiveness. Sallis (2002:30) affirms that it is essential for schools to assure the quality of the education they offer by establishing powerful feedback mechanisms. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of schools need to be done on a permanent basis, and the results of the evaluation have to be disclosed to the students, the teachers, the parents and the other stakeholders.

Feedback helps to take curative actions if there is something going on unintentionally. Quality assurance processes need to be evaluated as timely as possible. This would help to recognise the weaknesses and strengths of the process. Evaluation should be based on data/facts, and it should be a never-ending process. The outcomes of the evaluation should be communicated to the students as well as to those who have an interest in the school's activities. These ideas are in line with the intents of this study. The exploration of the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness is meant to identify what SIP has done to enhance school effectiveness, to identify the weaknesses experienced and to suggest ways to sustain the best practices and to improve the weaknesses.

Improving the students' achievement is something that comes after putting a great effort on a range of issues. The evaluation of school effectiveness and the improvement should consider the changes in school leadership, the change in the school culture and the learning environment, an improvement in community participation, and teaching and learning. This study tried to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness. It focused on the central issues that characterise effective schools that are meant to result in an improvement in the students' achievement.

In this section the researcher described different strategies that can be used to assess school effectiveness. The literature indicated that there is no single way to assess school effectiveness. This leads to the fact that the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness can be understood by considering the different dimensions of school effectiveness.

In the next section the concept of school improvement will be discussed with the aim of understanding school improvement as reform, as well as the importance of school leadership for school improvement, the need to promote decentralised school management, experiences related to school improvement initiatives as well as strategies for improvement.

## **2.4. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW**

This section conceptualises school improvement and elaborates on the fact that school improvement is a change process. It presents the leadership requirements for school improvement, some experiences related to school improvement initiatives and strategies of school improvement.

### **2.4.1. Defining school improvement**

Improvement has to do with development and enhancement. It requires changing the existing culture, namely a devotion of the school community in the process of change. In this regard, Harris (2002:10) explains that *school improvement* entails changing the prevailing culture in the school, and it needs the dedication of the school community to change the existing practice through the careful examination of their own practices and beliefs. Hopkins (2005:2) defines *school improvement* as a process of making schools comfortable places for all the children to learn. The researcher further elaborates that it as a process of increasing student outcomes by helping the schools to manage change and to focus on teaching and learning.

This also requires from the schools to facilitate conditions that support teaching and learning (Arlesting & Tornsen 2014:856) by building their capacity to manage change.

Thus, school improvement is educational change/reform that aims to create an environment from which the students can gain the best experience. If the students learn in a favourable and encouraging environment, their achievements will be maximised. This needs exerting all the coordinated efforts by the educational administrators, the teachers, the parents and the learners. It may take place in a context where the schools work under complex situations which are within the schools, between the schools and beyond the schools (Ainscow, Dayson, Goldrick & West 2012:198).

Furthermore, Makoelle (2011:23) understands *school improvement* to be a process of bringing the schools to an "an ideal state" through the implementation of improvement initiatives. I understand the term 'ideal' in this definition as 'perfect' or 'best'. What is perfect and best should be considered as relative, and those concerned with school activities should take the contextual and background factors into consideration and work for what is best for that particular context. This is because schools in different places (urban or rural) are at different levels of the needs for improvement. Change should be implemented to make schools perform better than they have been performing earlier on. As the name suggests, school improvement aims at creating an environment conducive to learning so that the children in the schools can gain the best experiences, and then their achievements will be maximised. This lends a hand for the schools to be effective in their undertaking.

Many studies on school improvement have tried to link school effectiveness with school improvement, and have indicated some common theories that help them to explain effective school improvement (Creemers & Reezigt 2005:359; Scheerens 2013:1). Creemers and Reezigt (2005:359) identified *school improvement* as a mechanism that focuses on policy and directions that can help the schools to look into their own practices and bring about the desired changes. The explanation is that school improvement is a policy issue, and involves practice that will result in outcome. The same researchers argue that school effectiveness is

based on theory which is a research issue. However, they indicate the link between the two concepts as follows:

“School effectiveness research and theory can provide insights and knowledge to be used in school improvement. School improvement is very powerful tool for the testing of theories. School Improvement can also provide insights and possibilities for effective school factors, which can be analysed further in effective school research” (Creemers & Reezigt 2005:360).

School improvement is about practice. It is a means to check whether the theories work or not in real school situations. The practice again, may lead to the development of other theories and the analysis of various factors which may be changed into practice and may contribute to the improvement of schools. Thus, exploring the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP needs understanding school improvement as a process. In addition, school improvement goals can be realised if change is understood and accepted by the stakeholders; the preferred leadership is promoted; the school improvement initiatives are understood by all in the system, and the strategies to run improvement are in place.

In the next sections the researcher will discuss these issues by advancing information from a range of sources, including what research has to say in relation to them.

#### **2.4.2. Conceptualising school improvement as a form of reform**

In educational settings reforms occur as the need for improvement is initiated (Schechter & Ganon-Shilon 2015:63). School reform has to do with bringing about changes in the schools and school improvement as a form of reform requires careful management. In turn, the management of change requires reasons, policies and processes for the change to be comprehended. According to Hoy et al. (2000:24), improvement can be carried out and repeated at different levels but it is necessary to agree on the justifications, procedures, policies and processes for the improvement. This is an essential step in working towards improvement. In other words, if a school has a problem in helping its students and satisfying the community, then it becomes apparent that change or renewal is required. That change

should be on planned agreements about the processes of the change. Unless the planned change is agreed upon and shared by the parties who are to be involved in the implementation of the change, it would be difficult to realise the goal of the intended change (Dunaway, Bird, Wang & Hancock 2014:469). Besides, there are certain principles to be met/ followed for school reform to be realised. Perlman (2007:54-59) identified a number of principles of school reform. Some of these include, "preparation for change; assessing each school's strengths and needs; weighing the alternatives; developing a plan, and allocating resources strategically". Moreover, it is important to make support mechanisms available for the success of the reform initiative (Tang, Lu & Hallinger 2014:669).

Preparation for change requires having a clear vision about what the school looks like after the reform, and requires a leader who is empowered as a change agent; improvement teams at different levels; the involvement of the whole-school community, and sufficient time to develop a plan (Perlman 2007:54; Santos 2012:3; Tang et al. 2014:656). The plans to be developed should be based on an assessment of what strengths the school has and what it needs to perform better. There may be too many needs, and prioritising must then be done in respect of the set of needs. All the processes should necessarily involve the whole school community, at least through delegates/representatives, and a plan for improvement should be developed. It is this assumption that leads to the exploration of the experiences of the school community regarding the outcomes of SIP. Besides, enacting the plan and making it practical requires the provision of human, financial and material resources (Santos 2012:3). At this point it is worth mentioning that the leadership as activator of the change process is expected to play certain critical roles (Hallinger & Huber 2012:355).

Thus, the next section dwells on the leadership requirements for school improvement.

### **2.4.3. Leadership requirements for school improvement**

Research indicates that leadership capacity to manage change is critical for school improvement (Marsh 2015:72). Besides, Heck and Hallinger (2009:661), Cravens and

Hallinger (2012:159) and Abbott (2015:145) emphasise that leadership is a key to realise school improvement. Research also points out that there exists a cause-effect relationship between school improvement and leadership (Heck & Hallinger 2009:661). This requires that leadership in schools should have a clear vision of what the school will look like after carrying out efforts of improving the school. This vision should also be owned by all who are concerned with the school's undertakings. Harris and Muijs (2005:15) explain the role of leadership as initiating change by providing the necessary vision and support for bringing about improvement in the school. They also note that leadership and school improvement are highly interrelated. Moreover, schools which improve and become effective are also characterised by strong school-wide leadership (Hofman & Hofman 2011:621; Sullivan 2009:463) and a shared vision. Having a shared vision, leadership in schools should aim at giving direction and assistance to the school community (Anderson, Mascall, Stiegebauer & Park 2012:427). This facilitates accomplishing the intended targets of the change. As studies on school improvement prove, leadership determines the schools' capability to improve (Abbott 2015:146; Dumay & Galand 2012:703; Harris & Muijs 2005:13). Studies further stress that leadership in schools need to create positive relationships in the school community (Pollock & Winton 2012:18).

Furthermore, in the schools the principals are supposed to take the responsibility of increasing trust among the school community by working in collaboration with the communities and becoming pedagogical leaders (Arlesting & Tornsen 2014:857). Gordon (2004:166) also observes that it is critical for the principals to build trust among the staff. They can do this by making the planning process collaborative. The improvement plans are expected to be prepared in consultation with the community members by giving them comprehensible direction on what and how the planning should be done. This requires from the principal to have the necessary skills and to work together with the teachers, the students, the parents and the other stakeholders (Pine 2009:99). It is also important to promote shared decision-making which is crucial to keeping up with change. As Ho (2010:613) made it clear, leadership also needs to be receptive to the ideas that come from grassroots.

Moreover, Hopkins (2005:7) insists that the decentralisation of roles is a requirement for schools to take over the school's improvement activities. Accordingly, roles need to be assigned to the school community so that each member may have his/her own responsibility. To realise the ambition of seeing improved schools and student achievement, the schools need to exercise a democratic form of leadership, which Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008:81) refer to as "leadership that is 'devolved,' 'dispersed,' 'shared', 'teamed' and 'democratic'".

Similarly, Harris and Muijs (2005:14) also emphasise the fact that school improvement requires the leadership to be the responsibility of all in the school and, as Marsh (2015:72) asserts, school leadership needs to be linked to the improvement initiatives of the schools. The teaching and non-teaching staff, the students and their parents need to participate in the improvement process. Together they have to make decisions that affect the school. If this happens in the schools, it means that everybody is sharing the responsibility equally, and are all accountable for whatever happens. However, it is true that collaboration results in a greater success than do individual attempts. In addition, Raynor (2004:152) discusses distributed leadership as leadership that is based on a group activity in which all the members of the school community jointly and equally participate. It is the role played by all the members of the school community, and not by a single person. In this case, school leadership is not the responsibility of only the principal or somebody else. It is a joint effort of the entire school community.

Furthermore, if leadership is distributed it means that decision-making is shared. In such cases, school activities become enjoyable for all involved in the process of improving the schools. Pont et al. (2008:32) state that this is important because participation in decision-making has an impact on the motivation of the staff in the school. It also influences the school climate within which teaching and learning takes place. Of course, the teachers will be motivated if they participate in decision-making. Thus, leadership needs to involve the whole school community in decisions that affect both the community and the functioning of the school.



Moreover, Ghamrawi (2010:315) explains *teacher leadership* as teachers engaging in dialogue with their colleagues and sharing ideas to solve problems. Besides, in schools where the teachers play different leadership roles, the performance of the schools becomes better. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, in Harris and Muijs 2005:23) distinguish the aspects of teacher leadership as:

- the leadership of students or other teachers;
- the leadership of operational tasks; and
- leadership through decision-making or partnerships.

These are essential leadership roles that can be played by the teachers to attain school improvement targets through administrative support (Firestone 2014:103). The teachers need to feel that they are working to improve the school. They have to engage in the mentoring of beginner teachers; they have to work as unit leaders and discipline committee members; and they have to actively participate in PTAs and other school improvement-oriented activities. Harris and Muijs (2005:61) further underscore the importance of collaboration that occurs if teacher leadership is promoted. The teachers become teammates and they develop improvement goals if they participate in decision-making. This, in turn, makes them use diverse strategies of teaching.

Thus, collaboration as mentioned above will have a motivating effect. The teachers, if motivated, can learn and introduce new methods that may help to improve the quality of teaching and learning which results in improved student achievement. Collaboration also helps the teachers to master the necessary skills. It has been indicated that "...if teachers possess sufficient knowledge and skill...students' performance will improve" (Gokce 2010:498). The teachers become risk-takers and work for the achievement of the school's goals. If the schools move toward collaboration among the teachers, they will be at the advantage of making the teachers exert all their effort in the school's improvement initiatives (Gordon 2004:15). This is justified in the quotation as follows,

"Teachers are more able to implement new ideas within the context of supportive collaborative relationships or partnerships. By working collaboratively, teachers

are able to consider the different ways in which the subject matter can be taught” (Harris & Muijs 2005:61).

Creating a collaborative environment encourages the teachers to become collaborative and it causes them to employ new ways of doing things and teaching their subjects. This assists the schools in becoming more effective. The importance of decentralising decision-making and increasing collaboration in the education system, as Rabichund (2011:112) states, is that the decisions will be based on local contexts and they increase the commitment and partnership of the school community. In line with this, an important issue to be given consideration is the time to be spent on important school matters by the teachers, the principals and the supervisors. The principals and the supervisors are responsible to play instructional leadership roles. They have to devise different strategies and support the teachers in the school (Smith & Engel 2013:107).

Nevertheless, from my experience it seems that the principals spend a lot of time on less important routine activities which are initiated by political affiliates. But, the principals ought to have sufficient time to support those in the school and to communicate with the parents and the community so as to facilitate the students' learning. This observation is substantiated by Pont et al. (2008:10) where they underline the fact that the principals as instructional leaders need the time as well as the capacity to contribute to practices that positively affect teaching and learning. In addition, Terosky (2014:27) also argues that principals might be working in a compelling and challenging environment, yet they have to strive to create positive learning environments. It seems acceptable that the schools should have the autonomy to decide and to be responsible for improvements, but this may not be sufficient for realising improved leadership and school activities. Autonomy given to the schools does not need to make the schools and the principals focus on less important matters. Regarding this, Pont et al. (2008:43) warn that autonomy does not guarantee improved leadership. While making the schools autonomous, it is crucial to give them activities with a clearly defined scope. Accordingly, the principal plays his role within that scope. This probably makes the schools to play improvement roles which they are expected to accomplish.

The suggestion is that priorities ought to be in place and the school principals should act accordingly. They should not waste time on less important matters. There are domains which can be of assistance for the schools to improve and the focus of the principals should also be on them. Thus, school autonomy needs to make the principals spend time on 'core' activities. They should concentrate on supporting instruction among the other relevant domains so as to enhance the students' learning. This vision cannot be realised if the autonomy of the schools results in the wasting of time on less relevant activities which may take their attention away from the process of instruction. However, there are times and situations which dictate those in the school to spend their time more on other aspects than on instructional leadership which is the key to improving teaching and learning in the schools.

Finally, various studies have been conducted on school improvement and leadership. Hallinger and Huber (2012:359) referred to the "historical context of leadership and identified various links between leadership practices and outcomes, as well as different models of leadership". The effect of leadership and the decision-making process are issues that need to receive attention. If the leadership capacity is not built, it will be difficult to achieve the school improvement targets. As discussed above, studies also indicate that decision-making should also involve those who take part in the implementation of improvement activities to realise the expected changes. Realising the importance of leadership, Thoonen, Slegers, Oort and Peetsma (2012:441) also insisted that building leadership capacity is the starting point to realise school-wide improvement. This is important because school improvement cannot be realised if the leadership capacity to implement the change is weak.

Other studies tried to identify those factors that would have either a positive or a negative effect on school improvement initiatives. For instance, Makoelle (2011:266) has clearly identified the administrative and leadership functions of school management that will have either a positive or a negative impact on school improvement. If there is poor functioning in relation to the important issues discussed above, bringing about improvement in any school system might be a challenge.

This section presented relevant details on school leadership and stressed the fact that it is an important factor that affects the functioning of schools. Thus, understanding the experiences

of the school community in relation to how school leadership affects the school improvement process and the effectiveness of the schools is important.

The next section presents some experiences on school improvement approaches by relating information from school improvement initiatives of specific countries.

#### **2.4.4. School improvement initiatives: Some experiences of school improvement approaches**

The literature on school improvement shows that there are different approaches to school improvement, though there is little indication of what really works. Researchers also argue that there is ambiguity regarding what needs to be improved (Caputo & Rastelli 2014:73; Ng 2011:463; Wallace 2005:147). There is no universally-agreed upon procedure that effects the improvement of schools. This indicates that it is possible to find a number of approaches but there is no guarantee of the achievement of the intended target using the approaches. At the same time, it is recognisable that countries and specific schools always try out different approaches by engaging in change processes based on the improvement needs they have. They do this by identifying their needs and then setting priorities for implementation.

Yet, researchers suggest that there are non-negotiable elements in school improvement programs. Harris and Muijs (2005:132) stress that in the schools which are considered as being effective, there are non-optional elements which have become the focus of the schools. They identified the elements as:

- a central focus on teaching and learning;
- a commitment to meaningful professional development; and
- distributed forms of (teacher) leadership.

Schools should focus on teaching and learning and make it effective so as to improve the students' results. However, this cannot be realised if there is no meaningful professional development of the teachers and if the leadership is not distributed to invite the school community to work towards a common goal. School improvement programs in different

countries share common aims, objectives and characteristics. This is observed as the goals and intents of school improvement initiatives and they have certain similarities across the world (Rabichund 2011:91).

The Ministries of Education in various countries have identified different models, domains and/or characteristics of school improvement. For instance, the Australian School Improvement Framework addresses four domains of school improvement as “learning and teaching; leading and managing; student environment and community involvement” (ACT Department of Education and Training 2009:3). These domains are almost similar to the SIP domains identified by the Ethiopian MoE which are illustrated in detail in chapter three, section 3.3.1. The schools in Ethiopia are expected to see to their own needs in line with the four domains which have actually been identified by the collaborative efforts of MoE, REBs and Teacher Education Institutions. The MoE (2008:41) emphasises that based on the outlined domains, the schools conduct self-evaluation with the participation of the stakeholders, and identify their own school improvement needs. After setting their priorities, they develop a SIP plan and implement the plan.

The domains in the Ethiopian SIP and the Australian School Improvement Framework are also in some way similar to the approaches of school improvement which were described by Ng (2011:464). The approaches/domains in the different countries include:

- engaging teachers in CPD and perfecting their instructional techniques and leadership skills;
- assessing students' learning;
- initiating policy documents and plans related to the improvement processes;
- implementing recognition strategies for best performances, and
- introducing improvement data management systems.

Furthermore, the philosophy of the South African School Improvement Model described by Khosa (2010:2) incorporates many dimensions about what should be taken into consideration while initiating school improvement programs. The researcher discusses the fact that

improvement initiatives without ambiguity and based on the principle of management by fact, developed through the full participation of the school community, and implemented by making the necessary resources available, can achieve the intended target in specific schools as well as in the education system (Khosa 2010:2).

This implies that school improvements should be initiated based on evidence; there must be stakeholders' participation, and there also exists a need to have adequate resources of various types. In other words, if the stakeholders are not aware of the initiated change, if appropriate resources are not in place or initially, if the change is not evidence-based, then it may be difficult to realise the expected goals of changes. Side-by-side to setting the approaches to improve the schools, it is important to think of strategies of school improvement.

Hence, it becomes important to realise some strategies of school improvement which are discussed below.

#### **2.4.5. Strategies of school improvement**

The literature on school improvement indicates that there is no one way to improve schools, and it seems that there are a number of ways to work for improvement (Ng 2011:463; Wallace 2005:147). This leads to the confusion to what needs to be used to bring about improvement and what effects can be achieved. However, this does not imply that the schools need not think of some strategies for improvement. School improvement as a reform requires executing certain strategies for its success. These strategies need to be developed based on need assessment (Creemers & Kyriakides 2015:110). Schools can think of ways to improve themselves, but if those thoughts and initial ideas are not altered to a plan, they will not be taken hold of and the schools will not be improved. In line with development of school improvement plans, it is imperative for the schools to engage those to be involved in school improvement activities in professional development tricks so as to make the school community become capable of carrying out its responsibility (Gordon 2004: xi). On the other hand, the implementation of what is planned always requires monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring helps to track problems as early as possible and give direction to take curative measures. Evaluation also should be carried out with a purpose of identifying strengths and weaknesses for the necessary further actions (MoE 2010a:54-58).

The next sub-sections discuss the planning of school improvement, professional development, and monitoring and evaluation as strategies for school improvement. However, the leadership component is not included as part of the sub-sections as it is dealt with separately, for it affects the whole school improvement process, including planning, professional development, monitoring and evaluation.

#### 2.4.5.1. A school improvement plan

A *plan* is a means to achieve the school's improvement targets. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2000:6) puts forward a school improvement plan as "a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement, and shows how and when these changes will be made" by raising questions such as "What does the school want to improve?" "How can these be carried out?" "Who is going to perform what and when?" and "What is the intended goal of the actions?".

These are essential questions to be answered by means of the school improvement plan. The answers to the questions will give the school an idea about what to do when, how, by whom and what results to expect. The MoE (2008:44) indicates that in the process of preparing their plans for improvement, the schools assess their needs and set priorities for improvement. The planning process helps the schools to identify their priorities from the many needs they have, though there is always ambiguity regarding what works to improve the schools (Caputo & Rastelli 2014:73). The focus needs to be on those areas that need improvement because they are affecting teaching and learning more than the other factors/needs. Setting priorities is needed because the schools cannot improve everything at once or overnight. Thus, improvement is a stepwise process. The level of participation of stakeholders in the planning process also influences the implementation of the plan (Dunaway et al. 2014:469). If the level of participation is high, it is more likely that the plan will achieve its target.

It is recognised that school improvements target improving student achievement and the ultimate goal of the plan needs to focus on this core issue. Accordingly, the improvement plans need to focus on specific issues that will have a greater impact on student achievement, and this helps the schools to attain real changes (Ontario Ministry of Education 2000:6). This is also clearly emphasised in Ethiopian MoE's GEQIP and SIP documents.

Thus, there are important issues that need attention during the planning process because they affect teaching and learning more than the other factors. Schools should be given the opportunity to exercise a reasonable amount of autonomy as they produce their own plans even though they can be guided by instructions and manuals produced by the central offices or the regional bureaus. However, they should not entirely depend on centrally-produced documents as they may have certain context specific needs. While stressing minimising externally-imposed planning strategies, Wallace (2005:166) claims that the improvement plans need to be logical and more flexible to the local requirements. The logic here has to do with the school's specific context, and the planning is expected to accommodate the local situations of the school.

A similar notion is held by the Ethiopian MoE, namely that the priorities of the school improvement plans should be based on the context of each school (MoE 2011a:5). The solutions which are sought by the schools also need to be complex enough to address the real needs and the problems at school level. This point is strengthened by Wallace (2005) where he says that schools operate under complex situations, and the problems they face are also complex. Solving the problems requires innovative approaches in planning for improvement and in seeking complex solutions (Wallace 2005:166). In simple terms, the complexity level of the problems in the schools leads to due consideration for the solutions that can help to solve the problems. Thus, if the problem is complex, the solution also needs to be complex.

Earlier in this section, it has been noted that the concerned stakeholders should participate in school improvement planning. In the process, it is highly essential to ensure the full participation of the teachers who play a major role in carrying out the improvement activities.



This determines the very success of school improvement. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2000:15) indicates that improving student achievement requires the greater participation of the teachers in the improvement process. This is because the teachers play critical roles in the planning of the improvement and they will have a greater impact on the students' day-to-day learning. Thus, the involvement of the teachers in the planning process makes them have a sense of ownership of the improvement process, and this is critical for success.

Furthermore, the literature gives an answer to the question, "What can teachers do during school improvement planning"? The Ontario Ministry of Education (2000:15) listed the following in respect of what the teachers can do in the planning of school improvement, namely

- actively participate and assume leadership roles in establishing priorities, in setting goals, and formulating implementation strategies for the plan;
- work closely with the school councils and the parents to implement the plan;
- ensure that the classroom strategies for improvement address the needs of the students;
- assess the students in different ways, and develop strategies for improving the level of the students' achievement;
- support the evaluation of the plan by providing up-to-date information on the students' learning, the school environment, and parental feedback;
- set and pursue professional development goals that focus on the goals and strategies identified in the plan.

The teachers need to be consulted while setting priorities and they should work in collaboration with the whole school staff. They also have to look at the compatibility of their classroom strategies and assessment methods for improvement in addressing the needs of diverse learners. Remedial actions can also easily be taken if the teachers participate in monitoring and evaluating the improvement plan. Indeed, the teachers should also plan and participate in those professional development activities that can enhance the implementation of the strategies in the plan. In addition, the oE (2011a:6) also stresses that the students need

to actively participate in improvement planning as they are the stakeholders who are highly affected by what happens in the school.

The students have to be allowed to take part in the planning process. They should understand what they are expected to do in order to contribute to the improvement process. The schools can incorporate representatives of the students to participate in the planning process. This will also have a multiplying effect as those who participated in the planning process can easily explain what they know to other students. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2000:16), having the students participate in identifying priorities for improvement, and setting the improvement goals and strategies will facilitate their communication with other students and their parents. Besides, their participation during the planning process will maximise their engagement later to achieve the improvement goals. The ideas discussed so far are also suggested by Makoelle (2011:266). He emphasised factors such as sound planning and the effective implementation of the plan at various levels through the contribution of all the stakeholders as important to realise improvement. Thus, it is agreed that participation of all the stakeholders during the planning stage is a critical element for success.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind the recommendations of The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006:1-3) which cites several common mistakes in the school improvement planning process. These include:

- An improvement committee which does not have the right members: The improvement planning team members should consist of members from all the stakeholders but their number should not be too large. If the team includes the wrong members then the plan will not accomplish the target.
- A plan that is non-selective: The objectives are expected to be achievable, but if too many issues are included in the plan, it will be difficult to achieve all of them in a satisfactory way. The plan should be based on specific objectives which can be attained after exerting realistic efforts by the school community. The number of goals to be set in the plan should not exceed what the school is capable to achieve at that particular time and in that context.

- Plans which lack follow-up during implementation: The preparation of a plan should not be taken as an end in itself. There must be a continuous review of follow-up (monitoring) and evaluation. This helps to take corrective measures as timely as possible.

To sum up, to be effective, the school improvement plan should be produced in collaboration with the concerned parties and the relevant stakeholders who work in collaboration with each other. The plan should also be realistic enough so that the goals stated in it can easily be attained. The entire process again, needs to be examined and if necessary, amendments should be made.

This section dealt with the school improvement plan together with the essential considerations while preparing the plan.

The next section sheds light on professional development and shows why it is important, and how it is linked to school improvement.

#### 2.4.5.2. Professional development

“Good professional development is school improvement. You can’t get the one without the other” (Gordon 2004:xi).

I introduced this section with a quotation from Gordon’s book which is named ‘Professional Development for School Improvement’. Professional development is a means to prepare the school community to take on their responsibility. As Gordon (2004:xi) and Castle and Buckler (2009:64) explain, professional development entails an intentional takeover to empower the school community on school-focused activities so as to bring about school improvement. The school community refers to the students, teachers, parents, and the school management team – the principals and the supervisors. The school community needs to be empowered to take over and manage the improvement process (Sweeney 2005:2).

The focus of school improvement, in many cases, is on improving the students' achievement. Consequently, any form of professional development that takes place in the schools should have as its aim helping the staff to improve the students' achievement (Pine 2009:92), and it should be related to the school's priorities (Neil & Morgan 2003:4). Thus, the students' achievement should be used to inform the professional developmental needs of the teachers in the schools. Staff development initiatives which take place in the schools need to be linked to the students' results, and they should help the schools to focus on critical issues that can contribute to the success of the students (Cawelti & Protheroe 2007:46). In turn, the teachers need to notice their knowledge gap as well as the students' expectations, and engage in learning to improve themselves (Tew 2007:3). This requires from the teachers to engage in collaborative teamwork based on some specific guidelines (Semadeni 2009:32).

Moreover, the professional development activities of the teachers in the schools should primarily be of a continuous kind, and they may not necessarily be concerned with getting further degrees (MoE 2008:6). These activities should assist the teachers to change their day-to-day activities to improve the students' achievements. Without providing support and giving the teachers the chance to play leadership roles, it would be difficult to involve the teachers in professional development activities that may help to improve instruction (Semadeni 2009:51). For that reason it is crucial to note that schools need to expect that the teachers take part in improvement initiatives by providing them with the necessary support and making them engage in professional development (Cawelti & Protheroe 2007:49). This makes clear that the leadership team in the schools needs to help the teachers to organise their own CPD concerns and relate them to the school priorities for the year (Neil & Morgan 2003:4). The teachers can engage in peer observation as well as beyond the school-level sharing of experience to perfect their classroom practices. Besides, the beginner teachers in the schools need to engage in induction. On this point, Pogodzinski (2014:467) emphasises that supporting novice teachers enhances school effectiveness.

Another way of promoting the professional development in the schools is by establishing professional learning communities. According to Putman (2012:48), professional learning communities help the teachers to manage their classrooms effectively and to play a leading

role in the reform processes of the schools. They can plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the improvement processes. The view by Osula and Ideboen (2010:146) is also worth considering that school-wide improvement can only occur if the teachers embark on every action that can help them to improve the classroom practices. This becomes a reality if the teachers in the schools are engaged in being a professional learning community (Adey 2004:7). Thus, the schools can improve their performance if the teachers in the school share their experiences, and if they also engage in professional learning from each other (Yendol-Hoppey, Dana & Hirsh 2010:6). Their contributions to the schools' efforts to improve may make them feel that they are participating in leadership. This may work as a principle for the whole school community. As Putman (2012:48) says, professional learning communities promote exercising dispersed leadership and they lead to a common understanding of the beliefs regarding the goals and strategies of improvement among the parents, the teachers and the students.

In line with this, the MoE (2008:24) also clarified that teachers need to engage in collaborative learning from each other. Putman (2012:51) further elaborates that professional development activities give emphasis to bringing together the school community as well as the other stakeholders, and make them collaborate to execute the improvement activities. This is where the achievement of the goals starts. All the members in the school system will take ownership of the school improvement targets because they know what is important and how it can be done (Adey 2004:143).

Additional point to note is that professional development requires creating learning networks. Focused networks are considered as important for the entire school's development. Giving emphasis to this, Katz, Earl and Jaffar (2009:65) stress that learning networks can help the school community to revisit their beliefs and assumptions about improvement process, and to clarify ambiguities. Learning networks need to have a clear goal to strive for. If the goals of the networks are unclear to those involved in the networking, then it means that change or improvement cannot be realised. During networking, it is crucial that the goals of the networking are clear and visible to all those involved in the process of improvement (Katz et al. 2009:65).

Besides, professional development involves the sharing of experiences within the school and outside of the school. The teachers can engage in this experience-sharing. At school level, as Kyriakides et al. (2014:87) clearly explicate, peer discussion among the teachers helps them solve most of the problems they face, and contributes to the better performance of the schools. This causes the teachers to feel that their beliefs are accepted and this minimises chance of program failures (Lotter & Rushton 2013:1264). Research suggests that networking in the schools can be a means of helping the schools to develop. Lee, Luis and Anderson (2012:133) suggest that the networking of schools and helping them to share experiences is a better way of learning than merely using data to make improvement-related decisions at district level. It seems that with this understanding the idea of clustering schools to facilitate experience-sharing and student-learning is already in place in Ethiopian schools. However, the above researchers suggest that this is an area to be researched further.

An additional point to note is that whenever the issue of the staff's and the students' development is raised, it is also crucial to focus equally on the development of both the teachers and the students. The schools need to focus on the development and empowerment of the students in and beyond the schools. If it is agreed that development can be in the form of empowering the students, the students need to be developed/empowered so that they may be responsible for their own learning and future citizenship. It means that they also need to be engaged in the development activities. To explain the point, Gordon (2004:12) elaborates that student empowerment is enabling the students through their psycho-social and physical development so that they become responsible for their own learning and their leadership duties. Thus, the empowering or developing of students is explained as

“... enabling the students to facilitate each other's development...empowerment to lead includes enabling the students to engage in individual and collaborative leadership at the classroom, school and eventually community and societal levels” (Gordon 2004:12).

The schools can take advantage of the above explanation as they attempt to improve the school's functions. The students can easily be engaged in their learning if they are aware of the school's and the community's expectations of them. The students have to know how to

support other students. Besides, the issues that worry the schools will not seem so important if the students take part in the teaching and learning and leadership activities. Both the students and the teachers need to be empowered to teach and to lead (Gordon 2004:xi; Tew 2007:3).

#### 2.4.5.3. Monitoring and evaluating school improvement

The monitoring and evaluation of school improvement have a purpose. Monitoring helps to take curative measures. Evaluation has additional purposes. It is mainly concerned with appreciating the final achievements. In the Ethiopian SIP, a specific standard is used to measure the overall goal of school improvement. It is stated as, “Teachers achieve measureable improvements in students’ results” as they implement SIP (MoE 2010a:14). This standard cannot easily be achieved without performing a series of school improvement activities. While performing the activities, there is also a need to monitor and evaluate the achievement of the program. There should also be a series of short-term evaluations that may help to make the necessary adjustments and to take remedial actions. “In school improvement plans, the completion of each of these short-term evaluation cycles offers an opportunity to revisit goals, adjust strategies, and check for student progress. Effective planners build on these cycles as the plan is being written...” (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement 2006:3).

Moreover, the monitoring and evaluation activities should not be the responsibility of only those at the district/zone/woreda education offices. The schools can also be actively involved in these activities. The MoE (2010a:45) states that the schools need to do self-evaluation to recognise their strengths and weaknesses in the performance areas of “excelling, implementing, developing and establishing”, as indicated in the School Improvement Framework. It is also advisable for the schools to use benchmarks while monitoring and evaluating the improvement programs, and conducting self-evaluation. Rabichund (2011:114) indicated that the schools need to evaluate themselves against external criteria. This can be by taking the achievements of better performing schools as benchmark and comparing it with their own evaluation results. If the schools fail to look beyond themselves, their improvement

initiatives will be less likely to bring about results that may help them to be in competition with other schools.

The fact that different schools perform differently results in achievement differences. Poorly performing schools should use the achievements and the processes undertaken by better-performing schools as benchmark to arrive at those achievements. Those schools that have achieved better should build on the experience of the schools in other areas/regions/countries that performed better when they evaluate themselves. Finally, Harris (2002:46-47) explains that judgements regarding the success or failure of a program can be done by raising questions such as:

- What have been the outcomes after introducing the change?
- Have there been outcomes which are unintended?
- To what extent has the reform improved the school?
- What further improvements should be made?

These questions may indicate that evaluation can be used to look into the real benefits of the reform; whether there are unintended outcomes or not, and to decide subsequent changes to be made based on the evaluation results. Finally, as MacBeath (2006:18) argues, the intention of the school in managing change cannot be achieved without the building-capacity of the school, namely through the self-evaluation of important matters related to the changing process and the improvement initiatives.

In the above sections the researcher aimed to present the concept of school improvement, conceptualising school improvement as a reform, the leadership requirements for school improvement, some experiences related to school improvement initiatives, and the strategies for school improvement.

The next section will indicate how school improvement enhances school effectiveness.



## **2.5. HOW CAN THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL ENHANCE THE SCHOOL'S EFFECTIVENESS?**

Above I indicated that school improvement is a change or a reform which requires that the schools engage in a process that will help them to achieve their goals, which is maximising the students' achievement. The question now is, "How can the improvement of the school enhance the school's effectiveness?" This question needs an understanding of the link between the improvement of the school and the school's effectiveness. When the schools are engaged in the improvement of their leadership and the competence of the teachers and when they focus on the learning of all the students by making the school's environment suitable for them, they are causing the school to exhibit characteristics of effective schools, which have been discussed under the sub-topic 'School effectiveness'. Research shows that school improvement is a path to achieve school effectiveness. There are, however, similarities and differences that can be identified between the two. "...There are some important distinctions and relationships between school effectiveness and school improvement that can be identified" (Townsend 2007:3).

As the schools improve they become more effective. Makoelle (2011:7) indicates that the concepts *school effectiveness* and *school improvement* run parallel to each other. It is the improvement process that will bring about the effectiveness. Macbeath (2007:10) mentions that school improvement is a continuous process of enhancing the effectiveness of the school. This effectiveness is reflected in student achievement and the better performance of the school in leadership, staff development, the parents' involvement, decision-making processes, a teaching and learning and school environment which all together will lead to better achievements. Similarly, Teddlie and Reynolds (2000:6) conceive that schools that are improving themselves continually set goals and work towards their attainment and the enhancement of their effectiveness.

Research has previously concentrated on effective school improvement theories and models showing that there is a link between school effectiveness and the school improvement processes (Scheerens 2013; Scheerens & Demeuse 2005; Wikeley & Murillo 2005).

Scheerens (2013:1) found that researchers in the field of effective school improvement have been working on theory-based issues and the improvement of models related to school improvement. Similarly, in an earlier study, Wikeley and Murillo (2005:355) found that school effectiveness gives emphasis to the theoretical aspects whereas school improvement focuses on practical issues. Though there is a need for practice-oriented research which looks into practical issues like investigating pathways and processes to school effectiveness, there is also a need to synergise the theoretical and practical aspects. That means there is a need to link school improvement with school effectiveness.

Ali (2004:1) asserts that, "School improvement research aims to determine if improvement processes result in greater effectiveness". School improvement gives attention to broader issues in the wider school environment and specific classroom instruction-related practices that affect teaching and learning. However, both approaches have been condemned for lacking methodological rigor. The need exists to combine school improvement with the effect it has on the students' outcomes (Ali 2004:1-2).

Scheerens and Demeuse (2005:373) described the principles relevant for effective school improvement such as "goal-setting for improvement, pressure to improve, cyclical improvement processes, and autonomy". This indicates that having a planned goal, interest and pushing factors to improve including school autonomy are important factors for effective school improvement. On the other hand, Creemers and Reezgit (2005:359) distinguished between school effectiveness and school improvement, and developed a framework for effective school improvement. They found that school improvement initiatives in all the countries have the following common characteristics:

- All had the school as the target for improvement and, therefore, as a unit of analysis.
- Ultimately they all intend to change, or to improve, the students' outcomes.
- All had intermediate goals in respect of the teacher, the curriculum, and the school organisation in order to achieve their ultimate goals.
- Information was available about the process.

They also described the students' outcomes as an effectiveness criterion, and school capacity to manage change as an improvement criterion. From the above it can be seen that school improvement initiatives often focus on the students' achievements, which again is linked to school effectiveness. Besides, the models discussed above on how to assess school effectiveness are linked with the improvement process of the schools.

The next section presents the theoretical framework that was adapted and used in this study.

## **2.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY**

For this study, I adapted and used the model of Theory of Change as developed by Gold et al. (2009). The model indicates that there is a strong link between the capacity of the school community and school improvement. *School community* refers to both the *internal to school* community and the *outside of school* community, which includes the students, the teachers, the parents, the administrators and the other staff members (Gold et al. 2009:244; Redding 1991:9). School improvement as a change process or a reform requires active participation of the school community by changing the existing school culture, and making the school community take the initiative to bring improvement in the schools. This requires the school community to take responsibility with an understanding that they are accountable for the outcomes. The theory of change model depicted that acting responsibly and accountably, the school community can run school improvement activities which will enhance school effectiveness. Thus, the theory of change model has enabled the researcher to explain the variables school community, educational outcomes, school improvement and school effectiveness.

Building the capacity of the school communities involves empowering them so that they may become active participants in the school's affairs and manage change. The school improvement processes and school effectiveness are the result of changing the school culture, of making shared decisions, high parental/family involvement, performing duties based on accountability principles, improving the learning environment, and the teaching and

learning processes. These are concepts that enabled me to look into the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness.

The next sub-sections discuss the relevance of these dimensions and show how they are related to school improvement and effectiveness.

### **2.6.1. School culture**

“A school culture that supports student learning should be promoted both within each classroom and in the school as a whole” (Danielson 2002:53).

Schools should work together to promote a culture that supports the learning of all the students. Moreover, Peterson and Deal (2003:8) state that a *school culture* is what the students conceive as being positive or negative about the school, more than merely the rules or procedures, namely that which the staff members consciously or intuitively begin to interpret, the norms and rituals of the school. It also includes talks about informal cultural networks. Bush (2010b:7) further explains that a *school culture* also has to do with the beliefs and values held by the school community. In addition, according to Raynor (2004:120), a school culture is the way the members of the school community relate to each other and the communication strategies they use to share ideas. In this case, *culture* is understood to be a prevailing practice in the schools.

The school culture affects what the schools do because of the associated practices in the schools and the beliefs of those who work in the schools. As Peterson and Deal (2003:9) explicitly state, the school culture affects whatever takes place in the schools. The researchers (Peterson & Deal 2003:10) listed the following aspects and values (among many) of the staff in the schools that may influence the school’s improvement efforts, namely

- whether they believe improvement is important;
- whether they prefer to work in teams or individually;
- the level of trust among the staff members and the school administrators;
- whether they feel accountable for the students’ learning;
- how motivated they are to work hard;

- what they think when the learners do not do well;
- how they behave in the passages, the lounges, and at meetings;
- what they talk/gossip about in public/private;
- the extent of support they give to colleagues;
- whom they go to for information/ideas or help;
- what they think about students and colleagues who act differently from them;
- whether they consider that all students are able to learn;
- whether they imagine that all the students' capacities are determined by their backgrounds, and
- whether they utilize the data on the students' learning in their everyday planning.

When changes are introduced in the schools, it is vital to create a sense of ownership. Whether the change is owned or not by the school community affects the effectiveness of the school. The schools have to take the responsibility for changing what existed earlier as a culture, and the responsibility lies with the leadership. It is the leadership that can create a collaborative working environment and build the capacity of the staff, the parents and the students to be motivated.

Noting the fact that culture influences everything, Gordon (2004:164) puts forward that school reform primarily needs to focus on changing the prevailing traditional practices in the school rather than other improvement efforts. As soon as change is introduced, the schools should continue to work on ways of altering the existing culture. They need to recognise that empowering the school community for effective participation in the implementation of school improvement requires changing the existing culture. Unless the school culture is changed, it will be difficult to achieve the intended targets of the change process due to the fact that a source of resistance to reforms in schools is found to be the existing school culture (Gold et al. 2009:243).

In addition, the culture in the schools should be changed into a culture of continuous improvement. Gordon (2004:164) recorded three issues that are needed to develop and maintain a culture of continuous improvement as follows: the members of the school community need to engage in an ongoing significant analysis of their behaviours, values, and

primary assumptions; they have to continuously picture the ideal learning environment for all the students, and collaboratively plan, implement, modify and integrate amendments aimed at continuous improvement.

Changing the school culture is very important for student learning to take place. Unless the ways of thinking are changed, it will be difficult to realise the changes in the functioning of the schools and the students' achievements. Gordon (2004:164), for example, stresses the fact that the schools should be involved in changing their traditional culture, and should promote continuous improvement. This requires changing the existing practice in the schools through the participation of various members in the school system as well as the collaboration of those outside the system. This is emphasised by Fullan (2001, in Gordon 2004:164) where he stated that changes to the school culture take place within the school itself through outside support. This entails that the educational officers and concerned stakeholders continuously need to support those in the school system so that change can be realised from the inside. This will likely result in the values the school community should own. Raynor (2004:121) supports this idea by saying that the schools need to work to the extent of realising practical changes beyond stating their vision regarding school culture.

Changes in the school's culture demands the creation of proper awareness. Studies indicate that workshops and training sessions on the creation of awareness should be given to those who are involved in the change process. For example, Alaba (2010:159) recommended that for school improvements to be effective, the schools need to conduct workshops and training sessions to redirect the existing beliefs in the minds of the school community. This recommendation leads to the fact that the students' achievements will be maximised if those persons who implement the change receive the appropriate training and participate in the change process. As part of the building of a school community, Gordon (2004:191) suggests that for the full commitment by the school community, there has to be shared decision-making.

### **2.6.2. Shared decision-making: Key leadership roles**

The school communities need to work in a teamwork environment to achieve the school's improvement targets. There is collaboration if there is feeling of ownership of the change process among the school community. It is the decision-making process that facilitates or hinders the feeling of ownership of the school improvement activities by the school community. This fact is confirmed by Putman (2012:1) and Hofman and Hofman (2011:620) namely that effective school leaders are the ones who recognise that improving the schools is not the responsibility of only one person. Besides, the quality of decisions will be affected by who is involved in the decision-making process and this will, in turn, affect the change initiative. Furthermore, Gordon (2004:166) points to the following four primary reasons for shared decision-making in schools.

- Better decisions will be made if the principal involves other members of the school community
- Shared decision-making will increase the group-effort among the members of the school community.
- If they are allowed to participate in decisions about change, the members of the school community will be far more likely to develop a sense of ownership.
- Collective decision-making empowers the students to be contributing members of the society.

Hence, decisions in the schools need to involve the teachers, the students, the parents and the community members. This will foster shared leadership and reinforce collective accountability. This notion is expressed by Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline (2004:169), namely that shared leadership increases collective responsibility, and this makes the school community to feel that they own the decision. Shared leadership encourages the participation of the teachers, the parents and the wider community in the decision-making process. The teachers' participation in decision-making increases their keenness to engage in reforms related to the improvement processes (Weiner 2014:256).

The teachers should, however, be participants in the decision-making process as they are the implementers of the decisions that are made. This will increase their commitment. Harris and Muijs (2005:127) highlight the fact that teachers' feeling of being responsible and becoming the owners of the school improvement initiatives will be higher if they participate in meaningful decision-making. Furthermore, the formulation of school policies, rules and regulations also require involving the students as they are expected to act accordingly. Danielson (2002:51) elaborates on this point by mentioning that the participation of the students during decisions concerned with school policies causes the students to understand what the goals of those policies are and to comply with the policy requirements.

Besides, the participation of the students in decision-making increases their access to various perspectives. Regarding the necessity of the students' participation, Danielson (2002:51) explains that the students' participation in decision-making provides the school community with important views. Rules, regulations, and procedures produced through their engagement will be better than those produced by the school management alone. Makoelle (2011:266) also considered the motivation of the staff and the students to take part in the decision-making process as a determinant of the quality of the decisions, and it will affect the improvement process.

In this sub-section, it was highlighted that decision-making is one of the key issues and leadership functions in the school improvement process.

The next section discusses the importance of parental/family involvement in the school improvement process.

### **2.6.3. The involvement of the parents and the family**

Schools cannot become fully successful without making use of the stakeholders' efforts (Lazaridou & Kassida 2015:99) and this has to begin during the planning of the improvement (Scanlon 2012:188). The parents or guardians of the children should be directly involved in the school's activities. Mtsweni (2013:45) and Kirkhaug, Drugli, Klockner and Morch



(2013:346) assert that parents have the potential to contribute to the best learning of their children. They also have the right to determine what their children need to learn. Schools led by effective leaders understand this important role and devise strategies for the involvement of the parents and other stakeholders (Coleman 2013:91). It has also been established in the literature that improving school environment and realising the quality of education will be at its maximum if the participation of the families, the communities and the broader stakeholders is higher (UNESCO 2007:75).

My experience as a student in the primary and secondary school was that my parents only used to go to the schools at the school's closing day at the end of the year. Sometimes I saw that the students brought their parents to school in order for them to be given a warning for serious breaches of the school rules and regulations. However, the literature suggests that parental involvement needs to be on a regular basis, and the aim should be to assist the schools so that better conditions would be created for the students to learn (Lazaridou & Kassida 2015:99; Tang 2015:135). Such involvement can be in the form of decision-making and school governance, among other things. More importantly, Stein (2009: 223) explains that parental involvement has to do with the participation of the parents in the management of the school, and the parents' and the teachers' expectations regarding the children's education, and communication between the parents and the schools.

The values and attitudes of the parents affect their involvement in the school's affairs. However, Letsholo (2006:6) emphasised that the parents can take part in school activities, and they have to support the schools. Unless the parents work with the school and follow up their children's education, it will be difficult to fully maximise the students' achievement which is assumed to be achieved through school improvement efforts. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2000:11) states that in schools where the parents are involved in their children's education, the students do better. Parental involvement helps to increase attendance and minimise the late-coming of the children to school. If the involvement of the parents is high, the children will complete their assignments on time, and they will also develop positive attitudes towards their school.

However, it is important to note that the socioeconomic status and educational background of the parents will have a significant impact on the involvement of the parents and of what they can do in their involvement. Their involvement can be passive or active. In spite of these factors, Robert (2010:14) asserts that the schools and the children's homes cannot develop independently. It is also common to find parents who contribute directly and actively to the teaching and learning environment as opposed to those who are inactive and contribute indirectly. In countries like Ethiopia where the education level of parents is low, the schools need to work on the creation of awareness and to indicate ways how those parents can be involved in their children's education. This assertion is with the recognition that their involvement has certain impacts/outcomes. Khosa (2010:16) identified the outcomes of family involvement as:

- increased monitoring of home study, the number of completed coursework exercises, school visits by the parents, and the parents' interest in the school reports; and
- improved learner performance at school and after school, including their execution of their after-school tasks, their homework, studies, and reading for enjoyment.

This section indicated that the parents are responsible for the education of their children. This shows that they should also be accountable to the system, together with the other members of the school community. Schools generally operate on the basis of public accountability, and this issue is briefly discussed below.

#### **2.6.4. Accountability**

The Theory of Change model takes into consideration that there must be public accountability while the school community members play the roles. Nash (2012:7) stressed that accountability requires that the schools improve their performance on the basis of socio-economic and moral conditions for the progress of the country. This is the fact that guides the school communities when they play their roles. Besides, the school community, particularly the parents, make the school leadership accountable for the achievement of their children (Crawford 2009:5). If there are accountability pressures, the attentiveness to school

improvement and effectiveness will be higher (Altrichter & Kemethofer 2015:32). Accountability calls for full the support of the community, and creating an environment that is conducive to learning and that facilitates teaching and learning in the school. Shared leadership in the schools also makes the school community accountable. Zmuda et al. (2004:169) emphasise that shared leadership requires that the school community participates in the necessary assessment of the areas which need improvement, and that it makes decisions that will be implemented by the leaders as well as the followers. This facilitates the conditions for making each member of the school community accountable.

Thus, school improvement as a path to school effectiveness requires the carrying-out of different tasks. The tasks are to be shared among the members of the school community. There has to be a system that makes them responsible and accountable for what they do on a continuous basis. In this respect, Schlechty (2001:78) emphasised that improvement-related accountability cannot be short-term, and it should also be the common responsibility of the school community. The researcher (2001:78) outlined the following key issues, namely

- individual teachers are held accountable for ensuring that what is taught is aligned to what is meant the students should learn;
- individual teachers have to be responsible for ensuring that the work they provide for the students becomes better continuously in terms of producing measurable student engagement, persistence, and satisfaction; and
- the school faculty as a group has to be held accountable for the achievement of the students in the school.

Accountability, in this sense, is in line with the responsibility given to individuals. All who are concerned with the school's business are responsible for what they do, and are accountable for the students' performance on a group basis as a whole school community. Slavin (2005:274) further states that reaching consensus on what the children need to learn needs to be the first step in holding the school community accountable and making the learners move towards the highest level of performance. It has also been stressed by researchers that there needs to be a mechanism to hold the "schools accountable for progress" (Yatsko, Lake, Bowen & Nelson 2015:35). Moreover, Gaertner, Wurster and Pant (2014:490) suggest that

inspection can also be used as a means of holding the school community accountable. In such cases, all the internal processes within the school system can be inspected based on the responsibility given to the school community members. The idea of accountability also extends from every aspect of the school life to the school's expenditures. Yet, research on the impact of inspection is not conclusive (Altrichter & Kemethofer 2015:35). In the Ethiopian context, the MoE (2010b:44) asserts that accountability should extend to the local level, and those who spend the public resources need to be accountable to the public.

Thus, the school community is expected to work for the better achievement of the students, carefully taking care of every step undertaken, and spending the resources wisely. This idea directly informs that unwise ways of spending the resources need to be discouraged, and if it happens the school community is responsible for bearing the consequences.

#### **2.6.5. The learning environment**

The teaching and learning process will be easier in environments which are conducive to the process taking place (UNESCO 2007:66). Educators have studied the need of creating suitable learning environments that meet the needs of the learners, the teachers and the other staff members (Zandvliet 2014:20). The physical environment of the schools needs to be conducive to learning and safe for children. This can extend from the facilities to be used in teaching and learning in the classroom to the playgrounds, the study areas and the rest rooms in the schools. Danielson (2002:44) clarifies a suitable and safe learning environment as an environment which provides sufficient space for teaching and learning, which makes the necessary facilities available and makes all the students feel safe.

It is the responsibility of the schools to create a suitable environment that fosters the students' learning. The children spend most of their time at school and not at home. This requires from the schools to work towards making the school environment enjoyable for the children to learn. Moreover, it is important to note that improving the school environment is not the responsibility of only the internal school community. It has to be the concern of all who have an interest in the school. Then, this will contribute to effectiveness of the school. The Ontario

Ministry of Education (2000:10) recommends that the responsibility should be shared. Everybody at the school as well as the community members can work together to set goals to create an environment conducive to learning. This will result in what Grift (2014:297) calls a “stimulating environment” for the children to learn. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2000:10) further lists the characteristics of highly effective schools in relation to their contribution to creating suitable learning environment as

- a clear and purposeful vision;
- a safe and organised environment;
- a climate of high prospects for the students’ achievement;
- focusing on high levels of student attainment that emphasises learning;
- a principal who gives instructional leadership;
- the frequent monitoring of the students’ progress; and
- strong home-school relations.

The aim is that every single activity carried out in the schools may have an impact on the children’s learning. In this sense, creating a safe learning environment is to be understood as improving the conditions in the school so that teaching and learning will take place smoothly. Danielson (2002:44) further adds that the school environment is required to create a feeling of community among the teachers and the students who work together in groups towards the achievement of the set goals. The emotional safety of these groups will lead to success. The schools are expected to work towards the creation of environments which will maximise the opportunities for all the students to learn. It is necessarily one of the important factors which will affect the functioning and effectiveness of the schools. This will stimulate the need to make the school community understand what a safe learning environment is, and to work towards achieving the goal of making the school a suitable place to learn.

#### **2.6.6. Teaching and learning**

The students’ success at school will partly be determined by the effectiveness of the instructional techniques used to improve their learning. At school the children need to learn in

an instructional situation that is suitable to help them acquire the basic knowledge, attitudes and skills. This kind of teaching considers what has been described in the words of Danielson (2002:106), “The capstone of any school improvement effort is the quality of teaching, which represents the single most important aspect of any school’s program for ensuring student success”. This needs perfecting the instructional techniques and bringing about changes in the lives of the learners (Jensen 2009:3). To realise this, Johnson and Fargo (2014: 847) explain that the teachers need to bring together knowledge, experience and a culture for successful learning.

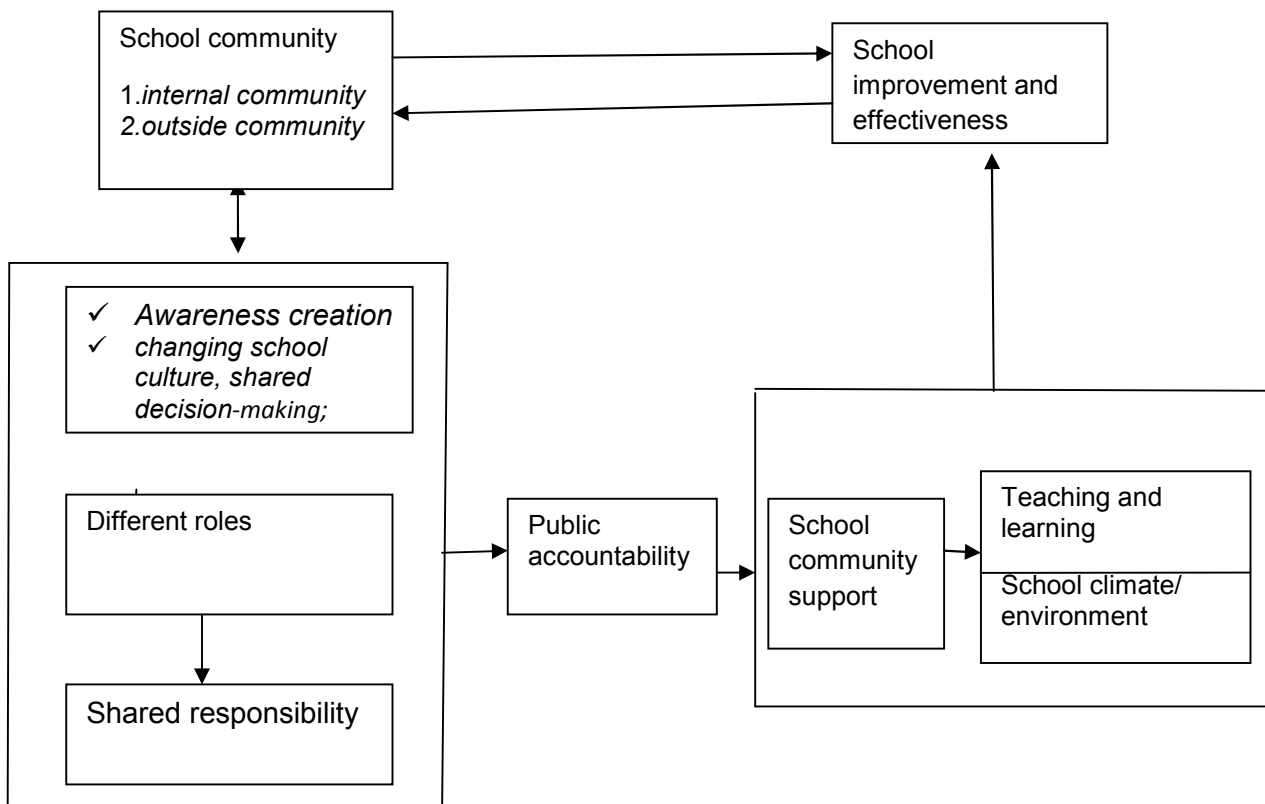
In addition, Osula and Ideboen (2010:30) and Jeffrey and Woods (2003:37) place the emphasis on a democratic learning environment. They indicate that children learn better in social, involving and democratic environments. This may help the children to be absorbed in and own what they learn. Thus, this is a learning environment required to be practiced in every school, namely one that focuses on teaching and learning. Besides, the teaching approaches need to give all students the opportunities of self-expression (Osula & Ideboen 2010:147).

Furthermore, Moyles (1997:9) also theorises that students learn by making connections between their minds and the physical world. They explore their environment by exerting their personal efforts, and actively seek meanings from their school and social experiences. This is what affects how we think what children learn and how we teach them. Meaningful learning also takes place if the students learn by contributing their share to the learning process (Osula & Ideboen 2010:30). In their attempt to improve their services and promote the students’ learning the schools can apply Moyles (1997:9) ideas. Children can learn by means of the various interactions they have, and the schools can create a space for such interactions to occur. Danielson (2002:52) also emphasised that students can learn from school discipline policies, their homework as well as the learning objectives set in the curriculum. The schools need to think beyond the curriculum as they decide to improve the students’ learning. This can be by means of extra-curricular activities, homework and the school rules and regulations.

Besides, Jeffrey and Woods (2003:114) explain that students gain knowledge and can have control over their learning if they engage in interactive learning. Such interaction has to be

among the different members of the school community. Learning takes place in cooperative environments, and the schools have the responsibility of creating cooperation among all concerned to optimize the students' success. Additionally, the schools can use assessment to informing the learning of the students (Christoforidou, Kyriakides, Antoniou & Creemers 2014:1).

Moreover, Allen (2006:17) also argues that the schools can make the students accountable if they give them learning opportunities which are relevant to their lives. This also requires making assessments that contribute to the students' learning (Leong 2014:2; Struyven 2014:1). Then they can decide to make the students responsible for their own achievements. However, such decision should be made only after creating a proper learning environment. Thus, success in teaching and learning comes after giving attention to the students' learning, and sharing the responsibility so that the students can obtain a better experience from what is taught and from what they have experienced (Allen 2006:17). The elements explained above, the components of the Theory of Change model, are clearly shown in the figure below, where one element leads to the next.



**Figure 2.1: Adapted model of the Theory of Change**

## **2.7. CONCLUSION**

In the above sections the researcher presented issues relating to quality assurance, the concepts of school effectiveness and improvement as quality assurance mechanisms, and an explanation of the theoretical framework used in the study. The researcher discussed the fact that school improvement is one of the ways to assure quality of education by making the schools identify their weaknesses and working on them. The researcher also indicated that school effectiveness and improvement go parallel to each other, and that school improvement processes lead to school effectiveness. Besides, it was explained that there are different strategies to assess school effectiveness and a combination of models/approaches can be used to assess it. Finally, details were provided in relation to the theoretical framework used in the study.

The next chapter deals with education in Ethiopia towards the improvement of the schools.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA: TOWARDS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

Educational reforms appear every decade based on the condition of the country (Schechter & Ganon-Shilon 2015:63). This is also true in Ethiopia as it is a country which has been affected by internal conflict for many years. The internal conflicts and the changing of the education policies based on the philosophies of the changing regimes together with the influence of foreign policies have affected the education system of the country. Given the poor condition of the country, investment in education has been very low for many years. This resulted in a low access to education and the poor quality of education which contributed to the poor development of the human resources of the country. The reforms since the 1994 Education and Training Policy (ETP) aimed at turning round the existing situation in education by expanding the opportunities in education and attempting to improve its quality at different levels (Teshome 2012:1).

This chapter gives a picture of the history of education in Ethiopia and links it to the development of ESDPs and GEQIP. Then school improvement within the Ethiopian context will be discussed.

#### **3.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA**

At the beginning of the twentieth century the failure of the traditional education (religious education) system to meet the needs of the people involved in state affairs, foreign relations and commerce led to the introduction of government-sponsored secular education. Emperor

Menelik II had the conviction that Ethiopia needed educated people to develop and modernise the country (Teshome 2012:15). There was a need to open public schools in Addis Ababa in 1908 (Shinn & Ofcansky 2013:135). The objectives of introducing modern education were to educate the young so as to ensure peace in the country, to reconstruct the country and to produce diplomats who can communicate in foreign languages (Teshome 2012:15).

Menilik's employment of a Western type of education was to understand the prevailing political order, the need for modernisation and the need for training interpreters for international communication and diplomatic purposes (Marew 2000:2). The education in Ethiopia has been influenced by various factors which are internal as well as external. The political system in the country was one of the major factors which influenced development, as well as policies of education. Negash (2006:7) categorises the education in the last three regimes in Ethiopia as the Imperial system (from the end of World War II to 1974), the Socialist system (from 1974-1991, and the current system (since 1994 up to the present). The education policies of Ethiopia have constantly been changing based on the ideology of each regime.

How the policies and practices changed, and the focus of education during the three subsequent regimes will be briefly elaborated on in the next sections.

### **3.2.1. Education during the Imperial period**

During the Imperial regime education was considered as an instrument to modernise the country. Negash (2006:7) states that there existed a strong belief with the Emperor that education is essential to realise the development of the country. However, the increase in enrolment was slow compared to the number of the school-age population at the time. In the 1930s there were only 8,000 students in a small number of schools. This number grew to 60,000 students in 1952 in 400 schools (Shinn and Ofcansky 2013:135). Due to the high population growth which was not in line with the economic condition of the country, the number of children who joined the school was by far less than those who were expected to attend schools. Negash (2006:8) stated that in 1970 there were only 1.1 million students out

of over 10 million children of school-going age. This shows that the enrolment was low during that period.

Though the gross enrolment was low, there were not many job opportunities for the graduates. There were many graduates of the secondary schools but the employment opportunities were rare. It was paradoxical that there were also many children of school-going age who did not get chance to attend school, yet those who spent years at schools were not getting any employment. The employability of the graduates was explained sadly by Negash namely that the graduates from the secondary level could not get a job in any of the modern sectors that were available in the country, though many children did not have access to education (Negash 2006:17). This shows that the education sector was neither increasing the employment opportunities nor providing access to education to the population of school-going age.

Due to the dissatisfaction which resulted in respect of education, the Imperial regime decided to do a review of the Education sector. Tefera (1996:15) indicates that the complaints regarding the failure of the education sector to satisfy diverse societal needs led to the Education Sector Review. It was noted by Negash (2006:18) and Tefera (1996:15) that the attempt to bring about improvements as intended in the Education Sector Review was not realised because the reform was not based on consensus among the concerned stakeholders, and their involvement level was insignificant.

### **3.2.2. Education during the Socialist (Derge) period (1974–91)**

The Socialist regime claimed that the education policy of the Imperial regime was wrong, and they changed the education policy. Negash (2006:18) confirms this where he wrote that the policy of the Imperial period was considered discriminatory and was dismissed by the leaders of the Socialist regime. The previous policy was dropped on the premise that the Socialist regime would transform the country by transforming the education sector.

Tremendous changes were instituted in the education sector, and no part of the earlier education system was accepted as being correct. Negash (2006:19) argues that the leaders of the Socialist period continued to expand the opportunities in education to prove that the Imperial regime was wrong. Shinn and Ofcansky (2013:135) express this expansion by indicating, “The Derge significantly expanded primary school enrolment, which grew to 2.5 million in the mid-1980s”. However, the expansion of the number of schools was in a situation where the schools were far from being favourable for teaching and learning to take place due to teachers' lack of essential teaching skills and external political influences (Engel 2011:5). Moreover, the management of education was also centralised. The hopes of the Socialist regime to transform the country’s economy through its education policy were hampered by a number of factors. Moreover, the problems in the country were aggravated by the internal conflict in the northern part of Ethiopia. The regime could not finance and give attention to the education sector due to the fact that a civil war was raging in the northern parts of the country, and the political condition in the eastern and western parts of the country was difficult to manage (Negash 2006:21). This led to the conclusion that the schools were given less attention and were poorly financed.

Due to the internal conflict, the scarce resources of the poor nation were spent on the war front, and there was no room for educational expenditure. This resulted in a low access to education and the poor quality of schooling during that period. This is summarised by Solomon (2008:54) namely that it was the time when the quality of teaching and learning was at the lowest level in the history of the country. Though the Socialist regime introduced reform to the general education by means of a study called the Evaluative Research of the General Education System in Ethiopia, the study failed because it “was shrouded in secrecy” (Tefera 1996:21). Thus, the improvements identified in the study were not implemented because they were not realistic and compatible with the situation in the country.

### **3.2.3. Education during the Federal System of Governance (since 1991)**

Since 1945 in the history of modern education three distinct education policies were implemented. The two education policies were those developed during the Imperial and the

Socialist regimes. The third one is the current policy (since 1991). It has already been indicated that the Socialist regime criticised the Imperial regime as if everything was wrong. The same also happened during the current period (since 1991) that the education policy of the Socialist regime was condemned as wrong. Complying with this view, Solomon (2008:58) states that the practice existed of condemning all undertakings which took place in the education sector. In 1991, the current government formulated a new policy in a situation where there was little access to primary and secondary education. Schooling was also taking place in poor school environments. Then there was a remarkable expansion in the number of schools, but the scarcity of resources for the school activities contributed to poor school environments, which resulted in the deterioration of quality of education in the schools. However, the increase in enrolment was significantly higher than during the earlier periods (Engel 2011:4).

The sudden expansion was described by Negash (2006:21) as dramatic increase in gross enrolment which had never before been seen in the education sector during the previous regimes. The increase in enrolment, however, suddenly led to a decline in the quality of education. As a result, the MoE (2005a:10) stressed that every possible action would be taken by all the stakeholders to ensure the quality of education. This required decentralising the education management to the school level and making it participatory. This is in line with the ETP's assertion that, "Clear guidelines, stating the rights and duties of all involved in education, will be issued to ensure participatory and proper professional relations in their activities" (Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) 1994:32). This statement served as a promise to decentralise the education management and to encourage the community's participation in school activities. Besides, with the aspiration to increase access, equity, the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the general education, the government launched ESDPs and GEQIP.

The following sections deal with the programs and evidences that triggered the development of the programs.

### **3.3. THE EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS (ESDPs) IN ETHIOPIA**

Education in Ethiopia has been characterised by low access, poor efficiency and quality. The first ESDP (1997-2002) was launched with the intention to lever schools out of their poor condition (Watson & Yohannes 2005:2). As indicated above, during ESDP I, there was a high expansion rate and access to primary education. The MoE (2007:3) and UNICEF (2010:1-2) refer to the drastic expansion in general education since the implementation of ESDP I. The expansion was, however, in a poor school environment where there were not sufficient resources, and quality was compromised. This gloomy condition was reflected by Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (2012:12) and Shinn and Ofcansky (2013:135) where they stated that the quality of the general education in the country continued to be a problem as the schools were poorly staffed and the necessary resources were in short supply.

However, this was contradictory to the premises of the ETP which states that the necessary facilities and materials would be supplied to the schools on an adequate basis to increase the quality and relevance of education (TGE 1994:30). Given the poor condition of the country, the provision of the necessary resources to the schools could not take place as was intended. Negash (2006:28) furthermore indicated that the education system was not systematically planned. In addition, it was poorly financed. Consequently, the expansion of the education sector under such conditions resulted in the decline of its quality.

It is acceptable that quality is partly determined by the input and the processes followed to arrive at the end. If a country's economy is poor and they cannot afford the cost of school facilities in order to invest in the development of the human resources, it will be difficult for the schools to produce quality learners. The quality of education was affected by the lack of resources to run the school's activities and the poor quality of the teachers. Consequently, the system produced a poor quality of graduates. Also the unavailability of job opportunities for the graduates from the poor school environments was a challenge (Negash 2006:35).

Moreover, the implementation of ESDP II clearly indicated certain challenges which were listed by the MoFED (2006:109) as problems of quality and relevance; participation and fairness; wastefulness; the capability of management and implementation capability; and the scarcity of resources to access quality education. This did not seem to conform with the pledges and beliefs of the ETP. The achievements that were expected from ESDP I and ESDP II. UNICEF (2010:1) explicated that the promises and beliefs of launching the ESDPs were with the assumption to bring about sustainable development by using education as a tool. This required expanding the number of educational institutions in order to make education accessible to all the citizens.

However, the MoE realised the problem of quality that occurred due to the unlimited expansion when it conducted the NLA for grades 4 and 8, which indicated that the students at these levels had not acquired the basic knowledge, attitude and skills (MoE 2007:3). In turn, the problem resulted in the sizeable unemployment of the young. Shinn and Ofcansky (2013:135), in the 'History of Ethiopian Education' also highlighted that the education system could not contribute to the minimisation of unemployment. Besides, the education offered to the children was based on theory and not linked to the practice and the learners' lives. Moreover, in the rural parts of Ethiopia, as the villages were far apart, education could not fulfil its position as a socially-driving force. This was realised by the MoE (2010b:10) when it stressed that the majority of the population in the country lived in dispersed communities and that was creating a challenge to the education sector. Thus, limited resources together with the poor conditions of the country made the education offered to Ethiopian children to be of poor quality.

In addition, a study conducted by UNICEF (2010:5) identified key issues and challenges in the education sector of Ethiopia, such as problems of capability in terms of knowledge, skilfulness and outlook at all levels of planning and implementation; problems relating to the capacities of the teachers to implement a learner-centred approach; curriculum-related materials were in short supply; there existed a low level of awareness and ability to promote extra-curricular activities in the schools; the school facilities were partly mismanaged, and the resource requirements of schools were not met. The following challenges affected the quality of

education in the country, namely the capacity of human resources to plan and implement change in the education sector; the competence of the teachers to use active learning methods and manage their classes; the availability of textbooks and other facilities, and the level of the promotion of extra-curricular activities. These critical issues affected the school effectiveness and the performance of the students.

However, as explained in the previous paragraphs, within the Ethiopian context, the increase in access to education was in a poor school environment, and the capacity of the teachers and the administrators in the schools to manage change or to meet the requirements of change were at its lowest level. The schools were expanded without the necessary resources to run the teaching and learning process. After realising the deterioration of quality due to the abovementioned problems in the general education sector, the goals of general education, according to the MoFED (2006:109), were revised as follows:

- provide education to all the children who are ready for school;
- improve the careers of teachers salary at all levels;
- make use of everything possible to produce qualified and responsible citizens at all levels;
- use the resources wisely to enhance efficiency;
- increase the participation of the community and the private sector; and
- ensure equity in education.

Furthermore, Engel (2011:24) explained that the Ethiopian government realised the deterioration of the quality of education, and gave attention to quality issues by changing the goal of ESDP III. The achievements of ESDP III were confirmed by the MoE (2010b:6), namely that the achievements were remarkable in respect of the expansion of education and of maintaining its quality. Thus, in ESDP III, attention was given to quality indicators so as to raise the declining quality of education.

To sum up, the problem that occurred due to high expansion rates during the first and second ESDPs had as result that the country gave attention to the quality of education in ESDP III. There were many necessary inputs needed to meet the quality requirements in the education



sector. In addition, bringing quality to the education sector demanded introducing a reform for quality assurance. Based on this premise, and due to the observed problems in the quality of general education, the government took the initiative to develop GEQIP side-by-side to ESDP III.

The next section introduces GEQIP, and leads to the discussion of the SIP.

### **3.4. THE GENERAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE PACKAGE (GEQIP)**

It has already been made clear that the expansion in the education sector was in poor school environments where the schools did not have the necessary infrastructure and human resources. The schools also failed to address each child's right to quality education. Joshi and Verspoor (2013:34) and UNICEF (2010:1) indicated that scores of students in the NLAs of the years 2000, 2004 and 2008 were below the expected level, though there was a slight improvement in subsequent NLAs. Thus, the main concern which led to the development of the GEQIP was the low academic achievement of the students in the NLAs where the students scored less than expected. Moreover, the MoE clearly specified that the high enrolment rate was not accompanied by the provision of a good quality of education to the children who were enrolled in the general education sector (MoE 2007:3). In addition, there was increased educational wastage due to the high dropout and repetition rates which necessitated the introduction of reform in the general education sector. Consequently, the attempts to increase the children's access to education were supported by the GEQIP in order to raise the quality of education offered to the school children and to minimise the dropout and repetition rates (MoFED 2008:20). It is also noted that the emphasis to quality issues were given attention during ESDP III, and the GEQIP was developed side-by-side to the third ESDP.

The components of the GEQIP, as described by the MoE (2008:5), were SIP, a teacher development program, the curriculum, textbooks and assessment, a management and administration program, an information and communication technology program, and a civic

and ethical education program. These programs were introduced in the education sector with the hope of ensuring the quality of general education.

The role and domains of the SIP, which is the focus of this study, are explained in the next section.

### **3.4.1. The role of the SIP and its domains in Ethiopian schools**

The schools in Ethiopia, as indicated earlier, were functioning in poor school environments. The SIP was introduced to improve the status of the schools and to enhance the students' learning and to maximise their achievement. The objectives of the SIP component, as outlined by the MoE (2008:6) are to:

- improve the capacity of the schools to prioritise the needs and develop a school improvement plan;
- enhance the participation of the school and community in decisions on the utilization and generation of resources;
- improve the government's capacity to deliver specific numbers of school grants at the woreda level, and
- improve the learning environment by providing basic operational resources to the schools.

These objectives were revised by the MoE. Issues related to school grants were non-existent as part of the revised objectives of SIP. Based on the experience of the implementation of previous SIP of three years, the MoE (2011a:5), in the revised SIP document stated the objectives as:

- to significantly increase the learning opportunities, the results and discipline of the students;
- to ensure good governance and democratic practice in the schools accountably and responsibly for its ultimate success;

- to build school leadership and administration on decentralisation whereby enabling the schools to have broader administrative autonomy.

To achieve these objectives, the domains of the Ethiopian SIP described in the GEQIP document are teaching and learning, school leadership, a favourable learning environment and community participation.

Each domain and its respective elements are indicated in the following table.

**Table 3.1: SIP domains and elements**

<p><b><i>Learning and teaching</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Act of teaching</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning and evaluation</i></li> <li>• <i>Curriculum</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Favourable learning conditions and the environment</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>School facility</i></li> <li>• <i>The empowerment of students</i></li> <li>• <i>Support for students</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Student outcomes</b></p>	
<p><b><i>School leadership</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategic vision</i></li> <li>• <i>Leadership behaviour</i></li> <li>• <i>School management</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Community participation</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Cooperation with parents</i></li> <li>• <i>Community participation</i></li> <li>• <i>Promoting education</i></li> </ul>

Source: Governing guideline for the implementation of the SIP (MoE 2011a:3)

The SIP, which has been implemented in Ethiopia the last six years, contains four domains and twelve elements, as indicated in the above table. The focus of all these intertwined domains and the respective elements is to improve the students' achievement. Attention is given to the students' achievement because, as the MoE (2010a:11) argues, though there

were changes in the number of teachers and the supply of the necessary resources for the schools, the level of the students' performance was not satisfactory.

Thus, the increased opportunities of access to education were not accompanied by significant improvements in the students' learning and achievement. The need to have the students acquire and develop significant knowledge, skills and attitudes demanded improving the learning of all the students by bringing about changes in the learning environment, in the quality of supervisory services, the leadership of schools, the participation of the students and the community (MoE 2010a: 11).

Accordingly, the domains and standards which are meant to bring about improvements in the schools in Ethiopia as outlined in the SIP guideline (MoE 2010a: 11) are discussed below.

#### 3.4.1.1. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is the central function of the schools. Teaching requires the use of methods which will enable the learners to acquire basic skills as well as to make them ready for independent learning. However, as UNESCO (2001:12) described, the problem related to teaching and learning in the Ethiopian school system was that the teachers were not able to employ the learner-centred approach when the teaching methods shifted from a teacher-centred approach to the new approach. This demanded spending a huge amount of resources on the training of teachers and the expansion of the classrooms to make adjustments to the existing student-teacher-ratio.

Thus, there was a shortage of the necessary resources to implement active learning methods, and the numbers of the students and the teachers (student-teacher-ratio) were not compatible with the expected standard. The teaching and learning domain of SIP is meant to halt or minimise the problems relating to teaching and learning. It has teaching and learning, and evaluation as the two distinct elements. One of the standards of the teaching and learning domain specifies that the teachers need to have the necessary competence and up-to-date knowledge through CPD. The MoE (2010a:12) clearly states the standard as, "Teachers have

the professional competency and participate in CPD, in order to learn new knowledge to apply in the classroom”. This entails that the teachers engage in CPD to improve teaching and learning.

The document further explains that professional development as a requirement of the school teachers can take different forms, such as formal training courses, experience-sharing meetings, action research or mentoring. This is with the assumption that the CPD experience of the teachers will have a significant impact on the students’ learning. Above and beyond, the school management is expected to take the responsibility for promoting the CPD activities in the schools, engaging the teachers in CPD, and giving the teachers sufficient time to accomplish the CPD activities. The other more interrelated standards under the teaching and learning domain are:

- The teachers are to use active learning methods in the classroom to realise improved learning results (MoE 2010a:12). This standard assumes that the students learn better if they engage in “group work, individual assignments, games, question and answer... instead of heavily relying on rote memorization” (MoE 2010a:12).
- The teachers achieve measureable improvements in the students’ results (MoE 2010a:14).

The first of the above standards is meant to have the teachers use student-centred approaches in the classroom that encourage the active involvement of the students in the teaching and learning process. The second standard, as stipulated in the policy document, is supposed to measure the overall goal of school improvement. The standard requires from the teachers to exert their full effort in CPD activities and to achieve observable changes in the students' results.

The school improvement domains in the context of the policy document aim at improving the students’ achievements, and this is the foremost concern of the program. To achieve this, the teachers are also expected to, as the MoE (2010a:14) states, “understand the curriculum, develop and use supplementary materials in the classroom”. Besides, the schools are supposed to create such an environment and make the students learn and achieve more.

Thus, to create a better learning opportunity for the students, according to the MoE (2008:6-7), the MoE (2010a:12-14) and the MoE (2011a:4), the teachers are expected to:

- master the subject content and methodology;
- conduct periodic and continuous assessment and evaluation;
- motivate the students for effective learning;
- be role-models to their students; and
- understand the differences between the sexes, and special needs and skills.

The list indicates that the teachers need necessarily to be equipped with knowledge of the subject matter they teach and also of delivery strategies. As they teach their students, they have to also do the assessment of those students by using diverse techniques. The assessments, if implemented properly, can help the students to learn and acquire knowledge. In addition, they are expected to encourage their students, become role-models for them and treat all the students equally. The MoE (2010a:23) further elaborates on the need to create better learning experiences and to maximise the achievements of the school children through the use of assessment strategies supported by action research, the implementation of extra-curricular activities, the involvement of the parents in school affairs, and by sustaining best practices. Besides, the students need to be assessed continuously so that they may learn from the results and feedback of each assessment on their progress. Use should also be made of action research results to inform the overall teaching and learning process in the schools.

Parallel to this, it has also been specified that the efforts of the teachers to create better learning environments should be assisted by the students' initiatives, namely in taking the responsibility for their own learning. The MoE (2011b:8) lists that what the students are expected to do as:

- working in teams and with the spirit of self-help and learning;
- having the interest and ability to take part in different clubs and committees;

- having due respect for their teachers and the school leadership;
- playing an active role in the laboratories, and frequently using the libraries;
- having a high desire to ask questions, to do research and for innovation;
- regularly attending the lessons given by their teachers inside and outside of the classroom;
- complying with the guidance, support and instruction of the school officials and the teachers;
- devoting their knowledge and labour to the development work of the school; and
- be disciplined, and role-models for their friends.

It is logical to have the students take some responsibility for their own learning. They should be active participants in the school as well as in classroom activities. This would help them to be successful in life, and take up their social responsibilities later. If the students engage in collaborative or peer learning, if they engage in extra-curricular activities, if they attend their classes regularly and commit themselves to study the subject matter, it is likely that their results will improve. But an improvement in the students' results can only be realised if the school-community exerts their full effort to assist and guide the students in the school. There have to be reasonably sufficient resources to be used in teaching and learning. In addition, the school community needs to be committed to empower the students. These and other issues relating to the school environment are presented below.

#### 3.4.1.2. The learning environment

The domain of the learning environment focuses on empowering and supporting the students. The domain stresses that to be successful the students need to learn in a safe environment, conducive to learning. One of the standards stated to achieve this domain is the “students develop a habit of taking responsibilities and leading a disciplined life” (MoE 2010a:15). When the students start to take the responsibility for their own learning, their results will be better. They have to engage in various activities of the school such as participating in decision-making concerning their learning and related issues, helping other students, and handling

problems related to student discipline in the school. The schools are expected to create a learning environment that is attractive for the learners. The collaborative effort of the school community should be reflected in making the schools better places for the students to learn.

Moreover, the students are expected to take the responsibility for their own learning, and need to actively take part in the lessons (MoE 2010a:15). The suitability of the learning environment is one of the factors which can affect the motivation of the students. It is known that the level of safety in the schools also affects the teaching and learning process and the amount of time the students want to stay in the school to study. The presence or absence of safe study sites/places, separate restrooms for boys and girls, clean drinking water, reading rooms, the teachers' offices and lounges, are some of the factors in relation to the learning environment in the schools that can affect teaching and learning. Yet, recent studies indicate that the learning environments of Ethiopian schools are not suitable for teaching and learning. A recent study by Abera (2014:77) in southern Ethiopia, Wolaita zone schools, shows that the schools do not have attractive classrooms; the school's compound fences are broken at many places; the places of recreation for the students are not inviting; the libraries are poorly stocked, and the toilets are not clean and hygienic. The study concluded that the absence of these facilities has negatively affected the performance of the schools.

#### 3.4.1.3. School leadership

Decentralised education management has been implemented in Ethiopia after the 1994 ETP. The MoE (2010a:13) confirms that decentralised education management is implemented and zones, woredas and the schools have to take certain roles. The execution of the responsibilities which were handed over to the ZEDs and the WEOs due to decentralisation, requires the REBs and the MoE to give those at the lower levels where there might be capacity problems the necessary support. This can be done by providing them, on a permanent basis, with the necessary training in respect of the new programs, and giving them the necessary guidelines regarding their day-to-day activities.



The school leadership domain of SIP focuses on school management and leadership behaviour. It emphasises the need to promote shared decision-making so that there will be “collective responsibility for student learning” (MoE 2010a: 16). Visions can easily be realised if the school community has a common understanding of the reform and commitment to implement change. This requires making decisions together with all those who have an interest in the school’s activities, instead of the higher management saying, “This is what the school needs and do it” for those at the lower level in the school and outside of the school. School policies, regulations and procedures need to be communicated effectively. The decisions of the school also need to be based on appropriate data, and should be communicated to the parents by using appropriate communication channels, and carried out effectively.

Moreover, as the decentralised management and leadership function in the schools, it is important to place the emphasis on the capacity of those at the school level to manage change. However, studies indicate that attempts at decentralisation have been affected by the shortage of resources (Engel 2011:18). This is in line with the statement by the MoE (2010a:23) which states that most of the offices at zonal and woreda levels do not have the required capacity, and there exists a need to improve a number of issues relating to leadership at different levels. However, a study by Abebe (2012:8-9) indicates that there are a number of improvements as there are structures which promote school-based management through the decentralisation of decision-making to the school level. The roles of a range of education stakeholders are considered and included in the school leadership initiative. Abebe (2012:8-9) specifically outlined the following regarding the attempts at decentralising the education management:

- the relationship between the WEOs and the schools is strengthened;
- the ESDPs, GEQIP and SIP give more power to the head teachers and the administrators to coordinate decision-making;
- the policy(education and training policy) emphasises that the parents and teachers participate in critical decision-making at school level;

- the Woreda and Kebele administration is considered as one of the key stakeholders for enhancing school-based management; and
- the participation of the students in education management is promoted.

Thus, the responsibilities at school level are expected to be shared by those who are responsible for what is taking place in the schools. The school community as a whole should work towards a common goal and there should be a concerted effort. It is the leadership that can create such an environment where different groups can come together and work towards a common goal. This starts with having a common vision, a plan, and working together to achieve agreed-upon objectives. This cannot be responsibility of a single unit or an individual within the school. Responsibilities need to be shared and the school community should be accountable for its actions. These are the prevailing views in the policy documents and the SIP within the Ethiopian context regarding school leadership.

The SIP also requires community participation to enhance the school's effectiveness.

The next section deals with community participation as one of the domains of SIP.

#### 3.4.1.4. Community participation

The elements under this domain include working with the parents, and society participation, which involves mobilising the community, communicating and promoting the importance of education in the community. The standards set for community participation by the MoE (2010a:17) are, namely

- the schools successfully mobilise the community to provide resources to support the implementation of the school improvement plan; and
- the schools are active in communicating and promoting the importance of education in the community.

The parents, as members of the school community and as having a special concern for their children's education and the quality of education offered to their children, should actively participate in the school activities. Their participation, however, needs to go beyond the contribution of resources and attending general meetings at schools. The schools should also have the proper means of communicating with the parents and the external community (which actually has an interest in the school's activities considering the school as provider of vital social service). This requires from the schools to use diverse communication strategies that can help to establish smooth relationships with the school community.

The above sections presented details relating to the domains of the SIP. The outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness need to be seen in conjunction with these domains as the schools are expected to maximise their performance by implementing those domains.

The next section discusses the implementation of SIP approaches and guidelines.

### **3.4.2. SIP Implementation approaches and guidelines**

The implementation of an educational program has to follow certain procedures. There should also be guidelines to be used for the successful implementation. The SIP, according to the MoE (2010a:1), has been implemented using the following SIP materials:

- the school improvement framework;
- the SIP implementation manual; and
- a school improvement guideline.

The SIP framework is a document which contains the tools to be used to follow up the implementation of the SIP against the standards of each of the SIP domains. The MoE (2011b:4-5) listed the tools as:

- the tools for the self-evaluation of the schools regarding the most important issues for improvement in the schools;

- the instruments to be used to collect survey data from the teachers, the students and the parents; and
- the instructions and tools on data-collection, analysis and reporting regarding the key issues in the schools.

Thus, the schools are supposed to use the tools and the instructions described in the SIP framework to carry out self-evaluation, to plan for improvement, based on the evaluation results, to implement, monitor and evaluate the implementation and the achievement of the plans. This is to be followed by reporting to the stakeholders and the subsequent planning for improvement. As described in the framework, the cycles start during the first year with self-evaluation, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation. Then, the second year follows the same steps. The third year of the implementation of the SIP again requires similar steps to be taken with the addition of carrying out a comprehensive evaluation and review of the school's improvement undertaking, and then reporting to all the stakeholders. Finally, the document states that there will be an external validation at the end of the third year. It can be summarised that the SIP framework is meant to help schools:

- to follow up their own progress and the progress of the students in their academic performance;
- to measure the achievements in respect of key issues that the school needed improvement on; and
- to effectively plan for improvement.

Moreover, the SIP manual (MoE 2011c:1-3) provides an explanation of how to implement the different domains of the SIP and related aspects. It gives a detailed account of

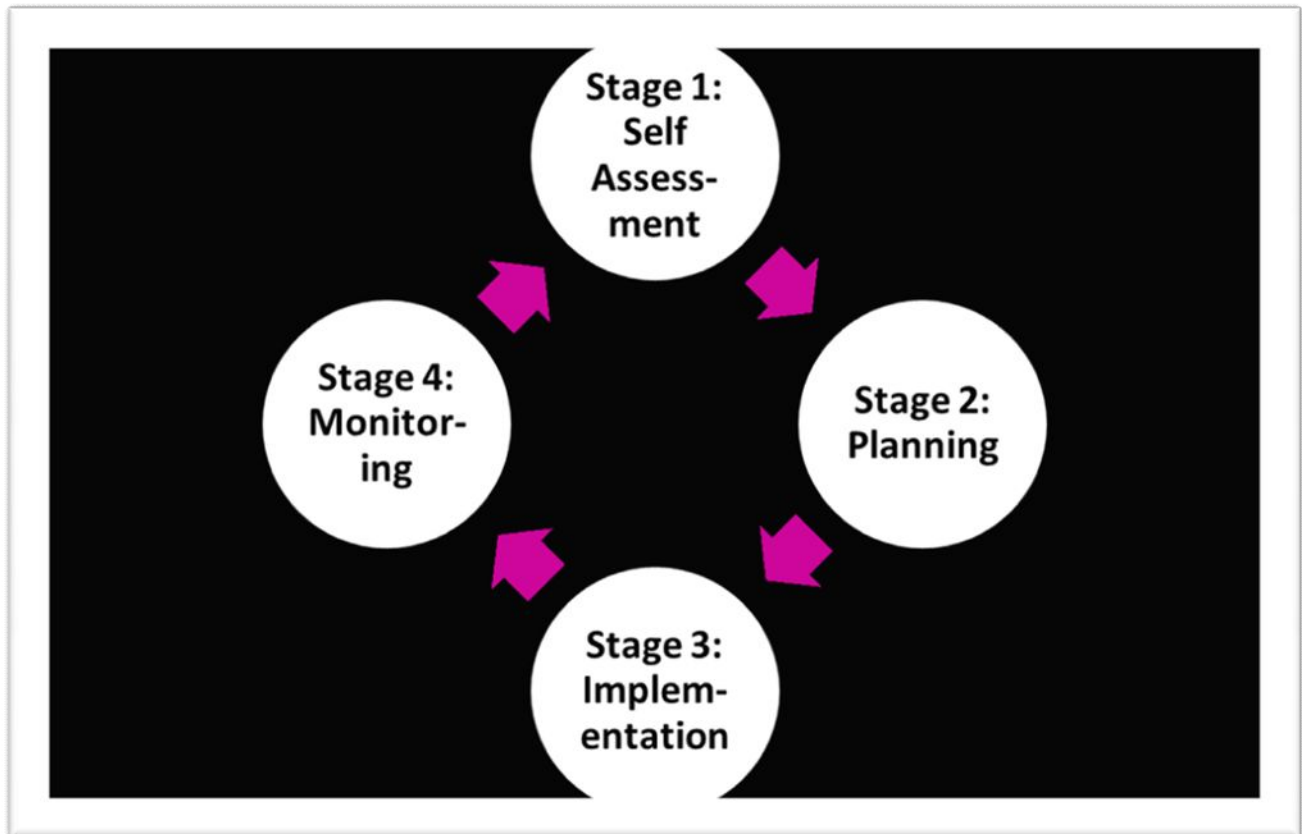
- the need for school improvement and its objectives;
- clarification of the domains of the SIP;
- strategies for the implementation of the SIP;
- guidelines on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of school improvement plans;

- key issues in respect of the stakeholders' participation;
- management arrangements for the implementation of the SIP;
- strategies to finance the program; and
- the systems for recognition.

The policy documents on the SIP clearly state that the improvement of the school begins with self-assessment, which should be carried out by the involvement of all the stakeholders. Thus, the MoE (2008:41) states that the school improvement process begins with a self-assessment of the conditions of schools through the involvement of the school community. Self-assessment Forms (SAFs) have been developed by the MoE with the assistance of the REBs and teacher education institutions (MoE 2008:41). The purpose of the SAF, according to the MoE (2008:41), is to:

- review where the school is currently; and
- identify areas most in need of development.

Self-evaluation may also be seen as "a handmaid of professional development...becoming more self-critical, self-aware, more reflective" (MacBeath 2006:18). Each school identifies its own needs by completing the SAF and developing a SIP plan. The planning cycle is followed by the implementation and evaluation cycles. These stages of the implementation of the SIP are indicated in the figure below.



**Figure 3.1: Stages of the SIP implementation cycles** (Source: MoE 2010a:18).

The implementation of the SIP cannot take place without the arrangements specific to its implementation and management. The MoE (2008:45-46) on the “Implementation and Management Arrangements” states the following as a series of activities to be executed:

- the schools receive training and conduct self-evaluation, using SAF;
- the SIC will prepare a school improvement plan;
- the plan will be revised based upon the suggestions of the key stakeholders;  
and
- the school monitors the operation of its SIP plan.

The MoE (2008:46) emphasises that training of REBs, ZEDs, WEOs and the schools will be done on a continuous basis, and those persons trained by the central experts at MoE level will train the REB experts and local school leaders regarding the SIP process. The MoE document (MoE 2008:46) further states that the MoE and the REBs will be responsible for the

monitoring of the implementation, for identifying areas for future training and the formative evaluation of the SIP material based on the feedback from the woredas and the schools. School improvement is expected to be a continuous process as it is not a goal in itself, and the implementation steps need to be repeated.

For the successful implementation of the SIP, the school community is entrusted with certain responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the stakeholders are discussed in the following sections.

### **3.4.3. The responsibilities of the stakeholders**

The SIP aims to improve the functioning of the schools, and it aims to make the improvement process systematic. This required from the MoE and the REBs to indicate the responsibilities of all the stakeholders, among other things.

The responsibilities of the different stakeholders, as stated in the SIP implementation manual (MoE 2011c:65-94), are summarised in the next sub-sections.

#### **3.4.3.1. The responsibilities of the principals**

The principals take the responsibility for forming the SIC which will lead and administer the implementation of school improvement. The principal of each school heads the committee and ensures that the committee comprises of representatives of the teachers, the students, the parents and the community. In relation to the improvement process the principals

- do a survey of the attitudes and perceptions inside and outside the school community, and conduct studies;
- ensure that there is a vision for improvement in the school;

- create training, experience-sharing and other CPD opportunities for the teachers and other employees;
- create a collaborative environment with religious, governmental and non-governmental organisations and experts;
- gather data on the SIP standards and the students' performance, and use the data for the planning of the improvement;
- lead the SIC and follow their performance up on a regular basis;
- communicate what is taking place in the schools with all stakeholders; and
- report to the WEO and the KETB on a quarterly basis.

While principals play the above roles, the teachers are given the responsibility of carrying out the tasks described in the following section.

#### 3.4.3.2. The responsibilities of the teachers

The MoE (2011c:67) stressed that in the schools where there are clear structures to equip the teachers with the necessary competence and in the schools where the teachers are engaged in the school's activities, the schools are found to be more effective. To involve the teachers in all the improvement activities, the following are outlined as the responsibilities of the teachers and the head teachers, namely

- gather data on the students' performance and analyse the data;
- conduct meetings at grade level and the subjects they teach, and work on educational plans;
- plan strategies to assist the students with special needs, and participate in meetings with experts on special needs once a semester;
- provide the SIC with data for the planning of the SIP;
- engage in CPD activities that help to improve teaching and learning; this can be by sharing experiences, and by attending workshops and training sessions; and



- become aware of up-to-date information on national and local strategies, such as strategies on gender, special needs education, etc.

In addition to the responsibilities of the teachers, the students are also expected to engage in the improvement process.

The following section summarises the roles expected to be played by the students.

#### 3.4.3.3. The responsibilities of the students

It is recommended by the MoE (2011b:8; 2011c:67) that the schools can become more effective if the educators work in collaboration with the students. In the improvement process of the schools, the students need to be given a space to work with the adults, and have to be trained on how to become responsible for their studies. Thus, the students should take the responsibility for

- engaging in peer-learning and assisting low performing students;
- participating in club meetings and other extra-curricular activities;
- serving the community by teaching about hygiene and health issues;
- conducting their own studies/surveys and participating in different surveys conducted by their schools;
- participating in monitoring and evaluating what is taking place in their classes; and
- actively participating in their lessons, and other school activities, including decision-making.

Although the principals, the teachers and the students are expected to play determining roles in the improvement process, the administrative staff members also play certain roles which may facilitate the improvement process.

The description of the tasks to be performed by the administrative staff is presented in the following section.

#### 3.4.3.4. The responsibilities of the administrative staff

The SIP manual recognises that the administrative staff can play a role in the improvement process of the schools. It has also been indicated that teaching and learning can be negatively affected if the school environment is poor. The administrative staff, as suggested by the MoE (2011c:74), can work on the improvement of the school environment and make it conducive to learning. In this respect, the responsibilities of the non-teaching staff which are outlined to contribute to the school's improvement are:

- gather data on the students;
- prepare and make the data, and
- collaborate with the other members in the school community during self-evaluation, planning and monitoring.

In addition to those persons in the school, as the SIP documents suggest, the parents and the community are expected to play the roles as indicated in the following section.

#### 3.4.3.5. The responsibilities of the parents and the community

Parental involvement in the children's education is among the factors that contribute to high student achievement. It also helps the schools by minimising the students' absenteeism. To benefit from parental and the involvement of the community, the schools need to establish amicable relations by using diverse and effective communication channels. For their mutual benefit, the parents and the community members, according to the MoE (2011c: 81), are responsible to

- help their children at home;
- give special attention to their daughters or female students, and assist them;
- follow-up and assist their children not to be absent from school;
- attend meetings organised by the schools;
- play a part in the committees;
- volunteer to support the schools;
- participate in decision-making;
- participate in school surveys; and
- monitor and evaluate the school's activities.

The tasks described above are supposed to assist the schools to improve their performance. Moreover, the teachers, the students and the principals need to be supported by the supervisors.

Accordingly, the supervisors of the schools are expected to perform the tasks depicted below.

#### 3.4.3.6. The responsibilities of the supervisors

The supervisors of the schools are expected to provide expert support to the school community during self-evaluation, the planning of improvement and the designing of implementation strategies. In addition, they need to do the evaluation of each school they supervise using standardised tools (MoE 2011c:83). Thus, the supervisors are responsible to:

- know/understand the context of the school they supervise and its achievements;
- ensure that training and professional development opportunities are in place for the school community, particularly for the teachers and the administrative personnel;
- regularly attend SIC meetings and provide support to the committee;
- devise model strategies that can be adopted by the schools in the improvement process;
- ensure that the schools are using proper/genuine evidence to plan for improvement;

- follow the activities of the schools up, and give support, based on data;
- support the schools in sharing the best experiences at and beyond the cluster centres; and
- ensure that the SIP plans are monitored, evaluated and revised regularly.

It has also been indicated that the SIC plays certain critical roles during self-evaluation, the planning of improvement, monitoring and evaluation.

The duties of the SIC are outlined in the following section.

#### 3.4.3.7. The responsibilities of the SIC

The SIC, which is accountable to the principal of the school, works for a period of three years. The committee members consist of teachers, the administrative staff, students, the parents and the community, and the principal as the chair of the committee. The responsibilities of the SIC (MoE 2011c:86; MoE 2008:45-46) are:

- producing a SIP plan;
- devising strategies to ensure the full participation of the school community in the improvement process;
- ensuring that the school community participates in self-evaluation, planning, implementation and monitoring;
- providing support for those who engage in the school improvement activities; and
- reporting to the school community each year on the improvement process.

In the above sections the responsibilities of the school community were outlined. The outcomes of the SIP on the functioning of the schools are to be seen in relation to the roles assigned to the school community as outlined above.

The next section presents a brief conclusion of the chapter.

### **3.5. CONCLUSION**

The researcher started this chapter by indicating that the education policies of Ethiopia have been changing from regime to regime, based on the ideology of each regime. This situation made the education system unstable, and resulted in poor schooling for many years. Moreover, the internal conflict in the country made the situation worse, and the schools were functioning in poor environments. The present reforms in the education sector are meant to bring changes by alleviating the problems and improving the quality of education. The ESDPs and the GEQIP focus on improving the education system by increasing access and improving the quality of education. The SIP which was developed as part of the GEQI is meant to improve the school environment, leadership, teaching and learning in the schools, and community participation in the school's activities. The improvements in these domains are meant to contribute to increase the performance of the students. The SIP has been implemented by using SIP frameworks and guidelines, and with certain implementation arrangements. The researcher also indicated the responsibilities of the stakeholders in the SIP implementation process.

The next chapter deals with the methodological approach which was followed to pursue the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents details on the methodological approach that I followed to pursue the study. The chapter starts with an explication of the research philosophy and the qualitative case study approach. Then, it discusses the design of the study, which is followed by a description of the study area and the sampling technique used to select the participants for the study. The chapter continues to explain the instruments of data-collection, the procedures of data-collection and techniques of data-analysis. This is followed by a discussion of reliability and validity (trustworthiness) issues in the study. Finally, the chapter presents the ethical considerations in the research.

#### **4.2. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM AND THE QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH**

The research paradigm determines the approach to be used in the research process (O'Donoghue 2007:11) and it guides the steps to be followed (Scott & Usher 2011:10). I explained in chapter 1 that I made use of the constructivist paradigm/philosophy and participants in the study to construct meaning. The constructivist philosophy allowed the participants in the study to construct meaning through the qualitative approach. The epistemological view guiding the study was that there are multiple realities that can be discovered (Koro-Ljunberg et al. 2009:693; Morrison 2012:15). Maxwell (2005, in Solomon 2008:25) indicates that qualitative research is inductive in its nature and it gives emphasis to particular events and individuals rather than making use of quantitative data. Qualitative studies place the emphasis on specific processes in the field, and the data are interpreted by focusing on particulars. These are the notions that guided my study methodologically. The study primarily aimed at facilitating an understanding of the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the functioning of the selected schools. The data could not be quantified. It was presented by means of words which can be used to

delineate multiple realities (O'Donoghue 2007:16) related to outcomes of the SIP. The concern is to understand the practices as they are experienced by the participants. In other words, the study explored the experiences of the school community regarding the outcomes of the SIP on the effectiveness of the selected schools.

There are various traditions/approaches that can be used within the qualitative approach. The case study approach is more suitable to investigate issues related to my topic, namely the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the functioning of the selected schools. In explaining the importance of case studies, Bassey (2012:162) states that case studies help the researchers to explore experiences related to practices. An investigation of the experiences brings new insights to the fore and contributes to the improvement of practice. Besides, Burton and Bartlett (2009:64) also indicate that case studies can be employed to explore the experiences and practices in educational settings. This leads to the fact that the SIP is an educational program within the education system. The experiences of the participants are about the actual practice. Thus, the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the effectiveness of the selected schools were based on the participants' views. The case study approach helped me to interpret the reality.

#### **4.3. THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

The research design makes the research process easier (Murnane & Willett 2011:48). It is the overall plan of the research (Scott 2012:107). I explained in chapter one that the research design concerns the structure of the research. I selected a case study approach for the study. Mitchell and Jolley (2010:9) explain the research design as the steps in the research process from the beginning to the end, which the researchers follow to accomplish their aim. Similarly, Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006:37) explain a research design as the framework which articulates the different aspects of the study. It includes epistemology, perspectives on theory and methodology. The design also indicates how these perspectives are related to each other. Besides, Bickman and Rog (2009:5) explain that the research design involves

identifying the problem, setting the questions to be answered, designing the approaches and the data-collection tools and executing the research. Furthermore, Marvasti (2004:9) listed the steps in a research design as:

- asking the research question based on the theoretical orientation;
- selecting the research respondents and the data-collection instruments;
- analysing the data; and
- reporting the results.

I identified the research question based on the theoretical framework and the set objectives parallel to the questions. Thereafter I selected the research participants with the consideration of the objectives of the study, collected the data, and analysed it. Then, I organised the research report.

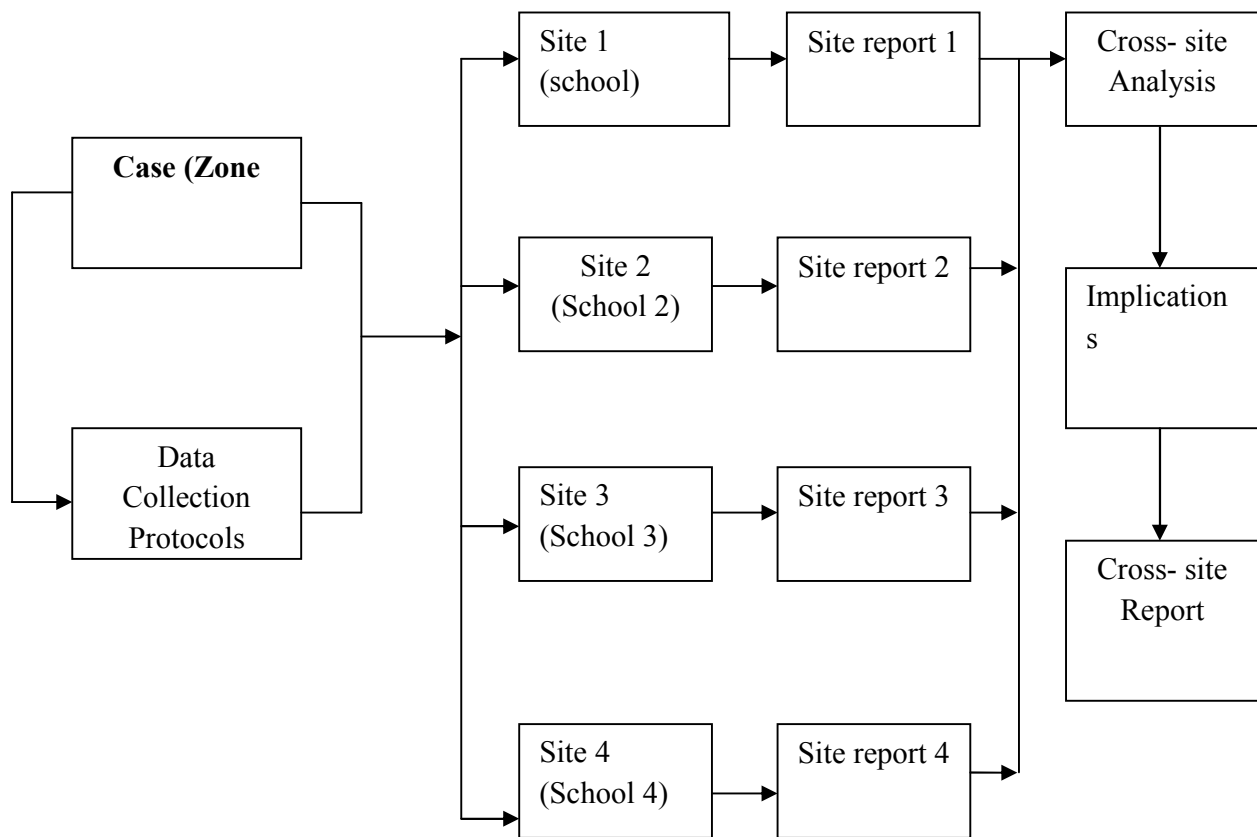
The design of this study is embedded in the constructivist philosophy. Researchers also believe that qualitative studies aim at studying the 'lived experiences' of the individuals or cases by means of the constructivist/interpretive approach (Jones et al. 2006:41). Moreover, interpretive educational researchers think that the research needs to explore the experiences of people (Morrison 2012:20). In interpretive research, the researcher, together with the participants construct meaning. This means that the researcher is also part of the research process. According to Morrison (2012:20), the key issues in interpretive research can be summarised as:

- the researchers are part of the research topic, and the participants also impact upon the researchers;
- the participants are the subjects, and the core task is to explore the meanings of events;
- present the accounts of the participants without distorting them; and
- the analysed data have qualitative significance.



With this belief, I selected the case study approach. Case studies facilitate the understanding of the experiences related to the educational setting (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:3). The case study approach enabled me to explore the views and experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness (Rapley 2014:57).

As the case I selected Sidama Zone, and then developed data-collection protocols to gather data from four schools (two primary and two secondary) in the zone. Then I collected the data from the purposefully selected participants. Finally, I analysed the data taking the guiding research questions and emergent issues into consideration. Finally, the report was organised. The figure below, which is adapted from Solomon (2008:30), shows the design of my study.



**Figure 4.1: The design of the study**

Within a broader case, which is the zone, there are multisite cases which are the schools and the participants in the study. A multisite case study engages in "... collecting and analyzing

data from several cases and can be distinguished from single case study” (Merriam 2009:49). Thus, I used multisite cases within a broader case to cast my net widely, as expressed by Bassey (2012:162).

#### **4.4. THE SITES OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The study was conducted at two primary and two secondary schools in Sidama Zone. This is the largest zone in SNNPR, and consists of well-performing schools as well as schools which are performing poorly. To select the schools, I used the evaluation data of schools from the ZED. One better-performing primary school and one better-performing secondary school (two model schools based on the 2012/13 academic year’s performance data), and one primary and one secondary school among the poorly performing schools, based on the evaluation report of schools, were selected from the zone. The schools selected were Yirgalem Secondary School, Loka Abaya Secondary School, Adarash Primary School and Soyama Primary School. The performance level of these schools was not disclosed, for ethical reasons. The selection of these schools was based on the premises that, according to Ribbins (2002:14):

- schools differ from each other in their achievements;
- it is possible to ... rank schools according to how successful they are in the, and
- it is possible to relate these rankings to the internal features of the schools.

The selected schools differ from each other in their performance, ranking and internal features. During the analysis of the data, the schools were referred as ‘school one’, ‘school two’, ‘school three’ and ‘school four’.

#### **4.5. THE SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS**

Qualitative studies are mainly conducted by using samples selected through the use of purposeful sampling (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle 2006:266). In qualitative research it is difficult for researchers to precisely specify the number of participants in the study. Rather, the researchers use their own procedures to begin collecting the data. This is explained as researchers choose a sample based on their judgement of information possession by participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007:114).

I made use of purposeful sampling techniques to select the participants of the study. I collected data from two SIP experts from Regional Education Bureau (REB), two SIP experts from ZED, two SIP experts from WEOs and from different members of the school community involved in the implementation of the SIP at school level. These included four principals of the four schools, four supervisors of the schools, four head teachers, 20 PTA members in the four schools (five members from each school), 28 teachers (seven from each school) and 28 students (seven from each school) of the four schools.

#### **4.6. INSTRUMENTS FOR THE COLLECTION OF THE DATA**

To answer the research questions and to achieve the objectives of the study, a study of the literature, interviews, observations and focus group discussions were employed.

The reasons for using these instruments are explained below.

#### **4.6.1. Literature study**

I answered research questions one, two and three by focusing on a review of the literature. I also consulted the literature and research studies to construct the theoretical framework of the study. The literature study also laid the foundation for the empirical study, and it was used to find answers to the questions.

#### **4.6.2. Interviews**

By means of interviews qualitative researchers obtain information-rich data (Alvesson 2011:2; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:3). Interviews enabled me to get in-depth information concerning the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the school effectiveness of the selected schools. From the two main types of interviews, I made use of unstructured interviews. Koul (2006:176) describes the advantage of an unstructured interview as that it provides flexibility by giving the researcher room to rephrase questions as well as to adjust the procedures to be followed. Unstructured interviews create the opportunity for better interactions with the participants, and helped me to get a better understanding of the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness. Moreover, Merriam (2009:88) suggests that interviewing can be used to explore issues which cannot be observed, and interviews give a detailed account of the experiences related to the practice.

I conducted one-to-one interviews with the SIP experts of REB, ZED and WEO, the principals, and the supervisors of the schools and the head teachers. The interview schedule comprised seven to fifteen (differing number of questions for different categories of participants) open-ended questions, and a number of sub-questions. The sub-questions were asked in cases where the participants did not give sufficient information on the topic (Alvesson 2011:12; Guest, Buance & Johnson 2006:63). In-depth interviews, lasting about 30-40 minutes, were conducted with the selected participants. All the interviews were conducted in the Amharic

language to avoid communication barriers which might occur when using English which is a foreign language for the participants.

#### **4.6.3. Focus-group discussions**

I used focus-group discussions to triangulate the data I obtained through interviews and to make the interview data rich by additional insights. Coleman (2012:255) advises that “There are decisions to be made about the composition of a focus group, taking into account the impact of members of the group on each other”. This made me consider group diversity that may affect the flow of the conversation during the discussions. Besides, I guided the respondents carefully in a way that enabled me to get in-depth information related to their experiences regarding the outcomes of the SIP. I made use of this tool to go deeper into the ideas related to the outcomes of the SIP and related issues. This method helped me to bring together a relatively large number of people at one time.

Thus, the different discussion groups were discussion group of students, discussion group of teachers, etc. As the moderator of the focus-group discussion, I tried to control those who wanted to dominate the discussion. The focus-group discussions were held with teachers, students, and PTA members, consisting of between 5 to 7 individuals. The discussions were conducted in their mother-tongue (Sidama language) with the students and Amharic language with the teachers and the PTA members. Each focus group-discussion lasted between 40 to 50 minutes.

#### **4.6.4. Observations**

Qualitative studies make use of observations. Before conducting an observation, I noted that it is important to plan what to observe (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:97) and this made me reduce observation checklist. I spent my time in the field observing and recording events in the schools with the intention to understand what has improved since the implementation of

the SIP. Best and Kahn (2004:199) indicate that the observation can be of the setting or of physical activities, non-verbal communications, planned and unplanned activities and interactions. Moreover, Cipani (2009:7) reflects that observations can be used to secure information regarding ongoing phenomena. In respect of this view, Gallagher, Bagin and Moore (2005:333) mention that,

“It becomes evident through observation that a program is producing good results when parents and pupils express more friendly attitudes toward the school, and when teachers wish to improve their skills in human relations, manifest deeper interest in pupil welfare, or take a more active part in community life.”

Observations in the study were done with the intent as described in the quotation. I conducted a one week-observation in each of the schools. I systematically recorded what I observed using a checklist and I included emergent issues related to the topic. This helped me to see the outcomes of the SIP on the effectiveness of the schools regarding the issues under study.

#### **4.6.5. Document analysis**

School plans, reports, minutes, memos, letters and the students' examination results were analysed as they reflect issues related to the outcomes of the SIP on the school's effectiveness. The SIP involves the production and exchange of various documents used for communication or for reporting purposes. These documents and other official documents related to the students' achievement, the ranking of the schools and decisions on relevant matters were analysed to substantiate the data I collected by means of other instruments. In using each of the documents, I have carefully checked for their authenticity. In cases where the principals told me that they had the soft copies of certain documents, I did not use those documents as there was the possibility of editing or deleting certain sections of the documents. I used only those documents that were communicated to the bodies concerned and that were filed with the signatures of the authorities and the seal of the school or the offices. In addition, I excluded documents which were not directly related to the topic (Berkovich & Eyal 2015:132).

#### **4.7. DATA-COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The planning of the practical sessions is critically important for the successful collection of the data (Alvesson 2011:46). Before going on field visits for the collection of the data, I developed data-collection protocols for each instrument. Then, after receiving ethical clearance, I began the data-collection process. I started with the collection of the data after having the consent forms signed by the participants. One-to-one interviews were conducted in consideration of the time the participants had free, likewise with the focus-group sessions. All the interviews and focus-group discussions were tape-recorded with the help of assistants and were later transcribed for analysis and interpretation. The tape recorder used for the recording of the interviews was checked by experienced technicians at Hawassa University. The data-collection assistants (one experienced educational researcher from Hawassa University and one experienced school principal) and I were oriented regarding the operation of the recorder. In the end I transferred the data to my personal computer.

#### **4.8. DATA-ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES**

The data-analysis was based on predetermined themes for the reviewed literature and the emergent themes from the empirical study. Data-analysis in qualitative studies starts first with the interviews, and the emerging themes were identified to revise the subsequent data-collection processes. The study was guided by the principle "begin at the beginning" (Simons 2009:119). The researcher stresses that qualitative researchers develop their own frame of analysis immediately after stating the research questions. During the observations and the interviews, I took down notes and memos to help me analyse the data.

Chilisa and Preece (2005:172) suggest that when the data-collection starts, the researcher has to begin with the analysis and this has to continue throughout the data-collection process. There is no single method to be used during the analysis of the qualitative data (Barbour

2014:313; Roulston 2014:297). During the analysis, I focused on categorising and identifying themes based on my research questions. I had an open mind to include emergent themes in my analysis as the data-collection and the analysis proceeded. The data obtained from each instrument was placed under the relevant category, yet leaving space for emergent issues.

After completing the data-collection, I listened to the recorded data and transcribed it. During the transcription I focused on more significant accounts (Alvesson 2011:59). When reading and re-reading the transcripts, I coded the responses and identified six major categories, namely leadership, teaching and learning, the school environment, community participation, the overall effectiveness of the schools, challenges affecting the school's effectiveness and solutions suggested to enhance its effectiveness. Then I presented the data under the major themes and sub-themes.

During the analysis of the data I was interested in the narratives of the participants regarding their experiences by constructing meaning through the narratives (Willig 2014:146). Then the analysis was followed by the interpretation during which I gave due attention to completeness, fairness, empirical accuracy, the value that the interpretation adds, and credibility (Yin 2011:207). I objectively reflected on the results (Roberts 2010:178). Finally, I read the analysis again and presented the discussions on each theme by relating it to the literature and previous studies.

#### **4.9. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY (TRUSTWORTHINESS)**

Validity and reliability can be maximised by using multiple sources of data and data-collection instruments (Guest et al. 2012:85). In relation to reliability and validity in qualitative research, Bogdan and Biklen (2006:48) explain that researchers are interested in thick descriptions and the accurate presentation of the data. Thus, my aim in the study was to enrich the data and to delineate the experiences of the school community regarding the outcomes of the SIP on the effectiveness of the schools. I triangulated data by making use of multiple instruments and various participants (Cox & Hassard 2010:945). To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, I made use of "tests of trustworthiness" as suggested by Bassey (2012:168). These include:



- the prolonged engagement with the data sources;
- persistent observation of emergent issues;
- adequately checking the data with their sources;
- having the data challenged by critical friends;
- the sufficient triangulation of the data; and
- giving a detailed account of the data.

In addition, Chilisa and Preece (2005:161) indicate that qualitative research is concerned with credibility, which is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research; transferability, which is equivalent to external validity. Moreover, in qualitative research *validity* has to do with the way the researchers infer ideas in a trustworthy way (Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & St. Pierre 2007:27). To make the data credible, I spent sufficient time in the field, triangulated the data and recorded my own reflections carefully. Besides, I made the time allotted for interviews and focus-group discussions tailored to respondents as it would be difficult to spend the same amount of time with children and adults (Cohen et al. 2007:145). To ensure transferability and dependability, I used thick descriptions and followed a step-wise data-collection process. Moreover, all the interviews and focus-group discussions were recorded and carefully transcribed.

The transcribed versions of the interviews and focus-group discussions, which were in the Amharic and Sidama languages, were translated into English, and then translated back and checked by language experts to see whether the original meaning of the ideas by the participants was retained. I presented the process I followed during the research and the interpretation of the findings (starting from preliminary data up to the end of the study) to get feedback from various experts, researchers and scholars in the area. I also received essential comments from the senior research staff members, and this assisted me to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

#### 4.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

After developing the research proposal for the study, I secured research ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Committee at UNISA. This paved the way for ethical considerations in the study. Ethics in research is about respecting the rights of those who take part in the study and producing knowledge in an ethical way. Busher and James (2012:91) describe the concept of *research ethics* as being "... intimately intertwined with constructing purposeful learning communities, called research projects, based on trust and respect among its members working together for a purpose". This means that the researcher should respect the participants who help him/her to construct knowledge, and they should trust that the researcher is constructing knowledge without causing any harm to them. Moreover, ethics in research helps to minimise the occurrence of unexpected effects in the research process (Burton & Bartlett 2009:29).

Securing permission for data collection was a chained process as it required getting permission from the head offices before I went to the next. First I wrote a letter to the ZED requesting permission to conduct the study. The education department wrote permission letters to the schools. The principals of the schools granted me permission to collect the data and facilitated communication with the school community. Before conducting the interviews and focus-group discussions, I reached consensus with all the informants regarding what to do with the data and the final results of the study (Cohen et al. 2007:52). I took the responsibility of assuring confidentiality (Roberts 2010:34). I clearly discussed confidentiality and anonymity issues (Mitchell & Jolley 2010:51) with the participants, and showed them the necessary respect to get their cooperation during the data-collection process. I indicated that the information they would give me would be kept confidential, and that their names would not be mentioned. Moreover, I informed them that their participation was voluntary and that they could at any time withdraw from participating in the research. As Bogdan and Biklen (2006:53) indicated, the aims and contents of the study and possible outcomes were explained to the participants. Ethics has to do with "meeting both the participants' concerns and the researcher's obligation to produce public knowledge", according to Simons (2009:96).

I was guided by a professional supervisor who has rich experience in conducting qualitative research, and I tried to deal with all the dilemmas related to ethics in qualitative research. No harm was done to the participants. They were selected purposefully and informed about the process of the research. They were also asked to sign consent forms to show that they agree to participate in the study. More precisely, Bassey (2012:168) listed the tests of respect for the participants in a case study as including the following:

- Initially, has permission been given to you by the appropriate manager to conduct research in the setting?
- What arrangements have been agreed on for transferring the ownership of the utterances and actions to the researcher...to compile the case report?
- What arrangements have been made for identifying or concealing the contributing individuals and the particular setting of the research in the case report?
- What arrangements have been agreed upon for giving permission to publish the case report, and in what form?

I prepared consent forms for all the participants and got them signed before starting the data-collection. Moreover, I got permission from the parents or the guardians to collect data from students who are younger than 18 years of age, as I was going to collect data from primary and secondary school children (Seidman 2006:43; Rapley 2007:28). In addition, the children who participated in the study signed an assent form prepared in their mother-tongue (Sidama language), and I made the data-collection tools appropriate to their age (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittler 2013:65).

This section discussed issues relating to ethics in the study.

The next section gives a brief conclusion of the chapter.

#### **4.11. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the researcher explicated the research philosophy and the methodological steps that are used to conduct the study. With the assumption that the participants of the study could construct meanings of the events related to the topic, I used the constructivist paradigm. The qualitative case study approach was selected to study the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the school effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools which I selected purposefully. I chose the purposeful sampling technique to select participants of the study as it was considered appropriate to select information-rich cases. Interviews, focus-group discussions, observations and document analysis were the instruments selected for the collection of the data. The researcher furthermore indicated that data-collection and analysis are parallel activities. Making data analysis parallel to data collection helped me consider the emergent issues. Finally, after discussing issues related to validity and reliability, the researcher presented the ethical principles that were followed while conducting the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher provides an analysis of the data collected and discusses the findings of the study by bringing together the data gathered from the interviews, the focus-group discussions, the observations and relevant documents. The data for the study was collected from October 15, 2014 to November 26, 2014. The schedules for the interviews were designed based on the knowledge that I obtained from the literature research. The participants in the study provided me with their opinions in answer to the questions I asked them in the interviews. I recorded the responses of the interviewees and the participants in the focus groups.

For the purpose of the analysis of the data, themes and categories were developed by coding the data. The themes and sub-themes developed were the result of reading the transcripts, the documents and the results of the observations again and again.

The categories and the responses are presented in the following section.

#### **5.2. THE CATEGORIES AND THE RESPONDENTS**

This section indicates from whom the responses regarding the major themes were obtained. The categories of the themes were produced by focusing mainly on the experiences of the school community, the domains of the SIP in the Ethiopian context, and issues that emerged during the collection and analysis of the data. The main themes identified relate to leadership, teaching and learning, the school environment, community participation, the overall effectiveness of the schools, the challenges affecting the SIP and school effectiveness, and

solutions suggested by the participants. The table below indicates the respondents according to the category of themes, from whom the responses were obtained, and the instruments used to gather the information.

**Table 5.1: Category of themes and respondents**

No	Main themes	Data/Responses obtained from	Instruments used
1	Leadership	Principals, supervisors, experts, teachers, PTA members and students	Interviews, focus-group discussions, Observations and document analysis
2	Teaching and learning	Principals, supervisors, experts, teachers, PTA members, students and the researcher's observation	Interviews, focus-group discussions, observations and document analysis
3	Schools or the learning environment	Principals, supervisors, experts, teachers, PTA members, students and the researcher's observation	Interviews, focus-group discussions, observations and document analysis
4	Community participation	Principals, supervisors, teachers, PTA members, students and the researcher's observation	Interviews, focus-group discussions, observations and document analysis
5	The overall effectiveness of the schools	Principals, supervisors, teachers, PTA members, students and the researchers' observation	All instruments
6	Challenges affecting school effectiveness	Supervisors, teachers, PTA members, students and the researcher's observation	All instruments
7	Solutions suggested to minimise the impact of the challenges on school effectiveness	Supervisors, teachers, PTA members, students and the researcher's observation	All instruments

Based on the theoretical framework, the literature on the SIP within the Ethiopian context, and the empirical data, the main themes in the above table were further split into sub-themes, as shown in the table below.

**Table 5.2: Themes and sub-themes**

No	Themes	Sub-themes
1	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning of school activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Availability of support for the schools</li> <li>✓ Involvement of stakeholders in planning</li> <li>✓ Setting priorities during planning</li> <li>✓ Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of planned activities on SIP</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Involvement of stakeholders in pertinent decision-making and school activities</li> <li>• Leading professional development activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mechanisms used to empower teachers</li> <li>✓ Induction of newly-deployed teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Leadership support to the school community</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation of overall school activities</li> </ul>
2	Teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching techniques/methods</li> <li>• Teachers' roles in teaching and learning               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Engagement in professional development</li> <li>✓ Collaboration among teachers</li> <li>✓ Motivating learners</li> <li>✓ Assisting students with special needs</li> <li>✓ Working with parents</li> <li>✓ Assessment of students</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ engagement in peer-learning</li> <li>✓ classroom discipline</li> <li>✓ support to students by the school community</li> <li>✓ follow-up of students' progress</li> <li>✓ feedback on students' work</li> <li>✓ performance evaluation of teachers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3	School environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources in the schools</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Suitability of the environment for students' with special needs</li> <li>• Safety policy</li> </ul>
4	Community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and community communication strategies/channels</li> <li>• Parents' involvement in children's education</li> <li>• Resource contribution and its management</li> </ul>
5	Overall effectiveness of the schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments of participants and document analysis</li> </ul>
6	Challenges to school effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General comments of the participants</li> </ul>
7	Suggestions by participants for future improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General comments of the participants</li> </ul>

### 5.3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOLS SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

Two of the four schools selected for the study were considered to be model schools and two were considered poorly performing schools. In this study the former schools were named School one and School three, and the latter ones were named School two and School four.



The four schools and the documents analysed are discussed briefly below.

- School one: This school has a brick fence. The buildings are also built of bricks. There are two separate libraries, separate laboratories for each of the science subjects, pedagogical centre (where materials which support teaching and learning are stored) and workshop. The classroom buildings are far from each other and there is sufficient space between them. The school grounds are green. Everything seemed organised when I arrived for my first visit.
- School two: This school has a wooden fence. The buildings are made from wood and mud. The floors of the classrooms are cemented. There is no free space between the offices and the classrooms, i.e., the staff office and the classrooms are all in a line. There is a highway next to the school. During my observations the teachers never spent time at the school after completing their teaching responsibilities.
- School three: This school is also fenced in by means of wood. The buildings in the school are old except the library, pedagogical centre (where materials which support teaching and learning are stored) and the laboratory. There is also a new building for students' with disabilities. There are separate offices for the administration and teachers of the school. The teachers in the school look busy and committed to their teaching responsibilities.
- School four: This school is poorly fenced but the classrooms and offices are built from bricks. There is a space between the administration building and the classrooms. There is one laboratory for all the science subjects, a library and a pedagogical centre (where materials which support teaching and learning are stored) in the school. The school is dusty. There are only few trees. The school is one of those built recently. The teachers in the school are young.

As the performance of the students and other related factors were used to categorise the schools as model schools or poorly performing schools in Ethiopia, it is possible to categorise the model schools, i.e. Schools one and three are more effective, and the poorly performing schools, i.e. Schools two and four are less effective in their performance. Thus, the reflections of the participants, the data from the documents and the observation results are presented by

taking the effectiveness level of the schools into consideration. This, in turn, is used to reflect on the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the effectiveness of the schools in Sidama Zone.

The data with regard to the main themes and sub-themes are presented and discussed in the following sections. The data presentation on the main themes is followed by a discussion of the findings on the respective theme in relation to the findings in the literature.

#### **5.4. DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTS ANALYSED**

The documents analysed included:

- The SIP and CPD plans: These are the plans produced by the schools regarding school improvement and the teachers' professional development activities to be accomplished in a particular period of time.
- Reports: These are the performance reports of the school to the school community that are meant to indicate what the school has achieved during a particular period of time.
- Reports, letters, memos and the examination results of the students. I carefully checked the authenticity of the documents before using them for analysis. I did not use the soft copies of documents for analysis.
- Minutes: These are the decisions made at particular meetings. They were used to describe how the decisions that were made in the school/s were affecting practice.
- Letters and memos: These are the documents used to communicate with the school community.
- Examination results of the students: These are students' performance results in the national, regional and school-level examinations, and were used to describe the performance of the schools and the students.

I carefully checked the authenticity of the documents before using them in my analysis.

## **5.5. LEADERSHIP**

Leadership in the schools is seen in relation to the planning and the involvement of the stakeholders in pertinent decision-making and other school activities, leading professional development, support to the school community and monitoring and evaluation of school activities.

The data on these issues is presented below, followed by a discussion of the findings.

### **5.5.1. Data related to leadership**

The next sub-sections the researcher presents the data in relation to the main theme of leadership.

#### **5.5.1.1. The planning of the school activities**

Successful planning assists the schools in improving their performance. This happens if there is leadership support for the school community on how to make the plans.

Regarding the available support on planning, the ZED expert pointed out,

*“We give training to principals and supervisors on planning and related issues. After attending the trainings, they go to the schools and handle the preparation of the plans for their own schools.”*

The assumption of the expert is that the training that are given to the principals and the supervisors facilitate the making of the plans at school level. This requires the commitment of the principals and the supervisors to disseminate the information they received during the training sessions. However, the practice at the ground seems to be different particularly because the supervisors are busy persons.

The supervisor of School four confirmed,

*“I make comments on what the school has planned. I do not have time to engage in the whole planning process of each school. I am responsible for a number of duties in the cluster schools as well as at WEO.”*

This explanation means that only making comments on what has been planned by each school is considered as a support mechanism. In this case, the training of the supervisors and the principals is not being disseminated. Thus, the plans are produced by the school community which does probably not have the proper knowledge of the planning process.

Yet, the reflections from the participants in all of the cases show that the stakeholders participate in the planning process. The extent of the participation varies from the full participation of the school community in the planning process to cases where the community members are asked to endorse a plan produced by a number of the management members.

Regarding the involvement of the school community, the principal of School three assured,

*“Planning is the key to achieve our goals. We bring all stakeholders to take part in the planning process. We set priorities of the plan by involving representatives of all the stakeholders.”*

The belief of the principal is that the achievement of the goals will be easier if there is a plan, produced by involving the school community. Besides, the plan is in respect of the agreed priorities.

Reflecting a similar view, the principal of School two said,

*“We have a mechanism to engage all stakeholders in the planning process. Parents, students and teachers participate through representatives. It is a norm established by the school management.”*

The explanation indicates that the management of the school played a role in engaging the school community in the planning process. As it is difficult to have each individual participate in the planning process, the management preferred to ensure the participation of the school community through representatives.

The comment by one of the head teachers in School one is also in conformity with the above ideas,

*“In this school, planning is the concern of all in the school. Each department gathers data from its members. Then, the data will be analysed and a plan will be produced on agreed priorities.”*

The essential point here is that there is participation on the part of the stakeholders during the planning of the school activities. This makes the school community understand what is expected from each one, and they act accordingly. Establishing a norm that makes the planning process participatory is also critical to ensure the sustainability of the intended practice. This process, in turn, will help to bring about real improvement in the schools as what is planned will be equally owned by the school and the community. However, the selection of the participants who represent the school community needs to be done with caution. The idea of ‘who is representing’ the students, the teachers and the parents is important.

A teacher in School two commented,

*“It is the principal who picks up representatives of teachers and parents. The nomination does not consider all necessary conditions such as commitment, experience and qualification. The principal uses his own criteria: the intimacy he has with the teachers.”*

This explanation, with a doubt, shows that some problems are being experienced during the selection of the representative teachers to be engaged in the planning process. The principal, in this particular case, is not making use of defined and agreed-upon criteria. The selection of representatives in the above context seems not to be on merit and other established principles or guidelines. On the other hand, the students in Schools one and three reflected that they nominated students who represent them in the planning of the school activities.

One of the students in School one indicated,

*“In my school, our representatives conduct meetings with students at each section level, and they gather information regarding our needs and problems. They collect our ideas to forward them during planning.”*

The students in School one seem to be participating through their representatives. The opinions of the students, as reflected by the participants of School three, are heard and taken into consideration during the planning process. During my visit to School three, I also noticed that the representatives of the students were discussing annual plan-related issues of the school with the principal and the vice principals of the school.

In School four one of the students commented,

*“I do not know who is doing the planning for the school. The principal reads the plan of the school during general meeting at the beginning of the school year.”*

(Others nodded their heads showing their agreement - my observation).

This comment indicates that the students in the school are not given the opportunity to be involved in the planning process. Regarding the setting of priorities during planning, the teachers in Schools one and three reflected that there is a trend of a need-analysis, and identifying priorities among a list of needs.

The words of one of the teachers were,

*“Before the beginning of the next academic year, we are always asked to identify problems and issues which we want to be addressed in the annual plan of the school...The school plan is developed based on agreed priorities.”*

On the other hand, in Schools two and four the teachers are of the opinion that they are not actively involved in setting priorities.

One of the participants in School two reflected,

*“We always hear the principal saying ‘These are the priorities we have to focus for this year’. We cannot change what the principal proposes. Our participation is needed to*

*endorse what is proposed by the principal. ...We are expected to give blessings to the proposal of our leaders.”*

This indicates that there is grievance among the teachers regarding the planning process. In the same school, I discovered that the annual plans for two consecutive years were similar. That means there were no changes in the contents of the plans. This shows that the school management has been using the same plan year-after-year. In such cases it can be deduced that improvement-planning is not based on the current needs of the school. It seems that this is happening because there is no real planning process which involves the school community. This is likely to diminish the effectiveness of the school. Moreover, there is also a tendency to consider planning as the duty of the top management.

The words of the principal in School four confirmed this,

*“As a principal, I lead the planning process, and I do it with the two vice principals. We produce the plan based on our experience of previous year in the school, but we get it endorsed during general meeting of the school community.”*

In this particular case, the school management is taking the initiative of planning, and of preparing the improvement plan. The participation of the school community is negligible as they have no contribution, except to give their blessing to what has been planned by the principals.

In the above section the data on the planning process were presented.

The next section explicates the results in relation to the involvement of the school community in decision-making as a function of school leadership.

#### 5.5.1.2. The involvement of the school community in decision-making and other activities

The leadership in Schools one and three seems to be distributed as there is participation of the school community in decision-making at different levels. The data shows that distributed

leadership exists as well as shared decision-making in School one, and to a reasonable extent in School three.

This is communicated by the supervisor of School one as,

*“There is no problem of participation in decision-making and other school activities. The school management always encourages the school community to participate in all sorts of activities. I also support (though the support is limited) the schools which I supervise on strategies to engage the school community in planning, decision-making and other important activities.”*

The principals and the supervisors in all the schools are of the opinion that the decisions are made by involving all who have an interest in the school's activities. The students in Schools one and three also confirmed that they usually participate in most of the school activities through their representatives. They are represented by their council members in decisions that particularly affect them.

One of the students in School three indicated,

*“Our representatives take part in all activities of the school. Members of students’ council usually participate in decisions that affect students. They also participate in different meetings of the school.”*

The description means that the students of the school are empowered and play their roles in all kinds of activities in the school. During the discussions I had with the PTA members, the students and the teachers in the schools, I realised that in Schools two and four the participation of stakeholders was less than expected.

In relation to this, one of the PTA members in School two complained,

*“The principal feels that he is the only person to make decisions for the school. He makes decisions by himself and requests us only to endorse and sign on them. Sometimes, we sign on the decision made by him...the other time we reflect that we need to discuss.”*



These words show that the PTA members are not properly participating in making important decisions as they are silenced and have to agree with what the principal decided.

Similarly, one of the head teachers in School two mentioned,

*“It is not common to participate in day to day decisions in the schools. It is the responsibility of the school management to make decisions. We, sometimes, participate in general meetings to endorse the decisions of the top management.”*

In this case it seems that there is grievance even on the part of the head teacher, namely that he is not participating in decisions that affect various the practices in the school. This means that what is decided by the management is not owned by the rest of the school community. In turn, this affects the implementation of the decisions and the performance of the school.

One of the responsibilities entrusted to the school leadership is to lead the professional development in the schools.

The data related to this sub-theme is presented below.

#### 5.5.1.3. Leading the professional development activities

This sub-section presents the experiences of the school community with regard to leading the professional development in the schools. Three of the schools in the study area have staff development plans which they prepared to implement in the short and the long terms.

Supervisor of School three had this to say:

*“The school, I supervise, has a three year staff development plan. It has made the staff engage in school based learning activities. Each teacher plans for him/herself based on the broad school plan and produces a portfolio of his/her own CPD. We have also long term plans which help us to engage teachers in upgrading programs.”*

In this case the teachers are engaged in the day-to-day self-improvement activities and prepare a portfolio of their own CPD experiences. In Schools one, two and three, the teachers are obliged to engage in experience-sharing with the teachers of cluster schools.

This situation is reflected by the principal in School two as,

*“My school works with cluster of schools in nearby distance. We have common meetings every month. We share best experiences with each other. Though there are some challenges which are affecting the process of experience sharing, our teachers are learning from best practices.”*

Experience-sharing, as described above, may help the schools to learn the best practices and to improve their weaknesses. This may enhance their effectiveness by creating learning opportunities from each other. However, the supervisors indicated that though the schools are clustered to help the schools learn from each other, there are challenges affecting the effectiveness of experience-sharing at school level.

The supervisor of School three confirmed:

*“Teachers raise a number of questions for which we do not have answers. For example, they request for transport facilities, allowances and refreshments. But there is no budget to cover these expenses. These conditions are making leading CPD activities a challenge at cluster level.”*

This indicates that there is a shortage of the necessary facilities to run experience-sharing forums at cluster level. It is likely that this will affect the effectiveness of the experience-sharing practice and the performance of the schools. On the other hand, the participants in the four schools reflected that opportunities have been given to the teachers to attend upgrading courses.

One of the experts in the education office had this to say,

*“We give opportunity (teachers get some chances of upgrading) of professional development to the staff on competitive basis. They usually get chances to upgrade based on efficiency results they have during the school year.”*

These seemingly convincing statements show that opportunities have been given to the teachers to upgrade their qualifications from one level to the next. Having the teachers compete to get a chance for further education also seems fair. However, its fairness should be checked against two perspectives. Firstly, the teachers who do not get upgrading opportunities because of their efficiency continue to be teachers in the schools. If these teachers have capacity problems which the evaluation results might partly reflect, then this will affect the performance of the schools. Secondly, the teachers are also of the view that the efficiency results are full of problems and are affected by a number of factors.

In addition, the teachers in School four reflected as follows,

*“The principal is an executive and a political appointee. He has the right to make us get opportunity for further education if he is happy and he may not let us get it if he thinks we should not.”*

This shows that the principal is not trusted by the teachers as their leader. This is likely to affect the work environment and the performance of the school.

An even more bitter complaint by one of the teachers in School two, namely

*“I have served for 18 years, yet I could not get a single opportunity of training because I am not the type of person wanted by the ever changing principals based on the interests of the leaders. Those who have only five years of experience have joined graduate programs because they are members of the ruling party.”*

The above instance implies that there is dissatisfaction with some teachers. If professional development is slowed down by such ideas and certain interests of the leaders, those affected by the problem may not carry out their duties successfully. I have also come to understand from the document-analysis that professional development opportunities through further education for teachers in the four schools are limited.

From the document analysis, I have seen that most of the staff development opportunities were related to what the teachers need to improve in relation to their subject matter. They are expected to identify their weaknesses based on their experiences and plans for improvement. Thus, the professional development plans have mainly to do with the activities which the

teachers carry out as part of their day-to day-routine, and only a few upgrading opportunities are given to the teachers to upgrade their qualifications from diploma to degree level. However, there are no plans to conduct workshops and refreshment training sessions, to give the teachers distance learning opportunities and to organise educational visits.

Hence, the teachers complained that they are not given any training opportunity. Though there are very rare cases when science and language teachers have been given opportunities of attending workshops, the workshops were not planned by the schools.

Regarding this, the teachers in School two forwarded,

*“We see that some language and science teachers are sometimes invited to attend workshops organised by other organisations. Such workshops are not basically planned by the school, or education office. Neither our school nor the education office has experience of planning for such workshops or other training.”*

In respect of a relevant point, one of the experts from the education office contemplated as follows,

*“Teacher development programs mainly focus on school-based activities and the office does not have budget to organise additional workshops. The office assists teachers through supervisors and offers them a chance to upgrade.”*

It is likely that the CPD which focuses on the teachers' day-to-day activities has become the concern of the education office, but refresher training and workshops are not arranged by the office. As part of the CPD, induction in the schools is used to make new teachers become familiar with the school environment. The novice teachers are inducted with the help of mentors and a study module in the schools. The schools have induction plans, and the focus of the plans is on classroom management, the students' discipline, school regulations and other issues related to teaching and learning.

Regarding this, the principal of School four said,

*“New teachers are teaching few sections, and they have the minimum load because they engage in induction course. This helps them to carry out the induction activities as well as the teaching responsibility successfully.”*

This explains that the new teachers are doing less than the load of the experienced teachers as the induction activities are considered as a load for them. This gives them time to accomplish the induction tasks and may help the school to realise the aim of making the new teachers competent in the school. This will probably contribute to school effectiveness. However, the culture and practice of inducting new teachers is affected by some challenges.

This was noticed when the supervisor in School four justified:

*“The experienced teachers sometimes show resistance to serve as mentors ... They request for incentives.”*

The teachers in the same school were of the opinion that,

*“Spending time with new teachers is time consuming, and we do not get enough time for preparation of our lessons.”*

Both comments indicate that there are problems in relation to the implementation of the induction program in the school. The resistance by the experienced teachers, a shortage of time and the lack of incentives were reported as challenges. Under such circumstances the potential of new teachers cannot be fully exploited and the teachers cannot teach the subject matter effectively. This negatively affects teaching and learning, which will probably minimise the school's effectiveness.

In this sub-section the researcher presented detailed data on leading professional development activities in the schools.

The following section presents data on leadership support for the school community.

#### 5.5.1.4. Leadership support for the school community

Consensus has been reached that leadership is one of the key factors that affect school effectiveness. Issues raised regarding leadership support in the schools mirror that strategies are used to support the staff, particularly the teachers, in all of the schools.

Regarding leadership support, the principal of School three maintained,

*“I have been using different strategies to assist teachers in the school. When some teachers face certain difficulties, I use coaching approach. I sit together with them, discuss on the problems and suggest ways to solve the problem.”*

The principal in School two contemplated,

*“Sometimes, I discuss with individual teachers. But the two vice principals are responsible to fully support teachers on daily basis. Particularly, the academic vice principal handles matters related to teaching and learning.”*

The two quotations above show that limited support is being given to the teachers by the principals.

This has also been observed by a teacher in School two,

*“The principal does not have time to spend supporting teachers. He is mainly engaged in activities and meetings outside of the school. He comes to the school only two or three times in a week and acts like a visitor.”*

In all the schools I noticed that the principals were not at school when I visited the schools. It took me a significant time to make arrangements to meet them for interviews. This situation together with the ideas expressed in the above quotation shows that the principals' instructional leadership role is non-existent in the schools. This is because the principals are occupied with out-of-school activities.

Similarly, there only the minimum support given by the supervisors to the principals and the teachers in the schools because the supervisors are busy. The supervisors in Schools one,

two and three indicated that they have to support a minimum of three schools in the cluster. Consequently, they do not have the time to support the schools which are in different locations.

The supervisor in School two stressed,

*“I know that I have to support both principals and teachers in various aspects. However, my support, as I feel, is limited as I have to support the three schools in the cluster. They have diverse problems and it is difficult for me to address the concerns of all schools.”*

This shows that the supervisor is not providing the supervisory support adequately because he is expected to address numerous issues in distant schools.

This was also shared by a teacher in School one,

*“The supervisor is not in a position to support us with the type of support we need. He is a busy visitor once in a while. Often, he does not have time to discuss with us. Above all, he is more concerned with collecting ideas using a checklist than interacting with us.”*

This quotation confirms that the supervisor is a busy person. He comes to the school for short while and then leaves for another school. Checklists could have been used by the supervisor to monitor the work carried out by the staff. However, this does not guarantee the improvement or advancement in the achievement of the intended goals. To enhance the effectiveness of the school, the collected data needs to be analysed and communicated to the school community.

So far the data in relation to school leadership support to the school community has been presented. The other sub-theme under ‘leadership’ is monitoring and the evaluation of the school improvement activities.

The data on this theme is presented below.

#### 5.5.1.5. Monitoring and evaluating the school improvement activities

Monitoring and evaluation strategies are included in the improvement plans of the schools. The plans in the schools indicate that there are times when an evaluation of the school's improvement activities has to be conducted. The monitoring and evaluation strategies are set by the SIC. The plans also indicate that the follow-up and evaluation of the school improvement activities are done by the SIC.

In Schools one and three, the participants reported that the SIC members are nominated by the school community. Alternatively, in Schools two and four the SIC members are appointed by the principal.

One of the PTA members in School three said:

*"We have representatives from PTA who participate in monitoring and evaluation. We have nominated members who will participate in the SIC."*

This shows that there is nomination of representatives who participate in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Similarly, the students, who participated in the discussion, in School one pointed out,

*"There are students who participate in monitoring and evaluation of school activities. We nominate them through the students' council. They represent us in the SIC. They gather information from students and they make our voice to be heard."*

The quotation indicates that the students in the school are participating in the leading, monitoring and evaluation of the improvement activities. They also know that they are represented by the nominees in the evaluation process. On the other hand, in Schools two and four the SIC members are appointed by the principal. Besides, the evaluation results are used for reporting purposes.

This is substantiated in the words of the principal of School four,



*“We have the SIC to conduct monitoring and evaluation and I am the chair of the committee. We use various checklists to carry out observation, and to gather relevant data. Then after, we organise the data for reporting to the concerned offices.”*

This information indicates that the monitoring and evaluation results are not used to make adjustments to ongoing practice. This partly implies that the intentions of monitoring and evaluation, as stipulated in the SIP documents, are not achieved.

On the other hand, the teachers in School two were of the view,

*“The SIC which is formed from teachers, students, parents (all members selected by the principal) and the school principal take responsibility of carrying out day to day follow-up of the school’s activities, and final evaluation. It is the principal who directs and makes them do everything.”*

This seems to imply that there is a structure in the school which facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of the school activities. However, the participants feel that they are not actively involved in the monitoring and the evaluation of the improvement activities through the right representatives.

This is indicated by one of the PTA members in the school where she stressed,

*“The SIC is led by the principal and the principal is responsible to handle matters related to evaluation. He forms the committee by picking up from the school community. We get the reports of what is going on through the principal. The principal plays a decision-making role during monitoring and evaluation.”*

This idea supports the above view that the principal forms and leads the SIC. The PTA, in this sense, is not directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the activities in the school. It expects the evaluation results from the SIC. Moreover, the reflection by the supervisor of the same school(school two) tends to inspire the view that he is in the school just to assist the principals and the teachers, and not to participate in the evaluation process.

He said,

*“Carrying out evaluation is the responsibility of the SIC. My duty is to assist principals and teachers on areas where there are weaknesses. But I support the schools when they carry out evaluation.”*

It seems that the supervisors are not concerned with participating in the evaluation process. This negligible participation only takes the form of providing support. Besides, the teachers in school two complained that they are always asked to have group-discussions and to report what they feel, but what they report is not contributing to improvement.

They mentioned,

*“They tell us to discuss regarding what is going on in the school in one to five groups. We always discuss and submit what we need to be improved, but we do not see any change happening because of our discussions. ...It is becoming a waste of our time.”*

The claim by the teachers is that their discussions are not considered valuable enough to bring about changes to the ongoing practice in the school. This made them feel that they are wasting their time on issues which do not bring about any change.

In the above sections, the details in relating to leadership were presented.

In the next section the researcher discusses the findings in respect of this theme.

### **5.5.2. Discussion of the findings related to leadership**

Studies indicated that the leadership capacity of schools to manage change affects the improvement initiative of the schools (Cravens & Hallinger 2012:159). In schools where the leadership was participatory, the school community was engaged in the planning process. This created a better understanding among those concerned with the business of schools, and facilitated the achievement of the planned goals (Harris & Muijs 2005:61; Zmuda et al. 2004:3). Besides, involving the right individuals as members of the planning team is

considered to be a means of beginning success (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement 2006:1), and the plans produced based on needs-assessment are taken as requirements that can help the schools to meet their improvement targets (Harris 2002; Hopkins 2005; May, Huff, & Goldring 2012; Stein 2009). This was particularly true of Schools one and three. The schools were considered to be model schools when compared to the other schools. Moreover, Gordon (2004:166) made it clear that the principals can add to their trust-building ability by making use of collaboratively-intended improvement plans. Thus, collaborative planning has helped Schools one and three to become more successful. This is in line with the suggestions reported by Makoelle (2011:266) and Danielson (2002:51).

Alternatively, in schools where the planning process was complicated by a number of problems, such as that the planning team members were not accepted by the school community, having only a few members or the principal with a few others produce a plan, or the principal alone taking the responsibility to produce a plan for the school, what was planned did not bring real improvement. Wallace (2005:166) indicated that a plan which is being imposed on the school community by top management contributes very little to effectiveness of schools. Schools two and four were considered as less effective, probably, as the experience of the school community shows, the planning process used by the schools were not effective (Pont et al. 2008:43). This reduced the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness. A lack of collaboration during the planning stages reduces the functioning of the schools to a minimum, as the improvement activities are to be based on what is planned by the school (Raynor 2004:152). It is also noted that leadership in schools is a critical factor that determines the fate of schools, starting from the planning stage (Bush 2010a:650).

The Theory of Change model advocates that participatory decision-making creates an enabling environment for the school community to engage in the improvement processes (Gold et al. 2009:244). Besides, the building of distributed decision-making in the schools facilitates the ways to let the school community own the decisions (Harris & Mujijs 2005:14; Hopkins 2005:7; Weiner 2014:256; Zmuda et al. 2004:169). In Schools one and three the decision-making was participatory, and this resulted in the smooth functioning of the schools. This finding is similar to the findings reported by Hallinger and Huber (2012:359). However, in schools where the decisions were already made by the school management and

communicated to the school community, the school community felt that the decisions were a sort-of imposition by the management as they did not take part in the decision-making process. This has negatively affected the level of the school community's participation in the schools' activities and minimised the effectiveness of the schools. These findings are parallel to the findings of Thoonen et al. (2012:441).

On the other hand, an exploration of the ideas in relation to leading CPD indicated that the teachers in the schools were engaged in CPD activities through their involvement in the day-to-day self-improvement tasks and experience-sharing with the cluster schools. Studies also confirm that networking and school-to-school collaboration can help the schools to facilitate their professional development through experience-sharing among the teachers (Chapman & Muijs 2014:351). Yet, the arrangements for experience-sharing at cluster level are challenged by a lack of the necessary facilities, such as the lack of a means of transport for teachers to travel from their school to the cluster school and the shortage of funds to cover the daily expenses of the teachers during cluster meetings. Alternatively, in addition to school-based CPD activities and experience-sharing at cluster level, a number of teachers were also engaged in courses to upgrade their qualifications. Nevertheless, leading these CPD initiatives in the schools has been negatively affected by:

- a shortage of facilities, and the lack of support;
- the resistance by the teachers to engage in CPD activities or to induct newly-deployed teachers; and
- not recruiting and selecting teachers based on merit for upgrading courses.

Moreover, the educational leaders at zonal/woreda/school level did not give attention to additional training, workshops, educational visits and distance course opportunities. Neil and Morgan (2003:7) indicated that the creating of opportunities for training, workshops and distance courses are important mechanisms to cause the teachers to stay up-to-date in their profession. But these aspects were missing in the schools. The limited opportunities the teachers had to advance their profession were affected by the problems listed above. Besides, there were no other strategies to influence the teachers to engage in learning. This

may hinder the schools from exploiting the full potential of the teachers in the schools, and it may result in the poor performance of the schools (Hoque & Alam 2011:347).

Leadership support to the school community was another issue addressed by the participants. For the smooth functioning of a school, the school community needs to be supported by the school leadership and the leadership needs to work according to certain ethical principles (Anderson et al. 2012:427; Engel 2011:8; Firestone 2014:103; Shapiro & Stefkovich 2011:27; Tang, Lu & Hallinger 2014:669). Besides, the leadership in the schools has to provide support and the essential resources to the school community so as to enhance effectiveness of the school (Pine 2009:99). However, the support given to the school community, particularly to the teachers, was limited for two reasons. Firstly, the principals were busy with out-of-school engagements, and it was not likely to find the principals at the schools. This made the necessary support to be given by principals to teachers, i.e., instructional leadership support, to be missed. Parallel findings were observed by Pont et al. (2008:43) and Danielson (2002:105). Furthermore, Danielson (2002:105-106) found that the educators in some countries spent much of their time on less important routines than working on the improvement of instruction in the schools. However, studies indicate that the principals as leaders should work for the common goal of improvement by becoming pedagogical leaders (Arlesting & Tornsen 2014:857; Smith & Engel 2013: 107; Spangler, Tikhomirov, Sotak & Palrecha 2014:1080). Thus, leadership at school level is not strongly linked to the school improvement initiatives. This is contrary to the findings made by Marsh (2015:72). Yet, it has to be taken into account that the principals often work under great stress (Bellamy, Fulmer, Murphy & Muth 2007:1). Secondly, the supervisory support to schools was found to be limited because there was only one supervisor assigned to support a cluster of schools, and it became difficult for the supervisors to address the diverse issues in the different schools. It was also indicated that School four, being a new school, had more leadership-related problems than the other schools as was likely to be the case in new schools than in the older ones (Paterson, Gow & Deary 2014:20).

The last sub-theme under the main theme of leadership was the issue of monitoring and evaluation. In schools where the leadership is distributed, the school community took part in

the monitoring and evaluation of school improvement activities (The Center for Comprehensive Reform and Improvement 2006:3; Harris 2002:47). In the four schools, the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the school improvement plans and activities was given to the SIC of which the principal was the chairperson (MoE 2011a:3). The committee was entrusted with the responsibility to conduct monitoring and evaluation, and to report to the school community and the education offices. Yet, in School two and four the committee was not trusted, for the reason that the members were selected by the personal biases of the principal, and the committee used to report the way the principal liked it. It has already been indicated that improvement teams with the wrong members cannot contribute to the effectiveness of the schools (The Center for Comprehensive Reform and Improvement 2006:1). Besides, the lack of trust among the principals and the rest of the school community reduced cooperation among them. The importance of building trust among the school community members to ensure cooperation (Browning 2014:388) was not obvious in the schools. Although it has been outlined in the SIP documents that the supervisors monitor and evaluate the SIP processes (MoE 2011c:83), the data did not indicate the active participation of the supervisors in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Furthermore, the continuous discussions of one to five groups of teachers in poorly performing schools, as part of monitoring and evaluation, was not considered as an input to take corrective measures and to make the necessary adjustments to the ongoing practice. This caused the teachers to feel that their discussions were not contributing to the improvement of the schools. Thus, the teachers' observation has negatively affected the performance of those schools. It was also discussed in a study by Ho (2010:613) that the school leadership needs to be receptive to the feedback given to the schools, for the reason of not accepting others' ideas would probably be counter-productive. However, these findings are contradictory to the findings reported by Abebe (2012:8-9).

In the abovementioned sections the researcher presented the data and gave a discussion of the results in relation to leadership.

In the next section the data will be presented, as well as a discussion of the findings on teaching and learning.

## **5.6. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The schools have to focus on teaching and learning when planning for improvement. This domain requires that the schools direct their attention to those factors which are related to teaching and learning.

The experiences of the school community in respect of the outcomes on school effectiveness and a discussion of the findings follow in the following sub-sections.

### **5.6.1. Data on teaching and learning**

The next sub-sections present the data related to teaching and learning.

#### **5.6.1.1. Teaching techniques/methods**

The participants expressed mixed views on teaching techniques. The principals in the four schools agreed that their schools focus on active learning methods, though there is resistance by some teachers.

The principal in School one had this to say,

*“Most of the teachers in the school are committed to the use of active learning approaches. Their professional development plans also focus on acquainting themselves with new approaches that help students to interact with each other.”*

This may show that the school is implementing active learning methods and that the staff members are committed to using the approach. However, this does not guarantee that active learning strategies are fully implemented in the school.

One of the teachers in the same school confirmed,

*“Active learning strategies that are suggested by the school for implementation are making teachers to engage students work in groups, discuss with each other and present what they have done as an assignment to the rest of the class. This is helping some of the students to learn from each other. However, there are students who depend on active ones.”*

This indicates that the students in the school are engaged in active learning and that they support each other. Besides, it shows that some forms of active learning techniques are implemented in the school. Yet, the quotation does not indicate the effective implementation of various active learning methods. Moreover, the suspicion also exists with the teachers that some students may not be understanding the subject matter as they depend on better performing students. If the teachers do not use their own strategies to check what the students have really learned, the problem may affect the performance of those students when they have to carry out certain tasks independently.

Then again, one of the teachers in School four complained,

*“The principal comes up with short reminders saying ‘use active learning’ approach about which we did not have any training so far. I do not think that the principal himself has clear ideas about it.”*

The comment of the teacher confirms that the principal reminds them to use the active learning approach. However, the teachers' concerns regarding having training on active learning indicates that they have gaps in their skills which the approach requires from the teachers.

Moreover, the critique by the students in the same school indicates the extent to which the teachers lack the necessary skills in relation to their instruction,

*“Teachers come to class, tell us to sit in groups, and they go out of class without making us understand what the lesson is about.”*



This information mirrors the poor implementation of active learning in the school. It seems that active learning is not used effectively by the teachers. As the above quotation shows, active learning is intended to have the students perform certain tasks without the support of the teacher/s. The students' words show that there is a gap in the implementation of active learning methods which leads to confusion regarding the use of the active learning approach.

Opposed to this, the teachers in School three mentioned,

*“We are always supported by the academic vice principal regarding different techniques of teaching and classroom management. We know its advantage and we are implementing it for the benefit of our students, our school and our own success.”*

In this school, as can be inferred from the quotation, support is provided to the teachers by the vice principals. The teachers are also committed to implement the active learning method/approach for it benefits their students and the school.

The suggestions of the participants regarding the use of active learning methods indicate that:

- An attempt is being made to use active learning methods, and teachers are expected to use active learning methods.
- Some teachers use the active learning approach incorrectly or have gaps in their skills gaps.
- Though they are supported by some of the principals in respect of the teaching techniques, other principals simply instruct the teachers to use active learning methods in their classes without guiding the teachers.

The above data in respect of teaching methods were indicated as experienced by the school community.

The next section gives an account of teachers' roles in teaching and learning.

### 5.6.1.2. The teachers' roles

The literature on school improvement in the Ethiopian context, as well as in the broader context, indicate that the teachers are expected to engage in professional development activities, to work in collaboration with their colleagues and the parents, to motivate the learners, and to assist those with special needs, and to conduct assessments of the students' learning in the subjects they teach.

The experiences of the participants with regard to these sub-themes are presented below.

#### *5.6.1.2.1. The teachers' engagement in professional development and in collaborating with others*

The data on the professional development of the teachers indicated that they are engaged in the professional development activities which are planned by the schools.

One of the teachers in School four described the teachers' engagement in CPD as,

*"We identify our weaknesses and strengths and plan for improvement. The CPD module is used to help us as a guideline to plan for our own CPD."*

This means that identifying their weakness is the starting point to plan for improvement and engage in CPD.

A similar indication by a teacher in School one was,

*"We identify our own CPD needs and work for improvement of what we need to improve in relation to teaching and learning."*

The experience of the teachers confirms that teaching and learning receives attention during the identification of the CPD needs of the teachers. However, engagement in CPD activities is considered unproductive by some teachers.

One of the teachers in School two criticised the CPD activities in the school by saying,

*“CPD activities are really leading to wastage of our time....CPD is not contributing anything new for us. It is unnecessary routine brought to us simply to make us busy. It seems that the principals and the government want to make us busy.”*

This comment confirms that some teachers are probably not comfortable with CPD as they feel that it is a time-consuming routine to keep them busy.

In contrast, the principal in the same school argued,

*“Some teachers feel that they know everything and they do not want to engage in CPD activities....They consider CPD as a political game designed to waste their time. There is always resistance by teachers.”*

Despite these criticisms, the documents in three of the schools show that there are CPD plans for the teachers and each teacher is responsible to plan his/her personal CPD upon which their evaluation is based. But, in the fourth school the plan has mainly to do with the induction of the new teachers. This may be the case because most of the teachers in the school are beginner teachers.

On the other point, regarding working in collaboration with their colleagues, the principal of School one indicated,

*“In our school, we have established a mechanism that makes teachers to support each other. Teachers can attend other teachers’ classes/lessons to get experience from well experienced teachers and at times they can invite other teachers, from the same subject area, to teach a portion of the subject they teach. This is done for the benefit of the learners.”*

In this case, the collaboration is focused on experience-sharing among the teachers and is extended to taking over the teaching responsibility of a colleague for a while if the teachers thought that it would benefit the learners.

The practice of helping each other among teachers in School three is expressed as follows,

*“We are working in one to five/peer-discussion groups. We sit together, discuss on important concerns/problems and devise different strategies to run our school’s activities.”*

The teachers’ habit of working together, as described above helps them to tackle the problems they face. However, the practice of helping each other among the teachers in Schools two and four is not very effective. Furthermore, the collaboration between the teachers and the parents is one of the issues described by the participants in different ways. In Schools one and three, there is a strong link between the parents and the teachers, and they are all committed to teaching and learning in their schools.

In School one, one of the PTA members pointed out,

*“Parents in this school are not simply represented by the PTA....They particularly work with teachers regarding the education of their children. There is a checklist which the school uses to follow-up their participation in teaching and learning activities.”*

The checklist which I obtained from the school contains sections to be completed by the teachers, the parents and the head teachers. The checklists are used to follow the participation up of the parents in the teaching and learning process in the school. Conversely, in schools two and four there was very little collaboration between the teachers and the parents.

One of the teachers in School four described the situation as follows,

*“Parents come to the school for other concerns. They do not engage in discussion regarding teaching and learning....There are other matters which they discuss with the school management. We usually hear that the discussions focus on issues related to discipline problems.”*

This shows that the teachers and the parents in the school are not aware of the importance of parental involvement in teaching and learning, or the school has not devised appropriate strategies for the participation of the parents or the guardians in their children’s education. During my visit to the above school, I noticed that the parents came to school for other

reasons, such as to discuss discipline matters (These issues were discussed previously in relation to the theme: community participation, in this chapter).

In addition to working in collaboration with each other and with the parents, the teachers were expected to motivate the learners and to assist those with special needs, as part of their teaching responsibility.

The next section presents the data in respect of these issues.

#### *5.6.1.2.2. Motivating the learners and assisting the students with special needs*

In all the schools attempts are being made to motivate the learners by most of the teachers. The learners in Schools one and three also pointed out that their teachers motivate them.

The principal of School three expressed the commitment of his school as follows,

*“My school conducts regular meetings with students and gets their opinions regarding what their teachers do in the class. ...Except few cases, they tell us that most of the teachers encourage them to study/learn hard and they can achieve better.”*

The words by the principal show that there at least exists a mechanism to look into what the teachers are doing in their classes. This probably helps the school to take the necessary steps when there are problems. However, this may create a negative feeling with the teachers if they feel that there is unnecessary inspection.

Regarding the assistance to the students, one of the head teachers in School one reported,

*“Every week, we have discussions at department level (with teachers) and students using separate sessions for both. First, we discuss with students and gather information regarding what is going on in their classroom. Then, we discuss with teachers by bringing the concerns of students and what they need to be improved into attention.”*

Moreover, the students in the same school indicated that they are often encouraged by their teachers'

*"Most of our lessons are enjoyable, our teachers also encourage us in different ways. They motivate us to learn."*

Contrary to the above views the teachers in School two indicated differences of opinion in respect of motivating the students.

One of the teachers was of the opinion,

*"Motivating requires offering material incentives to the students and rewarding them."*

While another one said,

*"It is better if I keep the lessons challenging so that my students will study and learn more and stay motivated."*

According to these quotations, motivating the students is equated with providing material incentives(probably like pens, pencils, paper,etc), and making the tasks difficult with the intention of influencing the students to study the subject. Providing the students with incentives and making the lessons challenging are considered as ways of motivating the students to learn. However, making lessons challenging beyond the capacity of specific learners may frustrate them and may affect their learning negatively.

Regarding the students with special needs, the discussion I had with the teachers and the students indicated that attempts are being made to make teaching and learning inclusive.

The teachers in School four, where there are relatively large numbers of students with disabilities compared to the other schools, said,

*"We give special support to students with disability, top scoring students and female students. There is tutorial program arranged by the school for them."*

The schedule which I received from the school also shows that special tutorial sessions are arranged for the students with disabilities, for the top-scoring students and for female

students. The tutorial schedules for the top-scoring students are called 'compensation classes', because these students spend much of their time helping students in group sessions of one to five learners.

In the above paragraphs mixed views relating to the motivation and assistance of students were presented.

The following section presents the data related to the assessment of the students.

#### *5.6.1.2.3. Assessment of the students*

The teachers are expected to assess their students on a regular basis according to the guidelines of the SIP. The schools also demand the assessment to be continuous so that the students' achievements in the subjects would be judged on different types of assessments.

The principal in School two stated,

*“Our school has implemented continuous assessment. Teachers use at least five types of assessments before administration of the final examination.”*

The following is a similar view expressed by the principal in School one,

*“Teachers in the school are expected to start assessment during their first week lessons. Our students are alert that their assessment on all subjects is part of the day to day lesson.”*

In both cases the teachers shouldered the responsibility of implementing continuous assessment. Assessment is made to be part of the lessons, particularly in School one.

Moreover, the teachers in school one agreed that assessment is part of their day-to-day lessons,

*“Assessment is our day to day business and we use diverse strategies to assess our students on continuous basis. This is making students to be alert and study regularly expecting that there will be some sort of quiz or short test.”*

This shows that there is a trend of implementing continuous assessment regularly for the benefit of the students. Nevertheless, the teachers in all the schools stressed the fact that implementing continuous assessment is a challenge mainly due to the large numbers of students in the classes.

One of the teachers in School two argued

*“I teach students in five sections in a week. There are more than seventy students in each section. If I have to assess them continuously, how can I plan and prepare for the face to face lessons to teach twenty periods in a week. It is difficult to bear the burden though continuous assessment is useful.”*

(I noticed other teachers indicating their agreement with the idea by nodding their heads)

When the number of students in a section is high, it is difficult to fully implement continuous assessment though the teachers believed that continuous assessment is important to enhance the students' learning.

One of the teachers in School four described the implementation of continuous assessment in the school as follows,

*“We always hear everybody talking about continuous assessment and we are expected to implement it. The reality is that we usually merge students into groups, and let them discuss on a topic or do an assignment.... We are not able to use other strategies such as tests or individual assignments because they consume our time.”*

Marking individual assignments and tests of a large number of students is considered to take up a lot of time. The teachers preferred giving their students group-assignments.

Similarly, the teachers in School two also criticised the effectiveness of continuous assessment by indicating as follows,

*“We find it difficult to give feedback when students do assignments or write tests on a regular basis. The presence of large number of students in each section and grade is resulting in poor implementation of continuous assessment.”*



This gives an idea that there is no feedback when the teachers make use of continuous assessment. This is because they are teaching large number of students. This makes the implementation of continuous assessment a challenge. Thus, the intention to augment the students' learning and to enhance the school's effectiveness through the implementation of continuous assessment seems not likely to achieve its aim.

The reasons for the relative implementation of continuous assessment in the schools are probably the lack of consistent follow-up and support by the principals as well as the supervisors, as indicated by Schools two and four.

This is implied in the words of the supervisor of School two when he mentioned,

*“I follow-up the implementation of continuous assessment by discussing with the principal of each school I supervise. I do not have time to check what each teacher is doing in relation to assessment. I usually discuss most of the issues with the principal and show some ways to improve what is going on in the school.”*

The explanation indicates that a discussion exists between the principal and the supervisor regarding the implementation of continuous assessment. This is with the assumption that the discussion helps the principals to improve their follow-up strategies. However, the principal himself is reported to be a person who does not have the time to support the teachers.

This is inferred from the words of the principal of the same school,

*“As per the education policy, teachers in my school are expected to engage in CPD. They plan for what they want to improve as part of the CPD. During staff meetings, I give them orientations which can help them to carry out their classroom activities. I do this during general meetings of the staff. This saves the time for other duties.”*

The principal assumed that the general orientations during staff meetings would help the teachers to handle their day-to-day activities. It may be convincing to, during general meetings, reach consensus on some important and on common matters. However, the evolving nature of the day-to-day practices in specific classrooms in particular, and in the school in general, requires the principal to play a leadership role and to support the teachers in handling their classrooms effectively. Moreover, follow-up helps the teachers who

experience problems to solve the problems they face during the implementation of continuous assessment. Yet, follow-up of the implementation of continuous assessment is not always done in some schools.

In the above sub-sections, the data relating to the roles of the teachers in teaching and learning were presented. The SIP guidelines for Ethiopian schools indicate certain roles to be played by the students.

The data on these roles are presented in the following section.

#### 5.6.1.3. The students' roles

The SIP guidelines outline certain roles to be played by the students in order to maximise their performance. The experiences of the school community in relation to the effectiveness of the students' roles are explained below.

The students in Schools one and three support each other and they are engaged in collaborative/peer-learning. The approach is implemented to improve the performance of the students in the schools.

The principal of School one communicated,

*“Students are working in one to five/peer-learning groups. There is at least one active student to support less performing students in each group. They study what they learned, do assignments and home works together. This is helping them to learn from each other, and it is also reducing the burden of teachers.”*

The quotation shows that the students help each other by solving the problems they may have in respect of the subject matter. Parallel to this primary purpose, the approach is considered as a means to reduce the workload of the teachers.

During my repeated visits to the schools, I observed that the students in the schools were sitting in small groups and having discussions. However, the teachers are of the opinion that

many students are not mastering the subject matter as their assignments and homework are being done by the better performing students.

One of the teachers in School four said,

*“I doubt the effectiveness of one to five arrangements of students. This approach has made students to become dependent on 'above average' students. The low achievers are neither studying nor reading as the smart and energetic students are doing everything for them. I feel again that the active students are wasting their time as less active ones are not benefiting from the approach.”*

According to the above information, the teacher feels that the students whose performance is below average expect their assignments and homework to be done by the better performing students. This, as explained above, might make the below-average students to be dependent, instead of them engaging in collaborative learning. It has also been indicated by the teachers that the teaching staff use the students in groups of one to five as a manner to guarantee that all the students receive pass-marks. The teachers are deliberately seeing to it that all the students get above 50% so as to have all the students pass.

This observation is indicated by one of the teachers in School two,

*“Teachers are evaluated based on pass rate of students in the subjects they are teaching. Any student is not expected to fail. He/she has to score 50% or above whether he/she knows the subject matter or not. Teachers do not want to be victim due to mere statement which says 'You have not enabled the students'. They prefer to use group arrangements and make students get pass marks as the active students do everything for all students in the group.”*

It seems logical to claim that the teachers in the schools should enable all the students to pass. In this sense enabling is meant to help the students to understand what they are learning in order to achieve better. However, the participants understood the term as seeing to it that all the students pass. If the students depend on others to pass in a subject, this does not indicate the mastery of the subject matter by the student. The problem occurs partly because there is probably no established follow-up mechanism to indicate whether the

students' results in a subject reflect their competence or not. In addition, it also does not seem logical to expect from all the teachers to have all their students pass, as the students have different backgrounds and levels of knowledge. However, the SIP plans of the schools show that the teachers enter into an agreement with the schools to see to it that the students achieve above 50%, and to increase their performance by 10% in all subjects. The agreement does not take into account a number of other factors that may affect the performance of the students. Opposed to this, one of the students in School one argued that peer-learning facilitates their learning.

She commented as follows,

*“We work in groups and study together. We also discuss the problems we have with each other before reporting them to our teachers or the principals.”*

Basically, a one-to-five grouping is meant to help the students to support each other. The above information gives a clue to the fact that the students in School one are learning from each other. Helping students to learn from each other is stipulated in the SIP documents as the goal of peer-learning. In addition, as is emphasised in the SIP documents, the students also need to get support from their teachers. However, in poorly-performing schools, there is no significant support provided for the students.

One of the teachers in School four commented that there is a loose support relationship between the teaching staff and the students:

*“Teachers prefer to keep silent as they are told to make students free and students are given much freedom. There is no way to control misbehaving students. Our school is reluctant to take actions on discipline matters unless the problems are related to politics.”*

This information explains that the school gives the students the freedom probably to inculcate democratic views. But if freedom is exercised in a misleading way, it will negatively affect the effectiveness of the schools. Thus, the silence of the teachers is an important concern here. If the teachers prefer to keep quiet on matters related to the students, then it will be difficult for the schools to achieve their mission and to realise their vision. The concern of teachers is that

the schools are giving attention to political concerns and that they are not giving the necessary attention to other breaches of rules and regulations by students.

For instance, the decision made by one of the poorly-performing schools reads from the school's minute no.11/2013 as,

*“The discipline committee has gone through the breach of the schools' regulation by student X (name omitted). The student has been found encouraging students to participate in fight against other ethnic groups in the area. ...Based on evidence, the school has decided that the student should be suspended from the school for a year.”*

(My own translation from minute no.11/2013).

This confirms that the school has made a seemingly critical decision to curb the problem that happened at the time. However, the concern of the participants is that the same needs to apply in respect of other misbehaviours which affect teaching and learning or the functioning of the school. Thus, rules and regulations which the teachers claim to be implemented are not implemented consistently by the school management. This situation has made the teachers to keep quiet and to feel that the students' treatment in the schools is improper.

Nevertheless, in the four schools there are school policy documents based on which each school's rules and regulations were developed. I also read that the parents and the guardians of the students signed on a form which deals with the rules and regulations of the school. Besides, the minutes which I collected from the schools show that there are specific misbehaviours on which decisions have been made and measures have been taken depending on the rules and regulation, particularly in better-performing schools.

Thus, the above account indicates that the teachers in poorly-performing schools are not providing the necessary support to the students due to their dissatisfaction with the inconsistent implementation of the schools rules and regulations. In contrast, all the principals in the schools described that the students were getting the necessary support from the school community.

The principal in School one explained:

*“We have arrangements to give support to all students. This ranges from one to one consultations to arranging tutorials and make-up classes. Firstly, students have the right to get support from their teachers on subject matters in the form of advising or additional class during extra time. Secondly, the school management and all the concerned engage in supporting students depending upon what is needed to be given as support.”*

These words tell us that the school is using diverse strategies to support the students.

This is also indicated by one of the head teachers in the school,

*“The school has various strategies in place to support students. At department level, the members of the department have a clear understanding of how to support students to help them become successful.”*

This school, which is considered to be a model school, has employed a range of techniques to support the students so that they will be successful learners. This contributes to the improvement of the results of the students and the effectiveness of the school. Thus, Schools one and three have established support structures for the students.

As analysed from the plans and reports of the schools, they have also made the following structures available:

- having the students support each other;
- arranging special tutorial classes for female students and students with special needs;
- scheduled tutorial classes for all students in core subjects.

In contrast to this, as explained in the previous paragraphs, in Schools two and four there were no support for the students or the available support structures were implemented loosely. In School two, the students were not adequately supported by their teachers even though the principal claimed that support was given to the students.

One of the teachers argued,

*“Teachers are overloaded and do not have time to give extra support to students. The vice principals can help them in what students are in need of because the principal is also busy with out-of-school duties.”*

The idea indicates that the students are supposed to be supported by the vice principals or the management. There is no support for the students, which is supposed be part of the teachers' duty, at the school. This situation is likely to contribute to the ineffectiveness of the school because the teachers consider the support to be given to the students as an additional burden.

Similarly, one of the head teachers in School two spoke out as follows,

*“Teachers are not in a position to stay in the school to support students. After completing, their daily duties they have to travel to the city which is a number of kilometres away from the school. They do not have residences or other facilities to stay in the school.”*

The shortage of facilities, particularly the lack of accommodation for the teachers in a rural school has made the teachers to leave the school as soon as they have finished their classes. During my observation, I also noticed that no teacher was spending additional time at the school. Such circumstances will probably continue to contribute to the poor performance of the school.

The other concern discussed with the students was their involvement in the evaluation of their teachers. In all the schools the students reported that they participate in the evaluation of their teachers. In Schools one, two and three the students indicated that they understand the purpose of participating in the evaluation and the evaluation process. However, in School four the students did not know what the purpose of the evaluation was and what the school was doing with the evaluation results.

In School three one of the students explained,

*“We evaluate teachers at the end of the semester. The school uses the evaluation results to make necessary changes. The school also informs us about the result of the evaluation; we always observe that there are changes after evaluation.”*

On the other hand, in school four one of the students complained,

*“The school makes us busy by assigning us in evaluation groups. We also fill evaluation checklists every semester. But we do not notice what the school is doing with the evaluation results.”*

It is obvious that the involvement of the students in the evaluation of the school activities in School three was used to make adjustments to the practice of teaching. It seems that the evaluation process is probably contributing to the better performance of the school.

So far I have presented the mixed views and experiences of the school community regarding the teaching and learning domain. Before finalising the presentation of the data on the domain, I would like to present my summary of the plans of the schools regarding the domain, as follows:

- The training of one to five group/peer-learning leaders, CPD coordinators, departmental heads and shift (morning and afternoon sessions) leaders
- Having the students engage in decision-making and experiencing the sharing of best practices.
- Making reading rooms available for the students.
- Ensuring the implementation of continuous assessment.
- Making the dropout rate in the school/s below two percent.
- Increasing the students' achievement by 10% and seeing to it that all the students achieve more than 50 %;
- Using the potential and experiences of competent and model teachers.
- Training teachers on CPD, the preparation of their own portfolios, and their one to five group duties and roles.
- Forming a council of students from the top 20 students.



These issues, if implemented as they are planned, would contribute to the betterment of the schools. However, the successful implementation of the issues as explained above would be unlikely in the poorly-performing schools as they have a number of challenges to deal with. In Schools one and three, as the data indicated, the implementation of the planned issues would be better.

In the above sub-sections the data relating to teaching and learning were presented.

The next sub-section presents a discussion of the findings.

### **5.6.2. Discussion of the findings related to teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning was one of the concerns the participants in the study dealt with. Implementing active learning methods helps to make the classroom participatory, and it is one of the ways to ensure the optimum learning of all the students (Danielson 2002:106; Osula & Ideboen 2010:30). In Schools one and three the principals and the teachers were committed to implement active learning methods in their classes, and they contributed to a better performance of the schools. This is in line with the requirements of the standards of teaching and learning of the SIP (MoE 2010a:12) and the emphasis by Johnson and Fargo (2014:847) as discussed under the heading 'Theoretical framework'. Nonetheless, it was believed that some students were increasingly becoming dependent on their friends' work and efforts as they were expecting their friends to do their tasks. Despite this, it was noted that the teachers in the schools had a sense of ownership and considered the success of their students as their own success. They committed themselves to the implementation of the active learning approach. They considered learning as their collective responsibility (MoE 2010a:16; Slavin 2005:274) and they "worked to achieve measureable improvements in their students' results" (MoE 2010a:14). However, the practice of supporting teaching and learning through action research was not reported though it was stipulated in the policy document (MoE 2010a:23).

On the contrary, in Schools two and four, the advice of the principals to have the teachers implement active learning methods was considered as merely a reminder by the teachers and

students. In those schools, the implementation of active learning methods did not go very far. The problem was partly caused by the teachers' lack of the skills required to implement active learning as a method, and the lack of commitment to implement it. Studies also indicate that such problems occur, probably because the principals in the schools do not help the teachers to focus on the students' learning (Lin 2012:200). Besides, Dumay and Geland (2012:704) stress that if the teachers lack commitment, the performance of students will be negatively affected.

The other key issues in the data relate to the teachers engagement in their professional development and in collaboration with others. It is agreed in the literature that teachers should be engaged in continuous learning as they have to update their knowledge of new methods and the skills required to manage the ever-changing classroom situation, and to maximise their students' achievements (Cawelti & Protheroe 2007:49; Kutsyuruba, Godden & Tregunna 2014:4; Kyriakides, Creemers, Muijs, Rekers-Mombarg, Papastylianou, Petegem & Pearson 2014:87; MoE 2008:36; Pine 2009:92; Pogodzinski 2014:484; Semadeni 2009:51). The teachers in the four schools identified the priorities for their own CPD based on what they need to improve to become competent teachers. This also needed to be in relation to the school's priorities. In this respect Adey (2004:143) also suggests that the needs of the individual teachers for improvement should relate to what the school needs to improve. Sweeney (2005:2) further states that the teachers' engagement in their professional development helps them solve most of the problems they have to face. The CPD guidelines for Ethiopian school teachers also indicate that the teachers should focus on issues that affect teaching and learning, and should work to improve them (MoE 2011c:18). Thus, the teachers' attempts to prioritise their CPD needs conform with what was found in the literature, and also the requirements of the MoE guidelines.

Nonetheless, CPD was considered by the teachers to be unproductive and monotonous. The challenges affecting the implementation of CPD in the schools were, namely the resistance by the teachers to engage in CPD or to induct new teachers, a feeling of 'I know my subject' and they considered CPD as time-consuming and as a political tool used to keep the teachers busy. Yet, there were CPD plans in the schools which were not fully implemented by the

teachers. Studies indicate that beginner teachers are not willing to interact with the more experienced teachers (though this was not observed in this study), and the experienced teachers felt that they knew what to teach and how to teach (Pogodzinski 2014:484). However, in this study it was not a concluding fact that the resistance of teachers was the only factor affecting the implementation of CPD to enhance the schools' effectiveness. There may be other related factors contributing to the poor performance of CPD.

Collaboration among the teachers was reflected in different ways. One finding worth discussing is the collaboration of the teachers in School one. In that school the teachers went to the extent of taking the teaching responsibility of a colleague's class for the benefit of the students. They managed to avoid a feeling of being inferior when they handed over a section of the subject matter they teach to their colleague (in the same subject). This happened when they felt that it was for the benefit or to the advantage of their students. Findings similar to this were reported by Putman (2012:51). Besides, other studies indicate that taking over a teaching session by informal teachers (colleagues or guests) has a positive impact on the students' learning (Weiland & Akerson 2013:1333). Generally, collaboration among the teachers in School one and three was firm and strong. This paved a way for the teachers to become motivated, and helped them to increase their proficiency (Gordon 2004:166). In these schools, the teachers believed in supporting the learners, and this contributed positively to the students' achievement (Tew 2007:3). In Schools two and four, however, collaboration among teachers was almost non-existent.

In contrast, as part of the teaching and learning domain, the students are expected to play certain roles in their own learning (MoE 2011a:8). Among other things, the SIP stated that they have to be engaged in collaborative learning. The one-to-five/peer-learning approach was introduced in schools with the intention that the students may learn from each other, and may understand difficult concepts more easily by studying and working together with their friends. In the schools the one-to-five/peer-learning arrangement by itself was proposed by the principals as it facilitated the learning of all the students. However, the participant teachers contended that most of the students were not benefiting from the grouping, because

- the approach caused the students to expect that a few better performing students would do the work for them, and
- the teachers, on the other hand, used the approach to have the students do the assignments together and obtain pass-marks for the assignments.

The teachers felt that the students were receiving pass-marks without mastering the content, and that assessments were not used to facilitate the students' learning (Christoforidou et al. 2014:1). However, the discussions on school improvement, as well as on the Theory of Change model indicated that the improvement processes should contribute to the mastery of the subject matter by the students. The poor performance of the students was aggravated by the seemingly imposition, as the teachers considered it, that they should enable all the students and make them pass. Because of this, they preferred to see to it that all the students received an above average mark (50%, as outlined in the plans) and improve the evaluation results of the students. Otherwise they would have to accept the consequences that may follow for not having the students obtain an above-average mark. This confusion between the teachers and the principals would doubtlessly have a negative impact on the students' performance and the schools' effectiveness. The implication is that assessment is not seen in terms of "its effect on learning" (Asikainen, Parpala, Virtanen & Lindblom-Ylänne 2013:211; Struyven 2014:1). Yet, studies indicate that there needs to be a common understanding of the achievement standard of assessment among the teachers (Adie 2014:532).

It might be surprising that the students who participated in the study neither criticised the one-to-five approach nor indicated its advantage. They simply indicated that they were working in groups. This clearly indicates that the students were not aware of its advantage, and the teachers and the principals were not in agreement regarding the success of the approach. Thus, the data on the effectiveness of the one-to-five/peer-learning approach in Sidama Zone schools are not conclusive.

Within the umbrella of inculcating democratic views, the schools have given the students much freedom, but the teachers have perceived this as a fruitless exercise. The reluctance of the schools to take actions even when some form of misbehaviour was observed caused the

teachers to remain silent. The silence of the teachers had a negative impact on teaching and learning. It is acceptable that the students need to be expressive and should learn to become democratic citizens (Jeffrey & Woods 2003:13). However, this does not need to silence the schools when unacceptable behaviour is observed. The data indicated that the gap created due to the silence of the schools to respond to such misbehaviour has caused the drivers of the process, i.e. the teachers, to keep silent and to watch what was going on. The rules and regulations available in the schools were supposed to be implemented consistently once they are developed, agreed on, and signed by the students and their parents or guardians (Allen 2006:17). Thus, it is acceptable that the weight of the breaches of rules and regulations committed by students may vary. Accordingly, the schools need to respond to the misbehaviour properly by labelling the misbehaviour as 'very serious', 'serious' and 'less serious'. This would help the students to learn from the operation of discipline policies in the school, and would make the functioning of schools to run smoothly (Jeffrey & Woods 2003: 14). Moreover, Chitpin (2014:218) recommended that if the principals face dilemmatic situations, they could use the peer advice from the teachers and other principals. This would probably help them make proper decisions.

So far the different findings related to teaching and learning have been presented.

The next section deals with the data and the findings in respect of the school environment.

## **5.7. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

The data relating to the school environments and the findings are presented in the following sections.

### **5.7.1. Data on the school environment**

A learning environment that stimulates learning possesses the necessary resources; runs extra-curricular activities that support the social and emotional development of the students;

creates conditions suitable for students with special needs, and has a safety policy which makes it safe for the staff and the students in the school.

In this section the researcher discusses the data obtained regarding the school environment based on the resources in the schools, extra-curricular activities, the suitability of the environment for students with special needs, and the safety policy in the schools.

#### 5.7.1.1. Resources in the schools

In terms of the necessary resources, School one and three had better facilities than Schools two and four.

I noticed that in School one there are

- well-organised libraries with separate reading rooms for the students and the teachers;
- play-grounds for the different games/sport activities;
- study facilities for the students;
- separate laboratories for the physical sciences (physics and chemistry) and biology;
- lounge (as named by the school) for the students and the teachers;
- a well-organised pedagogical centre(room with materials that support teaching and learning) furnished with materials purchased by the school;
- offices for the teachers to do lesson preparation and to read;
- duplicating and photocopying machines, printers and a computer laboratory; and
- separate and hygienic toilets for the boys and the girls.

Most of these facilities were available in School three as well, with slight differences, and some exceptions which I observed in School one. The availability of these resources make the school environment conducive for teaching and learning. During my visits to the schools I

noticed that both the teachers and the students were spending a longer time at the schools after classes. Thus, the performance of these schools is better than the performance of schools which do not have the necessary facilities.

In Schools two and four, the situation was different. I noticed

- less organised libraries with only limited books;
- less organised pedagogical centres(room with materials that support teaching and learning) with few materials;
- no lounges, except a woman sitting in the shadow of tree selling coffee, tea and bread in one of the schools;
- separate but not very clean toilets for the boys and the girls;
- no office for the teachers in School two except a small room where to place their belongings, and a larger, but uncomfortable room for the teachers in School four;
- no computers or printers in School two, but only few computers in the ICT laboratory of School four;
- a playground with holes here and there at School two, and a dusty playground at school four, and
- a number of green study sites in School two, but none in School four.

Moreover, the data shows that Schools one and three had better financial resources than Schools two and four. In terms of financial resources, School one has managed to increase its income-generating capacity.

The supervisor of the school articulated it in School one as:

*“The school has better sources of income than other schools in nearby areas. It has devised different strategies to generate income from the broader community as well as developed strategies to generate its own revenue internally.”*

The principal of the school expressed the situation as follows:

*“The school has launched evening classes for those who do not have time to come to school during day hours. This is helping the school as a means to generate income (finance the school)...We have also experience of developing projects and securing funds from other non-governmental organisations.”*

It seems that the school is not only using the budget allocated by the WEO. It has managed to generate an additional income from internal sources, as well as secure project-based funds. This facilitated the smooth running of the school's activities and contributes to the school's effectiveness. Conversely, in Schools two and four financial resources were limited to the governmental budget.

The teachers in School two were said,

*“The school does not have sufficient budget even to provide us with basic materials. Sometimes we face shortage of chinks and papers. At times, the school says ‘there is no budget for printing examinations’ and we have to wait for it.”*

The shortage of chalk and paper was indicated by the teachers

A similar remark was made by the principal in School four,

*“My school does not have other sources of income. It depends only on government budget...The school is also not allowed to collect money from parents because general education is to be provided free.”*

In this case, the idea of generating additional income was limited to thinking what the parents or the community could contribute to support the schools. However, other strategies of generating income such as designing projects to secure funds (as done by School one) is not an option for this school.

#### 5.7.1.2. Extra-curricular activities



All the schools have formed different clubs for the students to engage in. The clubs are named environmental protection club, gender club, civic and ethical education club, literature club, drama club, and so on. I frequently observed activities related to these themes taking place in the schools, but with tremendous variation regarding their coordination and implementation.

In School three the principal communicated the situation as follows,

*“There are a number of clubs in my school. The clubs are creating learning opportunities for students. But teachers who are assigned as club representatives are not willing to take the responsibility by considering it as extra burden. Finding coordinators of extracurricular activities is always a challenge to us.”*

The teachers' unwillingness to coordinate the school activities is a challenge that may affect the effectiveness of the extra-curricular activities in the schools. The teachers generally indicated that the extra-curricular activities in the schools are affected by a number of factors. Among the factors the lack of a proper budget was given emphasis by them.

In this respect, one of the teachers in School two mentioned:

*“Though there are a number of clubs in the school, they are not fully working. ...clubs need to have the minimum budget for what they want to accomplish. But they have no budget at all.”*

Even in School one, where there are different sources of income (as explained earlier under sub-section 5.6.1), no funds are earmarked for extra-curricular activities. This may partly diminish the effectiveness of the extra-curricular activities. A related challenge which was discussed by the participants in School three is the reluctance of the teachers to coordinate the clubs other than the Anti-AIDS and Environmental Protection Clubs, due to the fact that these clubs have the possibility of securing additional funds from partner organisations, and provide the club members with the opportunity to attend training and workshops.

Finally, from participants' views and the documents, I came to know that extra-curricular activities in the schools were considered the same as the activities of the clubs. No visits or trips were reported by the participants in the schools as part of their extra-curricular activities.

All the documents (plans, reports, minutes and letters) which I obtained from the schools do not indicate any instance of visits or trips to other places for social and/or educational purposes.

#### 5.7.1.3. The suitability of the school environment for students with special needs

School improvement requires making the school environment conducive for all the learners, also for the disabled. There were students with disabilities in all of the schools. Schools one, three and four have made some arrangements to make the school environment suitable for students with disabilities.

These include (as I observed in the schools, and the different documents prove):

- clearing away any obstacle from the passages in the school;
- arranging special tutorial classes for students with disabilities;
- assisting the students by providing them with materials such as sunglasses/eyeglasses, and walking sticks; and
- arranging additional training opportunities for the students with disabilities.

The reports which I collected from Schools one and three indicate that support is being given to the students in collaboration with other institutions.

The principal in School one indicated,

*“My school has made arrangements with partner organisations which work on disability and secured some important materials such as iron walk sticks, stationery, wheel chairs and school uniforms for students with disability.”*

In this case, the school has devised its own strategy and managed to get the support from external organisations. For those with disability problems, what is provided as a support probably makes the school conducive for learning, and may make them not feel that they are

ignored. The environment of School two, however, is unsuitable for students with disability problems, as well as for students without disabilities. During my observation, I noticed that there were holes and stones here and there in the walk lines, and on the playgrounds. Yet, I observed there were blind students who were carefully led by their friends to the classes and the offices.

#### 5.7.1.4. Safety policy in the schools

There were no documented safety policies in the schools except for school policies regarding the rules and regulations of the schools which focus on academic matters and discipline issues. The idea of a 'safety policy' is, as I read from the plans of the schools, considered to be equivalent to fencing the school compound, making gate-keepers available and forming ad hoc committees when problems occur in the schools.

Generally speaking, concerning creating a suitable school environment, the plans and the reports of the four schools focused on:

- changing the existing notice board of the schools' mission, vision and values with a new one;
- renewing the writings (on different subject matters) on the walls as they are becoming old;
- fencing in and beautifying the school gardens, and working in collaboration with health and environment clubs in the schools;
- constructing attractive fences, cleaning the compound/s and the classrooms;
- maintaining the furniture; and
- keeping the toilets clean and hygienic.

The issues listed above may contribute to the schools' suitability for teaching and learning. However, stocking up the libraries and making them comfortable for the students and the

teachers, and improving the use of ICT or making ICT facilities available in the schools are not included in the plans. This may diminish or reduce the effectiveness of the schools.

In the above sub-sections the experiences of the school community, observations and the contents of the documents on the school environment were discussed.

In the next section the researcher presents a discussion of the findings on the school environment.

### **5.7.2. Discussion of the findings related to the school environment**

It was established in the Theory of Change model that learning requires the environment to be safe and the necessary facilities to be accessible to all (Danielson 2002:44; Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:1; Grift 2014:297; Lin 2012:200). A suitable environment leads to optimum learning for all the students in the school. The schools which were considered as more conducive to teaching and learning had facilities and conditions which made the functioning of the schools smooth (Grift 2014:297; Zandvliet 2014:20). On the contrary, in schools which were considered as less-effective or labelled as performing poorly, the resources were limited and the school environment was poor. In Schools one and three it was obvious that there were better resources to be used by the teachers and the students, and to help them to teach or learn better when compared to Schools two and four. The availability of facilities made the teachers and the students stay at the schools for longer, and contributed to the enhancement of school effectiveness. The teachers had the necessary facilities and offices which encouraged them to spend more time at the school in preparing their lessons. Moreover, the environment of these schools was enjoyable for the students to study in the libraries and to refresh themselves on the playgrounds when they felt tired or they had to take a break. Furthermore, these schools enhanced their effectiveness by tackling financial problems through income-generation. They attempted to create a safe environment for the optimum learning of the students as stated in the SIP guideline (MoE 2010a:15).

In Schools two and four the facilities were in short supply and the school environment was not attractive. In these schools teaching and learning was challenged by the shortage of the necessary facilities for the functioning of the schools. In addition, these schools did not seek other sources of income or did not engage in generating additional income. As a result they had to face financial problems and this limited their functioning and affected their effectiveness. In a recent study by Abera (2014:77) it was found that schools in the same region(Southern region where this study was conducted) were reported to be far below the expected standards of suitability for teaching and learning.

The availability of extra-curricular activities facilitates the emotional and social development of the students. Besides, extra-curricular activities are instruments to empower the students (Gordon 2004:12). The four schools managed to establish a range of clubs for the students to be engaged in. Yet, variations in the coordination and implementation of the clubs were noted among the schools. The schools could not find coordinators because the teachers felt that it was an extra burden. Putman (2012:112) reported that the teachers felt the lack of "time for collaboration on school improvement issues". However, a lack of collaboration leads to ineffectiveness. Thus, Raynor (2004:142) stresses that collaboration is a solution to many problems, and it can lead to high achievements or to the improvement of the schools.

Furthermore, the implementation of extra-curricular activities in the schools was affected by shortage of financial resources. Even the teachers preferred to coordinate clubs such as the Anti-AIDS Club or the Environmental Protection Club for these clubs have some source of income from other organisations. The study indicated that the schools did not give attention to the financial constraints, but they claimed that there was unwillingness on the part of the teachers to coordinate the club activities. Nevertheless, it has become clear that the teachers were looking for incentives. The schools need to manage this dilemma by becoming creative (Raynor 2004:143), and they need to respond to the evolving needs of teachers in a creative way. Above all, extra-curricular activities in the schools were equated entirely with club activities. There were no trips or visits planned by the schools as part of the extra-curricular activities. This indicated that the scope of the extra-curricular activities was limited, and plans for sharing the best experiences from other contexts and environments were also missing.

The environments of the schools which were labelled as best-performing by the ZED was found to be more conducive for the students and the staff than the environments of the schools which were termed as performing poorly (Zandvliet 2014:20). The former schools were working with other organisations to make the school environment suitable for all the students including students with special needs, by introducing early interventions (Frawley 2014:167), whereas the latter schools were neither working in collaboration with outside organisations nor trying to make the school environment conducive by themselves. Lee et al. (2012:133) also observed that networking with partner organisations contributes to the effectiveness of schools by helping them to outsource their resources. In this regard, the contribution of resources to the suitability of the learning environment and increased school effectiveness was observed by the researchers (Lin 2012:212). Finally, there were no documented school safety policies in any of the schools and this implied that there were no clear procedures to handle safety issues in the schools.

The presentation and discussion of the data as well as the findings related to the school environment was done in the above sections.

The next sections present the data and discussions of the findings related to community participation.

## **5.8. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Community participation in school affairs is regarded as important in order to enhance the performance of the schools. There are different perspectives of community participation and parental involvement reflected by participants in the study.

These viewpoints and what have been found from the schools' documents and my observation are presented below.

### 5.8.1. Data on community participation

The following sections present and describe the data related to community participation focusing on the communication channels, the parents' involvement in their children's education, and the contribution of resources.

#### 5.8.1.1. School and community communication channels and relations

Establishing a sound relationship between the schools and the respective communities requires making use of effective communication channels and diverse strategies. The communication strategies used by the schools were mainly limited to meetings at the beginning and end of the school year.

Regarding this, the principal in School one had this to say:

*“We call parents for a general meeting at the beginning of each year, and we communicate the annual plan of the school to parents and selected community members... At the end of the year, we call for second general meeting to report what the school has done to the community.”*

One of the PTA members also agreed:

*“The school conducts general meetings which all parents and some community members are invited to attend. This is usually at the beginning and the end of the school year. At the beginning of this year, participants reflect on the plan of the school year, and adjustments are made based on their comments. At the end of the year, the participants discuss on achievements of the school year based on the report of the school.”*

The two quotations above made it clear that general meetings are used to obtain feedback from the school community. This implies that the meetings are used to communicate the plans and reports of the school, and to get feedback for revision of what is planned or to get inputs

for subsequent planning. It is also a common practice in Schools two, three and four that they all have two general meetings at the beginning and end of the school year. Thus, the meetings are used as a channel to introduce what the school has planned for the year and to report what is being done during the school year to the community.

However, it has been complained by the school community that in Schools two and four the comments forwarded during the general meetings are not used as an input for revision of what is planned or for subsequent planning.

One of the PTA members in School two complained:

*“Though the school communicates us the plan or the report, it is not usual to make changes because of our suggestions. After spending much time discussing on the plan or the report, they tell us that the school appreciates our participation, but they do not make the changes.”*

This indicates that there are grievances in the school community that their ideas are ignored. The community feels that it is not contributing an input for improvement process. This probably creates problems of ownership of what is planned or reported.

In addition to general meetings, in Schools one, two and three letters and memos are written to some parents in their own language on different matters. Some of the issues raised:

- their assignments as committee members;
- discussions of discipline matters;
- representing your locality;
- an urgent meeting; or
- assignment as school compound expansion committee member.

Thus, the schools used letters and memos to communicate their concerns with the parents. The messages written to the parents show that the parents are informed through the memos/letters of their assignment as committee members, or as community representatives, and they are invited to discuss discipline issues and other important matters. Alternatively, the



strategy used by the teachers to communicate with the parents sometimes focused on using the students as messengers to invite their parents to school when those students caused discipline problems.

A teacher in School one reported,

*“We communicate with parents through their students when students do not do home works, disturb in the class, fight with each other or quarrel with their teachers...The student comes with one of his parents or caretaker.”*

These words indicate that the parents visit the school when their children committed a breach of the school rules or regulations. This implies that there is a tendency to involve the parents in finding solutions when their children violate the rules and regulations of the school.

The above paragraphs presented data on channels used to communicate with the parents and the broader community.

The next sub-section gives an account of the parents' involvement in their children's education.

#### 5.8.1.2. The parents' involvement in their children's education

Improving the performance of the students in their school subjects is considered the aim of school improvement. One of the factors likely to influence the students' performance in the subjects they learn is whether they receive the necessary support from their families or not.

A student in School two was of the opinion,

*“Teaching is responsibility of our teachers... We get additional support from subject teachers, and we support each other as we study together. We do not expect our parents to do home works for us.”*

The remark by this student is likely to confirm that the parents are not involved in their education, and the students are also not expecting support from their parents. This indicates

that there is an awareness-gap between the students and their parents regarding what roles the parents and families can play in their children's education.

Besides the teachers in School four also agreed with this view by mentioning,

*“Parents do not have idea of participating in their children's education. Most of the parents give priority for their farm activities as the area is cash crop area. They prefer to sell their coffee than coming to the school. They always consider coming to the school as wastage of their time.”*

However, the views of the participant in Schools one and three regarding parental involvement are different from the views reflected by the participants in Schools two and four. The PTA members in School one are of opinion that parents come to school to discuss important educational issues with the teachers as well as with the school management.

In the words of one of the members,

*“Participation of parents in their children's education is a common concern among parents. There are different times when the parents visit the schools to discuss with teachers, home-room teachers, vice principals and the principal. Some parents even go to the extent of complaining regarding the ways some teachers are handling their classes.”*

From the suggestion it seems that some parents are involved in the education of their children. They are also concerned with what was going on in the classrooms.

Similar views were also held by the teachers in the same School one as follows,

*“We often work with parents. Though education level of parents is affecting their participation, there are parents who are taking part in the education of their children. Parents are assisting their children when they study, do home works and assignments...These efforts are reducing the burden of teachers.”*

The views of the teachers conform to the views of the PTA members described above. The parents with some educational background assist both their children as well as the teachers. Thus, the children are directly benefiting from the support and the teachers' teaching tasks

are relieved by the support of the parents. However, the children whose parents are not educated seem to be helpless regarding the support they could have got from their parents/guardians.

This section presented the data related to the participation of the parents in their children's education.

The next section provides data on the contribution of resources.

#### 5.8.1.3. The contribution of the resources

Community participation in education can be in the form of contributions to the resources and its management. The data show that the community participate in this respect in different ways.

The principal of School three explained,

*“The school is getting greater support from the community in terms of resource contribution. There is resource contribution in the form of money and material. Some of the classrooms in the school have been constructed and furnished by the school community.”*

The contribution of resources by the community, as explained above, helps the school to get better facilities. School three established a working relationship with the community and managed to secure the necessary support. This is also the same situation in School one.

One of the PTA members indicated,

*“The school has strong link with the community. It has also established 'Association of Alumni' of the school. ...The disability centre in the school is also highly supported by the former graduates of the school and the community. Besides, the community participates in follow-up of the use of resources in the school.”*

The school exploited diverse opportunities and secured the necessary support from the community. The community contribute to the betterment of the school. Thus, the contribution of resources and its management by the school community may enhance the effectiveness of the school.

In contrast, the principal of School two commented,

*“The government policy has made clear that general education is to be provided free to all children. This does not allow us to make the community/parents pay for education of the children.”*

It is clear from the policy document that education is free in the country. It means that the pupils do not pay for tuition or for the other facilities they use in the school. However, it does not imply that the community cannot contribute resources to improve the condition of schools. Thus, the above explanation indicates that there is confusion about making education free and the resource contribution of the community.

Despite this confusion, regarding the parents' involvement/community participation, the school improvement plans and the reports of the schools listed all areas of participation as:

- involving the community in discussions of the common values of the school/s;
- having discussions with the parents either on an individual or group-basis concerning the performance of their children;
- having the parents play their roles in minimising the drop-out of the students;
- establishing a structure that facilitates the conditions to have the parents contribute financial and material resources;
- securing the full support of the parents by creating an awareness of the goal of the school's improvement plan;
- making use of posters, notices and announcements in the media to communicate with the parents; and

- ensuring the attendance of the parents at different occasions and ceremonies organised by the school/s.

The above sections provided the data related to community participation.

The section below forwards a discussion of the findings related to community participation.

### **5.8.2. Discussion of the findings related to community participation**

Community participation begins with the establishment of a positive relationship between the school and the community using various communication channels (Makoelle 2011:266; Pollock & Winton 2012:18). Besides, a good communication strategy helps the schools to keep in touch with the community (Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:109). Chapman and Adams (2002:55) also indicated that the availability of open communication channels is one of the factors that affect community participation. It has been experienced by the participants that the schools use meetings, memos, letters and the children as channel for communication with the parents and the broader community. A recent study conducted in the U.S.A. shows that the schools preferred to use web pages instead of other transparent strategies that bring additional inputs to the improvement processes (Dunaway et al. 2014:469). In the better-performing schools, the schools which were labelled by ZED as model schools, the meetings which were conducted with the school community resulted in the contribution of inputs for the revision of the plans and ideas for subsequent planning. This created a feeling of ownership and paved the way for the school community to contribute positively to the improvement and the effectiveness of the schools. This is in agreement with the stipulations of the Theory of Change model.

In schools where the trend of accommodating the feedback (Sallis 2002:30) of the school community was little, the schools continued to perform poorly. In these schools the important component for the successful implementation of the improvement plans, namely the ownership of the plan by the community, is non-existent. This negatively affects the performance of the schools. In this regard Hopkins (2005:3) advised that the school

community does not need to accept the centralised plans uncritically, and Wallace (2005:158) added that annual plans should not be imposed on the school community. Studies by Scanlon (2012:188) indicated that the improvement process requires the participation of all the stakeholders. However, the findings in respect of poorly-performing schools are contradictory to the requirements of community participation suggested in the literature and the advocacy of the Theory of Change model. Besides, in the poorly performing schools, the parents were invited to come to the school when a breach of the school rules and regulations were committed by their children. The visit to the school for such reasons by the parents probably assists the schools to solve the discipline problems with the help of the parents (Robert 2010:14). Participation in solving discipline problems contributes positively to the effectiveness of the schools (MoE 2011c:81). Yet, such participation is not the sole factor to make the schools effective.

On the other hand, lack of proper follow-up of what their children learned by the parents/guardians contributed to the poor performance of the least performing schools. This was probably due to the fact that the schools made the parents to focus on discipline related matters and contribution of some resources. Besides, it was indicated (under section 5.8.1.2.) that the lack of the awareness of the importance of the parents' involvement in their children's education was one of the factors affecting their participation in their children's education.

In the better-performing schools where the students' achievements were high, the parents were involved in the education of their children (Lazaridou & Kassida 2015:99; Mtsweni 2013:45; Tang 2015:135). Their participation was based on the fact that their involvement would contribute to the students' success (Kirkhaug et al. 2013: 346). In Schools one and three, the parents went to the extent of commenting on how their children were taught in the class. This goes with the strategies of parental involvement outlined by Khosa (2010:16) which result in the strong monitoring of the students' learning. Moreover, the community's contribution of the necessary resources has assisted the schools to create smooth teaching and learning environment. Thus, it was indicated that the involvement of the community in the schools' affairs is experienced as a positive contribution to the performance of the schools (Robert 2010:14; Letsholo 2006:6).

In the above section an account was given of the data related to the community's participation, and a discussion of the findings.

The data related to the overall effectiveness of the schools and a discussion of the results is presented below.

## **5.9. THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOLS**

The next section presents the views on school effectiveness.

### **5.9.1. The participants' views of the overall effectiveness of the schools**

The participants in the study shared their experiences relating them to the students' performance in the national, regional and school-level examinations. This situation was mainly reflected by the principals.

The principal of School three explained the overall effectiveness of his school as follows,

*“The school is becoming better from time to time. I am saying this based on students' result in consecutive years. Before two years the average pass rate of students in centrally prepared examination was lower than that of last year. Last year, the pass rate increased by 16%. ...This year, we hope that the results will be better because we are strongly working to achieve better results.”*

As the data show, the performance of the students in the school is increasing from year to year. This partly explains that the school is becoming more effective.

Similarly, the supervisor of School one agreed,

*“The school is becoming more effective than it was earlier. There are a lot of changes when compared to the previous years. This is making the school to become one of model schools in the zone.”*

Thus, from the above it can be deduced that the changes taking place in the school have contributed to the effectiveness of the school, and School one is now labelled as a model school.

Moreover, the principal of School one added,

*“The school community is exerting its full effort to make the school the school one of the best schools in the region. We understand that this does not happen overnight. For now the school is one of the best schools in the zone. Students' achievement and behaviour is improving from year to year.”*

These words make it clear that the improvement in the students' results and behaviour are observed in the school. In relation to the improvement in the students' behaviour, the yearly report of the school for the academic year 2013/14 shows that there were not so many discipline problems in the school. The improvement in students' behaviour indicates that the performance of the school is improving. Conversely, the participants from School two and four reported that the schools have not indicated any obvious changes in the students' achievement, as well as in their behaviour.

For example, the supervisor of School two indicated,

*“Though there are slight changes in the school, it is difficult to say that the school is effective. There are a lot of issues which need improvement.”*

The indication shows that there is only a slow improvement in the school. These slow improvements are not bringing about any changes in the students' performance. Above all, the 2013/14 final report of the school indicates that there is a decline in the students' results from the academic year 2012/13 to 2013/2014 in the centrally prepared examinations. This indicates that the performance of the school is declining for different reasons which have been discussed in earlier sections. However, it is paradoxical that the average pass-rate of the students who do not sit for the national examinations is 96%, as indicated by the students' examination results in the schools. This shows that the assessment results at school level were not genuine, for different reasons.

This section presented the data related to the overall effectiveness of the schools.



The next section discusses the findings related to the overall effectiveness of the schools.

### **5.9.2. Discussion of the overall effectiveness of the schools**

The overall effectiveness of the schools is described by linking it to the pass-rate of the students in the national, regional and school-level examinations. This view is not in conformity with dozens of views in the literature (Beare 2007:66; Busher et al. 2000:399; Creemer & Reezgit 2005:399; Makoelle 2011:63; Scheerens & Demeuse 2005:373; Sullivan 2009:463). These researchers indicated that school effectiveness is to be determined by looking into a number of intertwined variables related to the characteristics of effective schools. Besides, Ncube (2002:112) and Scheerens (2015:14) argued that a single model or approach cannot be used to determine school effectiveness and the functioning of the schools. Similarly, Creemers and Kyriakides (2008:75) stipulate that the effectiveness of the schools needs to be determined based on broader goals than focusing on measuring achievement in basic skills. However, the position held by some researchers( for example, Makoelle 2011) indicates that school effectiveness can be determined by looking at the students' results (Makoelle 2011:65-67). The schools which were labelled as model schools had high numbers of students who passed their grade. The model schools devised various strategies and maximised students' results. Moreover, it was reported that the students' behaviour was also improving in those schools. However, in the poorly-performing schools, the high pass-rate of the students in the school-level examinations did not guarantee success in the national or regional examinations. This implied that the results reported at the school-level were not genuine in the poorly performing schools and did not indicate mastery of the subject matter by the students. This was probably due to the poor implementation of the assessment techniques in the schools. The assessments did not contribute positively to the learning outcomes (Asikainen et al. 2013:214).

In Schools one and three the participants believed that the effectiveness of the schools was the result of a range of changes introduced to improve the performance of the schools. On the contrary, in the schools where the improvement process was slow, neither a change in

behaviour nor an improvement in students' results was observed. Thus, in the centrally-administered examinations the students' results were reported to be poor. However, studies indicate that the nature of assessment affects the quality of the learning outcomes (Asikainen et al. 2013:211). Thus, determining school effectiveness based on the school-level assessment results requires caution.

The participants in the study also reflected on the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the schools.

These are described in the following section.

## **5.10. CHALLENGES TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

The section below provides data related to challenges to school effectiveness.

### **5.10.1. Data on the challenges to school effectiveness**

The participants in the study indicated the following as challenges to school effectiveness:

- the absence of the full participation of the school community in the planning and decision-making in poorly-performing schools;
- the engagement of the principals in out-of-school activities, and not giving attention to instructional leadership in the schools;
- the lack of proper support by the principals and the supervisors;
- resistance by the teachers to engage in CPD activities, to properly implement peer-learning approaches, and to lead extra-curricular activities in all schools;
- the non-existence of merit-based recruitment procedures for upgrading courses;

- the lack of parental involvement in some of the schools;
- the lack of planning for educational experience-sharing visits beyond the cluster schools;
- the absence of recognition mechanisms;
- confusion regarding the benefits of the peer-learning approach;
- the unavailability of training and workshop opportunities for teachers; and
- some students' expectations that their assignments would be done by other students.

Moreover, the documents that were analysed indicate that the following are the main challenges to school effectiveness:

- the shortage of funds to run the school's activities;
- the lack of positive attitudes by some teachers towards peer-learning; and
- the resistance by the teachers to engage in CPD activities.

It is critical for the schools to have the necessary funds and other resources to run their improvement activities. The shortage of facilities, the lack of a positive attitude towards improvement initiatives, and the resistance to participate in reforms will negatively affect the performance of the schools.

The list of the challenges to school effectiveness was given above.

The discussion of the findings is presented below.

### **5.10.2. Discussion of the findings related to the challenges to school effectiveness**

The literature on school improvement and effectiveness makes it clear that ownership of the improvement plans by the school community is unlikely if the participation level of the community in the planning process is low (Harris & Muijs 2005:14, Hopkins 2005:7; Raynor 2004: 152). In poorly-performing schools, the low participation of the school community in planning, decision-making and other improvement activities were drawbacks to the achievement of the aims of improvement. Makoelle (2011:65-67) indicated that poorly-performing schools are characterised by the abovementioned features. Moreover, the effectiveness of the schools was challenged by the lack of proper instructional leadership support by the supervisors and the principals. The principals and supervisors could not focus on their pedagogical leadership roles (Arlestig & Tornsen 2014:857). Thus, it became difficult for the schools to expect success without the necessary support (Cawelti & Protheroe 2007:49; MacBeath 2007:66). Consequently, in the poorly-performing schools, the lack of support on instruction affected teaching and learning, and this, in turn, resulted in the poor performance of the schools. This is in line with the reports by Chapman and Adams (2002:55) on the factors that determine school effectiveness. The literature also suggested that the availability of support is critical for successful teaching and learning (Allen 2006:17; Danielson 2002:106; Jeffrey & Woods 2003:114; Semadeni 2009:99).

Furthermore, the resistance of the teachers to engage in CPD and the lack of planning for training and workshops, the non-existence of merit-based recruitment strategies for upgrading courses of teachers, and the shortage of facilities to run cluster-level CPD were reported as challenges to the implementation of teachers' professional development. These challenges are likely to contribute to the poor performance of the teachers in the teaching and learning process (Semadeni 2009:62). Besides, the shortage of resources critically affects the improvement process (Anderson et al. 2012:407). Shortage of resources probably results in low achievement of students in the schools since it affects the teaching and learning process. Some of the challenges listed above, such as the resistance to change and the lack of transparency in the recruitment procedures were related to the school culture which require changing the present school culture (Gold et al. 2009:238; Gordon 2004:166). It is also worth

mentioning that poorly performing schools faced challenges related to the lack of cooperation between the teachers and the parents. Studies indicate that lack of cooperation happens due to certain background factors related to school culture (Robert 2010:14). In schools where there is no cooperation, transparency and resistance to change, the extent of parental involvement was reported to be limited. Besides, the lack of recognition mechanisms for good performance, the confusion about the role of the peer-learning approach, and the shortage of funds were identified as challenges.

Finally, the participants in the study forwarded a number of suggestions for future improvement.

The data on the suggestions and the discussion of the results are presented below.

## **5.11. SUGGESTIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENT**

Suggestions of participants for future improvement and the discussion of the suggestions is presented under the following sections.

### **5.11.1. Data on suggestions for future improvement**

The participants in the study suggested the following categories of actions to be carried out to improve the schools and to enhance their effectiveness.

#### **5.11.1.1. Suggestions to improve the planning process and the implementation of the plans**

In order to make the planning process and the implementation of the planned activities more effective, the following key solutions are suggested, namely

- involve all the stakeholders in the planning process;
- create a positive relationship with the community;
- ensure the commitment of all the stakeholders;
- make the necessary resources (both human and material) available;
- establish strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and
- conduct expert reviews.

#### 5.11.1.2. Strategies suggested to minimise the challenges related to CPD

It has been indicated earlier that a number of challenges affect the implementation of CPD.

The participants suggested that the following strategies could minimise the impact of the challenges:

- create an awareness among the teachers about importance of CPD, and change their attitudes;
- allocate funds for CPD activities;
- provide training on CPD for the teachers and help them to make a distinction between the needs of the CPD and the SIP;
- make the CPD portfolios' evaluation a requirement for the teachers' promotion;
- monitor CPD activities; and
- creating forums for the sharing of best experiences related to CPD.

### 5.11.1.3. Overall strategies suggested to make the schools more effective

The following are the overall strategies forwarded by the participants to make the schools in Sidama Zone more effective:

- create training opportunities for all the stakeholders on the SIP;
- secure the full support and cooperation of the community;
- support the schools in carrying out genuine self-evaluation, and formulate action plans on the identified priorities;
- search for extra sources of finance and other resources;
- clearly schedule monitoring and evaluation activities;
- ensure the full engagement of the teachers in CPD;
- increase the students' innovation through motivation; and
- establish recognition mechanisms for best practices.

The discussion of the solutions suggested is presented in the following section.

### **5.11.2. Discussion of the solutions suggested by the participants for future improvement**

The categories of the solutions as suggested by the participants focused on planning and as well as general strategies to enhance school effectiveness. Ensuring the involvement of all the stakeholders in the planning process is considered to be a key to school improvement. It has been indicated that this creates a feeling of ownership of the improvement plans among the school community, and increases their commitment (Kyriades et al. 2014:87; MoE 2011a: 17, Wallace 2005:166). Besides, the participants felt that the availability of the necessary resources is one of the key issues in achieving the improvement targets. This is in line with

the requirements of effective plans and suggestions forwarded by Santos (2012:3) for the successful implementation of reforms. The data also indicated that there is a need to establish monitoring and evaluation strategies. Monitoring and evaluation, if carried out with the cooperation of the school community, can help to track the problems affecting improvement practices (Rabichund 2011:114 ) and can give insight into the areas which need further improvement (Harris 2002:46-47; MacBeath 2006:18). Moreover, creating a room for expert reviews is suggested as a means of assisting the schools to identify their problems and to solve them (Harris 2002:47; Rabichund 2011:114; The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement 2006:3).

The second category of suggestions focused on solutions that can be used to minimise problems related to CPD. Awareness-creation regarding the importance of CPD and changing the attitudes of the teachers are suggested as solutions. This may assist the schools to minimise the resistance of the teachers to participate in CPD, due to two reasons. Firstly, the teachers considered CPD as fruitless and time-consuming. Secondly, they considered CPD as a political tool of the government, used to keep the teachers busy. The abovementioned considerations indicated that there was a lack of awareness about the importance of CPD, and this resulted in negative attitudes. Thus, it is sound to claim that teachers need to be trained about the importance of CPD (Cawelti & Protheroe 2007:49; Putman 2012:48) and to accommodate their beliefs (Lotter & Rushton 2013:1264). Furthermore, the participants also suggested that there is a need to allocate the necessary funds and other resources that can facilitate the implementation of CPD (Santos 2012:2). Moreover, having the CPD tasks as a requirement for the teachers' promotion, and expanding experience-sharing opportunities are suggested as solutions. Although it was not properly implemented, the accomplishment of the CPD tasks is one of the requirements for promotion of teachers in Ethiopian schools (MoE 2011c:65) .This indicated that there exist an implementation gap. Finally, the third category of solutions suggested are those which are considered to make the schools more effective. These include the training of all the stakeholders on the SIP, ensuring the cooperation of the community, conducting self-evaluation properly (MacBeath 2006:18; Rabichund 2011:114), monitoring and evaluating properly (MoE 2008:46), and providing the necessary support for all the students (Gordon 2004:12).



This sub-section provided a discussion of results on suggestions provided by the participants in the study.

The next section provides a brief summary of the chapter.

## **5.12. CONCLUSION**

In the previous sections of this chapter, I presented and analysed the data in respect of the experiences of the school community as regards the outcomes of the SIP on the school effectiveness of the four schools. Then a discussion of the results was presented by blending what the data indicated with the findings in the literature and my own comments. This was done under each major theme. Thus, the chapter conveyed an analysis of the data on leadership, teaching and learning, the school environment, community participation, the overall effectiveness of the schools, challenges affecting school effectiveness, and solutions suggested by participants.

The findings are briefly summarised below.

- The findings in relation to leadership indicated that in schools where leadership was participatory, the functioning of schools was smooth and the school community was more committed to their duties than the school community of the schools where the leadership was not participatory.
- Regarding teaching and learning, the teachers' commitment to implement active learning methods and to support each other as well as their students contributed to enhance the performance of the schools as opposed to the other schools. The results furthermore indicated that the teachers' engagement in CPD was at the lowest level due to teachers' belief that CPD was not helping to improve teaching and learning. The one-to-five approach which was meant to enhance the students' learning was an issue on which the participants did not agree in respect of its contribution.

- As opposed to the school environments of poorly-performing schools, the school environments of the better-performing schools were found to be relatively conducive to learning, and it contributed its share to the better performance of the schools.
- In the better-performing schools, there existed participation of the school community in the school affairs, and this created a feeling of ownership of the improvement processes, and contributed to school effectiveness. Conversely, the participation of the community was found to be negligible in the poorly-performing schools.
- School effectiveness was described in terms of the students' achievements in the regional, national and school-level examinations.
- The lack of proper support to the school community and of the necessary resources, the non-existence of diverse professional learning opportunities for the teachers, and the teachers' resistance to participate in CPD were found to be challenges affecting school effectiveness.
- Making the school leadership participatory, availing the schools of the necessary resources, increasing awareness about CPD among the teachers, establishing support structures, and providing training on the SIP were suggested as solutions.

The next chapter presents a synthesis of the findings, the conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SYNTHESIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher presents a synthesis of the findings by indicating the main objective, the research questions and the strategies used to find answers to the questions. The chapter provides a concise summary of the findings in relation to the research questions and conclusions in respect of each of the questions. Then follow practical recommendations and recommendations for future research. Finally, the chapter culminates in the presentation of the conclusions to the study.

#### **6.2. SYNTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study was to explore the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness of the schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia. A parallel question which was stated to find an answer to was "What are the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia?"

This main problem led to the following sub-problems.

- What is school effectiveness and how can it be assessed?
- What role can the SIP play in improving school effectiveness?
- What are the structure, place and the role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools?
- How does the school community experience the role of the SIP in improving school effectiveness?

- According to these experiences, how can the SIP be improved to enhance school effectiveness?

The study was outlined into six chapters so as to answer the main research question by finding answers to the sub-questions as follows:

- Chapter 1 focused on the background of the study, the problem-statement, the research questions, the aim and objectives of the study, the contribution of the study, the motivation of the study, the scope of the study, limitations, the theoretical framework of the study, a description of the methods used, and definitions of the terms.
- Chapter 2 presented a review of relevant literature on the quality of education, quality assurance in education, school improvement and school effectiveness and how the latter can be assessed, and the theoretical framework of the study(which is also briefly introduced in chapter one).
- Chapter 3 reviewed the historical context of education in Ethiopia to show why it became important to reform the education sector, a general education quality improvement program in Ethiopia, and the SIP in Ethiopia.
- Chapter 4 discussed the research methodology focusing on the research paradigm, the design of the study, the study area, sampling, the data-collection instruments and procedures, data-analysis techniques, issues of reliability and validity (trustworthiness), and ethical considerations.
- Chapter 5 provided the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data regarding the experiences of the school community with regard to the role of the SIP in school effectiveness. It discussed results from different schools by focusing on what the participants reflected, and related it to other research findings focusing on the sub-themes.
- Chapter 6, this last chapter, will deals with the synthesis, conclusions, and recommendations of the study based on the main themes of the research question, and the contributions of the study.

The following sections present the summary of the findings of the study.

First a summary of the literature study is discussed and thereafter the findings from the empirical study.

### **6.2.1. Summary of the literature study**

The first three questions of this study were answered by conducting a literature study. The findings from the literature study regarding the three questions are summarised below.

#### **6.2.1.1. What is school effectiveness and how can it be assessed?**

Seeking the answer to this question required looking into school effectiveness and strategies to assess it.

The findings on these issues are presented below.

##### ***6.2.1.1.1. School effectiveness and the characteristics of effective schools***

In Chapter 2, section 2.2.1., the definitions of school effectiveness and the characteristics of effective schools were presented. *School effectiveness* is referred to as the extent of the proper functioning of the school. School effectiveness is achieved on the basis of accountability to the public. This indicates that schools produce effects by making resources available, and effectiveness also entails that the resources are administered to achieve those effects. Besides, the effectiveness of the schools is determined by looking into the characteristics of effective schools which have a positive impact on the students' learning. Schools which place considerable emphasis to students' learning are characterised by:

- a conducive learning environment;
- shared leadership and decision-making;
- effective planning;

- emphasis on teaching and learning;
- school-wide professional development for the staff;
- the empowerment of the students;
- the use of diverse monitoring and evaluation strategies; and
- effective communication strategies.

The literature study indicated that these characteristics exist within a context and can be affected by both internal and external factors.

#### *6.2.1.1.2. Strategies to assess school effectiveness*

School effectiveness can be assessed by focusing on different models. The models focus on goals (measuring performance), inputs (resources brought to run the process), processes (teaching and learning, planning, decision-making, etc.), customer satisfaction, organisational learning and overall quality assurance processes. It was discussed in chapter 2, section 2.2.2, that focusing on a single model of assessing school effectiveness cannot provide a complete picture about the effectiveness of the school. Thus, a combination of models needs to be used to assess school effectiveness. Moreover, the literature indicated that an assessment of school effectiveness needs to be based on the determinants of the success of schools, such as information on the environment of the school, support structures, parental and community involvement, the planning process, monitoring and evaluation strategies, ownership of the practice by the school community, communication channels, and feedback mechanisms. In the literature it is also suggested that school effectiveness can be measured by using the students' results/achievements as criteria. To sum up, an assessment of school effectiveness can be made by means of the criteria summarised above.

### 6.2.1.2. What role can the SIP play in improving school effectiveness?

To provide an answer to this question it became crucial to conceptualise school improvement and to move on in explaining the role the SIP can play in improving school effectiveness.

The findings are summarised below.

#### *6.2.1.2.1. Conceptualisation of school improvement*

School improvement was explained in chapter 2, section 2.3.1, as a process which aims at changing or reforming the existing practice/culture of a school to improve the performance of the school. It is planned, based on evidence regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the particular school. It requires identifying priorities for improvement and planning them, improving leadership, providing professional development opportunities for the staff, devising strategies to empower the learners, and designing proper monitoring and evaluation strategies by involving all the stakeholders.

#### *6.2.1.2.1. The role the SIP can play in improving school effectiveness*

In chapter 2, section 2.4, it was explained that the school improvement process leads to school effectiveness. This view is supported in the literature and earlier research findings on school improvement and school effectiveness. It is also confirmed that school improvement is a path to school effectiveness. The former has to do with the capacity of the schools to manage change, whereas the latter is concerned with the effect the change process has on the functioning of the schools in general and the students' outcomes in particular. Thus, the improvement of the school enhances its effectiveness by improving the performance of the schools.

### 6.2.1.3. What are the structure, the place and the role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools?

Understanding the structure, the place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools required looking into what triggered the development of the SIP in the country. This, in turn, demanded understanding the trends in the education system that led to the development of the SIP. Then the discussion of the answer to the question focused on the role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools.

The summary is presented as follows.

#### *6.2.1.3.1. Ethiopian education towards school improvement*

In chapter 3, it was indicated that the education policies in Ethiopia have been changing based on the ideology of the political group leading the country. There was no trend of building upon the previous policies and their achievements. The regimes of the different periods dismissed the earlier policies and started afresh. Together with the poor conditions of the country this contributed to the decline of the quality of education, among other things. Since 1994 the attempt made to increase access to education has resulted in the expansion of schools. However, the expansion was in poor school environments, and the quality of education deteriorated. Consequently, the achievement of the students in the NLAs and the national examinations was found to be poor. This triggered the development of a quality assurance package, named GEQIP, for the general education sector. School improvement is one of the programs of GEQIP, and is implemented in primary and secondary schools as one component of the quality assurance process. The SIP is implemented, based on the SIP guideline, framework and implementation manual. The documents give a clear account of the domains of the program, the standards and the elements in each domain. They furthermore provide implementation strategies for the program.



#### 6.2.1.3.2. *The role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools*

The SIP focuses on leadership, teaching and learning, community participation and the school environment. The improvement process is meant to bring about changes in the ways the above domains were practiced/implemented previously, and it aims to improve the students' results. This is explained in chapter 3, section 3.3.1. Thus, the schools work for improvement by identifying the agreed-upon priorities and planning them for improvement. In addition, the SIP stipulates the responsibility of the school community in the improvement planning and implementation process. These responsibilities were discussed in chapter 3, section 3.3.2. Moreover, the implementation of the SIP starts with self-evaluation by using the SAF, and based on the results, the schools plan for improvement. Finally, it was indicated that the SIC is given the responsibility to plan, monitor and evaluate SIP-related activities.

### **6.2.2. Summary of the findings**

An empirical study was done to find answers to the research question "*How do the school community experience the role of the SIP in improving school effectiveness?*".

This section provides the main findings of the empirical study in the following sub-sections.

#### 6.2.2.1. Findings on theme 1: Leadership

In the schools where there was a strong collaboration of the school community in the planning, decision-making, and the monitoring and evaluation processes, the improvement initiatives were owned by all in the school, and the performance of the schools was enhanced. On the other hand, a lack of collaboration among the school community on the above issues negatively affected the performance of the poorly-performing schools. Besides, in all the schools, leading CPD was challenged by the resistance of the teachers, the lack of the necessary resources, and poor recruitment and selection procedures for upgrading the

teachers' qualifications The busy schedules of the supervisors and the profound engagement of the principals in out-of-school duties and political roles have also resulted in weak leadership support to the school community. Thus, the findings indicated that the culture of support to the school community by the leadership is yet to be developed (The findings related to leadership are presented in chapter 5 section 5.5.2).

#### 6.2.2.2. Findings on theme 2: Teaching and learning

The teachers' commitment to support each other, to implement active learning methods and continuous assessment contributed to the enhancement of the performance of the better-performing schools. In these schools the teachers considered the success of the students as their collective responsibility, and they felt that they were accountable for the results. This notion is also supported by the stipulations of the Theory of Change model, namely that the teachers' commitment to support their students enhances the performance of the schools. On the contrary, in the poorly-performing schools, collaboration among the teachers and the commitment to implement strategies that can maximise the students' performance was at the lowest level. Although there was a trend of identifying CPD needs, the engagement of the teachers in CPD was not very good due to resistance and the belief that CPD was not contributing to the teaching and learning process. Besides, the one-to-five/peer-learning approach was implemented in the schools to have the students support each other. However, there were mixed views regarding the benefits of the approach. The teachers believed that the approach was resulting in many students being dependent on the work of better performing students in spite of the principals' view that the approach was facilitating teaching and learning in the schools. It was also reported that the silence of the schools in responding to misbehaviours was affecting the teaching and learning process. (The detailed findings on these themes are presented in chapter 5, section 5.6.2).

#### 6.2.2.3. Findings on theme 3: The school environment

The availability of the necessary facilities created environments conducive to learning in Schools one and three, and this contributed to their better performance. Though there were attempts to introduce extra-curricular activities for the social and emotional development of the students, their implementation was negatively affected by a lack of coordination and resources in all of the schools. In the poorly-performing schools, the school environment was found to be far behind from conducive to teaching and learning. (The findings on school the environment were discussed in chapter 5, section 5.7.2.)

#### 6.2.2.4. Findings on theme 4: Community participation

In the better-performing schools, the comments and ideas collected from the school community by using different channels of communication were used as an input to make adjustments to the ongoing improvement process. The feeling of ownership created as a consequence, enhanced the effectiveness of the schools. In contrast, the absence of accommodating feedback obtained from the school community to the improvement process contributed its share to the ineffectiveness of the poorly-performing schools. The findings furthermore indicated that in these schools the parental involvement was limited only to participation in discipline matters, as opposed to the enhanced participation of the parents in the better-performing schools. (In chapter 5, section 5.8.2., a discussion of the findings related to community participation was presented).

#### 6.2.2.5. Findings on theme 5: The overall effectiveness of the schools

The discussion on the overall effectiveness of the schools was presented in chapter 5, section 5.9.2. The promotion-rate of the students from one level to the next in the national, regional and school-level examinations was described as a measure of the effectiveness of the schools. Yet, the high pass-rate in the school-level examinations in the poorly-performing

schools did not guarantee that the schools were effective. This entailed that the effectiveness of the schools was at its lowest level. Moreover, the literature indicated that school effectiveness needs to be assessed in a number of ways using different models, and the students' achievement is only one of the ways.

#### 6.2.2.6. Findings on theme 6: Challenges to school effectiveness

The lack of the significant participation of the school community in school affairs, the lack of appropriate instructional leadership support, the teachers' resistance to participate in CPD, the non-existence of training and workshops for the teachers and the shortage of resources to conduct cluster-level experience-sharing were reported as challenges. A discussion of the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the schools was presented in chapter 5, section 5.10.2.

#### 6.2.2.7. Findings on theme 7: Solutions suggested by the participants

The findings indicated that there is a need to engage the school community in the planning and the monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure their commitment during implementation of the SIP, to avail the schools of the necessary resources for running SIP activities, and to conduct expert reviews. Besides, awareness-creation of the importance of CPD and making the accomplishment of CPD tasks as criterion for the promotion of the teachers were forwarded as solutions to minimise the challenges related to CPD. Furthermore, establishing support structures, training the stakeholders on SIP, and ensuring their full participation were suggested as solutions to make the schools more effective.

In addition, the strategies discussed below are considered as important to further enhance the effectiveness of the schools in Sidama Zone.

### **6.3. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE SIP SO AS TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOLS**

This section is intended to answer the fifth research question, namely 'According to these experiences (experiences of the school community), how can the SIP be improved to enhance school effectiveness?' The strategies suggested are based on the findings and the challenges outlined by the school community. The findings indicated that there are specific problems affecting the effectiveness of Sidama Zone schools.

These included:

- problems related to the planning process (see section 5.5.2, paragraph 2);
- the lack of proper support for the school community and the schools (see section 5.5.2, paragraph 7);
- the prevailing school culture (see sections 5.5.2; 5.6.2; 5.7.2 & 5.8.2);
- resistance by the teachers to engage in CPD (see section 5.6.2, paragraph 4);
- limited community participation (see sections 5.8.1 & 5.8.2) ;
- the lack of proper review mechanisms (section 5.5.2, paragraphs 7& 8);
- the lack of incentives and recognition mechanisms (see section 5.10.2, paragraph 3); and
- limited experience-sharing opportunities (see section 5.5.2, paragraph 5).

Based on these experiences which are negatively affecting the performance of the schools, the following strategies are suggested to enhance their effectiveness in Sidama Zone.

#### **6.3.1. Monitoring the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes in the schools**

A plan is the beginning to improve the performance of a school, and it should be based on the current needs of the school. If plans are not produced based on the present improvement needs of the schools, obvious changes would not be possible. If there is no follow-up and no

provision of the necessary support during the planning process, the schools with capacity problems may resort to using the plans of the previous years. Thus, the schools need to receive genuine support and follow-up when they produce SIP plans.

In addition, when the schools start implementing the plans, experts and supervisors who have the time to spend in the schools need to provide the necessary support for the successful implementation of the plans. This would help the schools to tackle the challenges they face, and improve their performance. Besides, the monitoring and evaluation process needs to be checked by external reviewers. This would help to make the evaluation results and reports authentic.

### **6.3.2. Building trust among the teachers and the principals**

The principals and teachers need to be aware of the fact that they are working towards the common goal of improvement. If the teachers consider the principal as somebody else who does not have the time to support the schools but who comes to the school as a visitor, then they may not realise that they are working towards a common goal. It is a known fact that teachers are the driving forces of teaching and learning in the schools. Unless there exists trust between the principal and the teachers, the driving force becomes ineffective, and this will affect the effectiveness of the school. Building trust requires changing the existing culture in the schools and creating a relationship of trust between the teachers and the principals so that they may act as colleagues working to achieve the common goal of improvement. Minimising the amount of time principals spend out of school and supporting them on issues related to instruction can pave the way to creating smooth relations between the principals and the teachers.

### **6.3.3. Creating a working relationship between the public schools, teacher education institutions, universities and private schools**

The capacity of the teachers and the school management is increased if the teachers work together with the teacher education institutions and the universities. This would create training opportunities for the teachers, the principals, the supervisors and other experts. This would enhance the teachers' capability which would result in their improved performance at school level. This would directly contribute to the effectiveness of the schools. Furthermore, it would be easier for the public schools to access the best practices related to school improvement from other model public schools and the research findings related to the schools' improvement and effectiveness if they collaborate with higher education institutions.

Moreover, it is important for the public schools to create a link with the private schools. In most cases the private schools have better resources than the public schools. The human resources in private schools are employed on a competitive basis which partly contributed to high performance of the schools in the study area. Therefore, the public schools can benefit from the experiences of the private schools and thereby improve their performance.

#### **6.3.4. Introducing mechanisms for recognition**

When teachers are assigned to carry out other administrative activities that support the development of the students, they will be encouraged to perform them if there are incentives to do so. This minimises the feeling that the activity is an extra burden. Besides, the best performances in all aspects of the school's affairs need to be recognised. Recognition is critical for the sustainability of improvement initiatives. This will have a motivating impact on the school community and will positively contribute to school effectiveness.

#### **6.3.5. Providing special support to poorly-performing schools**

Providing the necessary support to schools can enhance their effectiveness by maximising their capacity to manage change. It is advisable that developing the capacity of the schools can help them to change the overall school culture which predominantly affects the improvement initiatives. The capacity of poorly-performing schools to manage change was at

the lowest level for different reasons. Most of the causes for the poor performance of the schools were related to the prevailing practice in the schools. In addition, the accumulated experience of poorly-performing schools lags far behind from the experience of the better-performing schools. Furthermore, the poorly-performing schools, being located in the rural areas and far from each other, could not get the necessary support from the present cluster-based supervision. This also contributed for their poor performance. Thus, these justifications call for the need to look into the specific challenges such schools are facing, and support them to tackle the challenges. Introducing special support structures for the poorly-performing schools can enhance the effectiveness of the schools.

The next section draws major conclusions based on each of the research questions.

#### **6.4. CONCLUSIONS IN RESPECT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following conclusions are drawn based on each of the research questions.

- Question 1: *School effectiveness* is referred to as the functioning of the schools on the basis of public accountability, and can be determined by looking into the characteristics of effective schools. Thus, it can be assessed by using different models of school effectiveness and the determinants of the success of the schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no single model to assess school effectiveness, and a combination of models can be used to assess it.
- Question 2: *School improvement* is conceptualised as a change process that focuses on the development of the schools by identifying their weaknesses, and using different strategies to enhance their effectiveness.
- Question 3: It was indicated that the SIP as part of GEQIP is entrusted to improve the poor condition of Ethiopian schools in respect of leadership, teaching and learning, the school environment and community participation.
- Question 4: From the findings of the empirical study, it can be concluded that the SIP has contributed to school effectiveness in the schools that have properly managed the change process. Conversely, in schools where the SIP domains were poorly implemented, the



performance of the schools remained at the minimum level, and the school community suggested areas which needed further improvement to enhance the effectiveness of Sidama Zone schools.

- Question 5: Monitoring the SIP cycles with the help of experts, building trust between the principals and the teachers, creating a link between public schools and teacher education institutions, universities and private schools, introducing incentive and recognition mechanisms, and providing special support to poorly-performing schools are indicated as strategies to enhance school effectiveness in Sidama Zone schools.

The next section provides practical recommendations for possible action by the schools, WEO, ZED and REB as recommended per each action.

## **6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are practical recommendations to make the schools in Sidama Zone more effective:

### **6.5.1. Redirecting the roles of the principals and increasing the number of supervisors**

I observed that the principals in the schools are busy with activities other than instruction. The same concern was reflected by the teachers in the schools, namely that the principals are spending most of their time on what they referred as ‘command post’ appointments for political reasons. This is negatively affecting the functioning of the schools as the instructional leadership role to be played by principals is missing. It sounds reasonable to redirect the roles of the principals and to have them focus on instructional leadership. This could be done by employing other officers in schools other than the principals’ office which could be responsible to link the school with the external environment as the principals’ main role is to be an effective leader in the school.

The study also indicated that supervisors are responsible for providing support to a number of clustered schools. The schools are far distances apart and it has become difficult for the supervisors to support the schools. The present supervisors for the cluster schools are not

helping the clustered schools and it seems that the approach clustering approach is resulting in wastage of the available human resource. Thus, the ZED and WEO need to increase the number of supervisors by training more of them.

### **6.5.2. Creating diverse professional development opportunities for the teachers**

The effective professional development of teachers is crucial to equip the teachers with diverse curriculum delivery strategies. It would be difficult for schools to realise their vision of becoming effective without enhancing the capacity of the teaching staff with diverse techniques of teaching methods, classroom management, handling misbehaviour and issues related to their subject matter. The traditional approach of giving a number of the teachers the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications and engaging the teachers only in school-based CPD cannot fully help them to stay updated with the necessary knowledge and skills. Therefore, the MoE, ZED and WEO should work together and introduce a range of professional development opportunities for the teachers. The teachers, for example, need to be given the opportunities of training and workshops, and of attending distance courses and visits for educational purposes.

### **6.5.3. Making community participation diverse**

The study highlighted the fact that the participation of the community in the schools' affairs is mainly limited to the contribution of resources and attending meetings at the beginning and the end of the school year. However, it is believed that the multi-level participation of the community can enhance the effectiveness of the schools. Accordingly, the ZED, WEO and the respective schools should use different strategies that are appropriate to the local conditions and make the areas of community participation diverse.

#### **6.5.4. Rethinking the recruitment, appointment and retention of principals**

The school community has complained that the principals in the schools are political appointees, and that they are not helping the schools. The schools, however, need to have competent and qualified principals who can work towards the improvement of instruction in the schools. Thus, the ZED and WEO need to reconsider the approaches they use to recruit, appoint and retain experienced principals.

#### **6.5.5. Creating mechanisms to check the school plans and performance reports**

It has been found that plans have been duplicated by some of the schools, and there is an indication that the performance reports are not authentic. However, the schools need to operate under a functional accountability system. Supervision, though not effective for different reasons, is already in place. In addition, the schools should be inspected and the results of the inspection should be used to make the school community accountable. Such inspection should be able to confirm whether the plans are based on the current improvement needs of the school or not, and whether the reports are based on the actual performance of the school. Hence, the REB, ZED and the WEO should take the initiative to create mechanisms to check the school improvement plans and the performance reports.

#### **6.5.6. Sharing experiences beyond cluster centres on best practices**

The schools in the Sidama Zone are clustered for the purpose of sharing best experiences among themselves. Yet, those best experiences are limited to the local context and the performance level of the schools in the cluster. This means that if all the schools in that locality are performing relatively poorly, then this would not be able to help the schools to benefit from the experiences they share with each other. Therefore, ZED, WEO and the school management need to devise strategies to have the schools share their best experiences beyond cluster level. This would help the poorly-performing schools to share in

the experiences of the best-performing schools, for example, on project development and the generation of income.

#### **6.5.7. Reconsidering criteria for school effectiveness**

The schools in the Sidama Zone, as is the case in the other zones of Ethiopia, are labelled as model or best-performing or poorly-performing schools by comparing the schools with each other. The criteria do not even take into account the performance level of private schools which are known for their performance throughout the country. Limiting the comparison criteria only to public schools does not show whether those schools have really achieved the best, or the least. Thus, the MoE, ZED and WEO should reconsider their ways of labelling schools by making use of comprehensive criteria and by comparing the performances of both public and private schools. This may alert even the public schools which are labelled as best-performing, as they may have a number of deficiencies which require further improvement

#### **6.6. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study did not look into the roles of the principals and the supervisors in relation to the professional competency standards for Ethiopian school principals and supervisors. Thus, it is suggested that further research needs to be conducted to evaluate the contribution of the competency standards for principals and supervisors to school effectiveness in Ethiopian schools. This would provide a clue to the leadership gaps which need to be given attention during the implementation of the SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

It is also argued that the principals lack the necessary competence to play leadership roles. This study highlighted the fact that disappointments exist regarding the recruitment, selection and appointment of principals. Thus, it is advised that the impact of the principals' assignment criteria on school effectiveness as well as the quality of education are investigated to bring the

impact of recruitment, selection and appointment processes of principals on quality of education to the attention of the concerned stakeholders.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the one-to-five/peer-learning approach in Ethiopian schools is a source of debate among the educators, the experts both internal and external, and the political leaders. There is tension between the managers of education and the political leaders who insist that the one to five approach has to be implemented to improve the students' results on the one hand, and the teachers in the schools and the educators who claim that the approach is used by the government as a political tool. The former (managers and political leaders) argue that the students learn better if they support each other and their achievements will improve. However, the latter (teachers) condemn the approach because it results in the students' passing from one grade to the next without acquiring the basic knowledge and skills and not contributing for real improvement. Therefore, it is an area which needs to be researched further to come up with evidence regarding whether the one-to-five approach is contributing to the improvement and effectiveness of the schools.

Finally, it is important to note that there is a need to conduct studies on a larger scale on the topic in order to come up with evidence that may give policy direction on the SIP in Ethiopia.

## **6.7. CONCLUSION**

While attempting to explore the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on school effectiveness, the study sought answers to five questions. The literature study presented answers to the questions related to school effectiveness and strategies to assess it; the role that school improvement can play in enhancing school effectiveness and the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools. The empirical study again, explored the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the SIP on the school effectiveness of Sidama Zone schools.

The findings implied that, in the Sidama Zone, the effectiveness of the schools is yet to be realised. There are a number of issues which need further improvement irrespective of the labelling of schools as model or poorly-performing schools by ZED. This does not imply that the effectiveness of the schools can be realised overnight. With the belief that changing the condition of the schools and improving their performance takes time, those who administer the schools and those who have an interest in the business of the school need to work collaboratively. Authentic collaboration among the school community and their commitment to contribute to improvement of the schools can assist in enhancing the effectiveness of the schools.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A1

### Letter requesting permission to conduct research

To: Head, Sidama Zone Education Department

Sidama Zone, Hawassa, Ethiopia

**Subject: Request for Permission to Conduct Research in \_\_\_\_\_ School**

My name is Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo, a lecturer at Hawassa University. Currently, I am a doctoral student in Education Management at the University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr T Netshitangani (Netsht1@unisa.ac.za) in the College of Education at University of South Africa in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management and you can contact her in case you need any information on the research.

Here, I am seeking your permission to collect data from principals, teachers, students, supervisors, SIP experts and PTA members by using interviews and focus group discussion which will take 40- 50 minutes time. I also want to get permission to observe the events related to SIP in the schools and to use relevant documents from the schools. The schools purposefully selected for the study are Yirgalem secondary School, Adarash primary School, Loka Abaya Secondary School and Soyama Primary School. I assure you that the names of participants will not be mentioned anywhere in the research report and the data collected will be confidential. Participants will be asked to sign consent forms for participation which will be on voluntary basis. The participant can also decline from participation at any time.

After completing the research, I will give one bound copy of the findings of the full research report to your office. If I get an article of the research published, I will provide a copy of it to your office. If you need further information, please contact me on 251-0911922145 or 53341562@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

I would appreciate if you could complete the letter of permission at the end of this letter and return it to: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo, Hawassa University, P.o.Box. 75, Hawassa, Ethiopia.

With kind regards,

Dawit Legesse Edamo

**Cell: 251 0911922145**

**B.O.Box 05**

**Hawassa, Ethiopia**



## Appendix A2

### Memo from Hawassa University to Sidama Zone Education Department

ሀዋሃ ዩኒቨርሲቲ  
ማህበራዊ ሳይንስና ስነ-ሰብ  
ኮሌጅ



Hawassa University  
College of Social Sciences  
& Humanitie

No  
ቁጥር CSSH/ 852 /2006  
Date  
ቀን . 16/07/2006

To: Sidama Zone Education Department  
Hawassa

Subject: Permission for Data Collection

Dawit Legesse Edamo (Edamo DL-53341562) is a Doctoral student at University of South Africa (UNISA) with the support of Hawassa University. The student is currently conducting a study entitled "The Experiences of the School Community with Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" to fulfill the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management.

The purpose of the study is to provide an insight and understanding about the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of School Improvement Program on school effectiveness in selected schools and come up with ideas that inform policy makers, educators, the school community and other stakeholders to help them make better decisions regarding the program and to enlight ways to sustain positive effects of the program.

Therefore, we kindly request your kind office to grant permission to the student to conduct interviews and focus-group discussions with students, teachers, principals, supervisors, PTA members and educational officers; to conduct observation in the schools and to review documents related to school improvement program that would be available in the schools and offices of the Zone's Education Department.

CC:  
➤ Ato Dawit Legesse



With regards,  
  
Mengesha Mielke (Dr)  
College of Social Sciences  
& Humanities  
Dean





Date: 27/03/2014

Ref.No. 5/26/8/246/12

From: Sidama Zone Education Department

Hawassa

To: Asarachi PTE/School  
Y/Alam

**Subject: Granting permission for data collection**

The college of Social Sciences and Humanities of Hawassa University has requested us to grant Mr **Dawit Legesse Edamo** (Edamo D L -53341562) permission to collect data from the schools and offices of the zonal Education Department and Woreda Education offices. The aforementioned person is a Doctoral student at University of South Africa (UNISA) and conducting a study on "**The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia**" to fulfill the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the School Improvement Program on school effectiveness. Therefore, the Zonal Education Department requests kind cooperation of the Schools/Woreda Education Offices to allow the researcher to conduct interviews, focus discussions and carry out observation and document analysis. The interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with students, teachers, principals, PTA members, supervisors and officials of Woreda Education Offices.

With regards,

Uu  
Ishoetu Qurre Leemmo  
እሱቲ ቃሬ ሊግ  
Rosu Islanchimma Agarooshsh  
ሎሲ ዘላ'ሊንሎ ባንሩሳንሩ  
የትምህርት ስራ ማረጋገጫ  
ዘ/የ.ደ.ት ስራ/ሰ.ሰ.

CC

Mr. Dawit Legesse





Date: 27/03/2014

Ref.No. S/CE/8/446/12

From: Sidama Zone Education Department

Hawassa


To: Soyama Pril School  
Soyama

**Subject: Granting permission for data collection**

The college of Social Sciences and Humanities of Hawassa University has requested us to grant Mr **Dawit Legesse Edamo** (Edamo D L -53341562) permission to collect data from the schools and offices of the zonal Education Department and Woreda Education offices. The aforementioned person is a Doctoral student at University of South Africa (UNISA) and conducting a study on **"The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia"** to fulfill the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the School Improvement Program on school effectiveness. Therefore, the Zonal Education Department requests kind cooperation of the Schools/Woreda Education Offices to allow the researcher to conduct interviews, focus discussions and carry out observation and document analysis. The interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with students, teachers, principals, PTA members, supervisors and officials of Woreda Education Offices.

With regards,

  
Ishectu Qarre Leemmo  
አሸቆ ቃሬ ሉዋ  
Rosu Isanchimma Agarooshis  
ሎሲ ዘላ'ሪኖሎ ባክሮሪሳንሽ  
የትምህርት ማረጋገጫ  
መ/ዲ.ደ.ት ከተማ

CC

Mr. Dawit Legesse





Date: 27/03/2014

Ref.No. S/CL/8/446/D

From: Sidama Zone Education Department

Hawassa

To: Lokta Abaya Secp. School  
Hantabe

Subject: **Granting permission for data collection**

The college of Social Sciences and Humanities of Hawassa University has requested us to grant Mr **Dawit Legesse Edamo** (Edamo D L -53341562) permission to collect data from the schools and offices of the zonal Education Department and Woreda Education offices. The aforementioned person is a Doctoral student at University of South Africa (UNISA) and conducting a study on "**The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia**" to fulfill the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of the School Improvement Program on school effectiveness. Therefore, the Zonal Education Department requests kind cooperation of the Schools/Woreda Education Offices to allow the researcher to conduct interviews, focus discussions and carry out observation and document analysis. The interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with students, teachers, principals, PTA members, supervisors and officials of Woreda Education Offices.

With regards,

*W*  
Ishochu Qarre Leemnu  
አሽቶ ቃሬ ለዋ  
Rosa Islanchimma Agarootsh  
ሎሲ ዘላንሎ ሻሎ ማራጋጋ  
የትምህርት ስራ ማራጋጋ



CC

Mr. Dawit Legesse

## Appendix A4: Sample letter of permission from schools



Date: 28/03/2014

Ref.No SCH/445/35

To: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo

From: Adarash Primary School

Yirgalem

Subject: Permission for Data Collection

It is noted from the letter of Sidama Zone Education Department that you have got permission to collect data from the schools of Zone for you doctoral study entitled "The Experiences of the School Community with Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia". With this letter our schools shows that it cooperates with you as you carry out observation, interviews and focus group discussions in the school. You can get the documents related to school improvement program upon request.

Best wishes,



School Director

ዘዩ ክዳ ጣንቆ  
Zegeye Kuyisa Tanke  
ጣንቆ ማህበር  
Murnchcha

Zone P/Biddishaha Lokka  
Kki dirimi Rimba  
27/03/2014

Date: 28/03/2014

Ref.No. sch/1039135

To: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo

From: Lokka Abaya Secondary School

Hantate

**Subject: Permission for Data Collection**

Sidama Zone Education Department in its letter dated 27/03/2014 Ref.No. S/ch/8/446/12 informed us that you are granted permission to collect data from our school on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia".

Thus, we have taken note that you can collect data from the school and the school community using interviews, focus group discussion and interviews. The documents you want to use for the purpose of the research in relation to the above topic can be obtained from record offices and documentation section of the school. Make sure that the school community participates in the study voluntarily and you should arrange appropriate time with the help of responsible section in the school.

Wish you the best,

Director of the school

  
Asfaw Kassa



በሰዳማ ሥነ ጥምርና ጥምርና ፎቶግራፊ  
25 ደረጃ ስና መምህራን ገበያ  
Sidama Zone Educational Department  
Yirgalem Secondary & Preparatory School

Date: 28/03/2014

Ref.No. S/ch/1/1064/1/35

To: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo

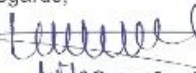
From: Yirgalem Secondary School

**Subject: Response to Your Request for Data Collection Permission**

In its letter dated 27/03/2014 Ref.No. S/ch/8/446/12 Sidama Zone Education Department has informed us that you are a doctoral student at University of South Africa and allowed you to collect data from our school to complete your study on "The Experiences of the School Community with Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia".

I assure you that the school will cooperate with you as you collect the data. You have to explain the participants that you have permission to collect data and show them this letter. You should conduct interviews and focus group discussions at appropriate times which do not interfere with normal class time of both teachers and students. If they have classes in the morning, you can carry out data collection in the afternoon or you can arrange appropriate time. Relevant documents will be available to you upon your request.

Regards,

  
Libanos Yigana  
School Director  
M/9/C/1009/UC  
Academic Vice Principal







Sidaamu Zoone Daalle Woradi  
Rosu Borro Mine Sooyyaamt  
Umi Dirimi Uminna Layinki  
Doylichho Rosu Mine

Date: 28/03/2014

Ref.No: Slch-410/014 8

To: Mr Dawit Legesse

From: Soyama Primary School

**Subject: Permission for Data Collection**

We have been informed by Sidama Zone Education Department that you are a doctoral student at University of South Africa and allowed to collect data from our school to accomplish your study on "The Experiences of the School Community with Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia". Thus, the school community will be cooperative as you show them this permission letter and you can conduct interviews, focus group discussions and observation. To secure the documents you need, you can specifically communicate the vice principals/directors and record offices.

Best Wishes

School Director

Adduyna Shufa Jaagge

አዲና ሹቶ ጆጌ

Rosu Mini Murricha

ሶሱ ሽብር ማሪቻ



በ.ዳ.ዓ.ዓ. ስነ ጥምረት ማምረቻ የደ.ካ.አ.ግ.ግ.  
2ኛ ደረጃ እና መሠረዳ ት/ቤት  
Sidama Zone Educational Department  
Yirgalem Secondary & Preparatory School

Date:28/03/2014

Ref.No. S/ch/1/1064/1/35

To: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo


From: Yirgalem Secondary School

**Subject: Response to Your Request for Data Collection Permission**

In its letter dated 27/03/2014 Ref.No. S/ch/8/446/12 Sidama Zone Education Department has informed us that you are a doctoral student at University of South Africa and allowed you to collect data from our school to complete your study on "The Experiences of the School Community with Regard to the Outcomes of the School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness of Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia".

I assure you that the school will cooperate with you as you collect the data. You have to explain the participants that you have permission to collect data and show them this letter. You should conduct interviews and focus group discussions at appropriate times which do not interfere with normal class time of both teachers and students. If they have classes in the morning, you can carry out data collection in the afternoon or you can arrange appropriate time. Relevant documents will be available to you upon your request.

Regards,

  
Libanos Yehane  
School Director  
M/9/C/1009/11  
Academic Vice Principal



## **Appendix B1(a): Letter to the principals requesting their participation in the study**

**Dear Sir/Madam:**

My name is Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia. The study specifically tries to:

- Identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools;
- Discuss school effectiveness and determine strategies to assess it;
- Identify the roles SIP can play in improving school effectiveness;
- Explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school effectiveness, and
- Devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

Your reflections and opinions regarding the outcome of School Improvement Program (SIP) on School effectiveness are very important to achieve the above objectives. This is because you have first hand experience regarding school activities related to SIP and its outcome on school effectiveness. Without getting in-depth information from you, it would be impossible to finalise the study.

Your participation in the study will be on voluntary basis and you can withdraw at any time from participation without penalty. It takes you 40-50 minutes time to take part in the interviews and to ask questions that you want to ask. I also request to tape record the information you provide me not to miss important points. The information you provide will be kept confidential and it will be used only for the purpose of completing this study. I assure you that no harm will be caused to you because of your participation. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. The interviews will take place during convenient time for you. In case you want to know the outcomes of the study, one copy of the final report will be given to your school, woreda education office and zone's education department.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the consent form at the soonest to you to: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo.

### **Researcher's Address**

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia

**Consent by the participant:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to participate in the research project. I am willing to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my participation is voluntary and I may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that my name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter.

Name and Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Phone or e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

(Co-Signed by D L Edamo)

## **Appendix B1(b): Letter to the teachers requesting their participation in the study**

**Dear Sir/Madam:**

My name is Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia. The study specifically tries to:

- Identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools;
- Discuss school effectiveness and determine strategies to assess it;
- Identify the roles SIP can play in improving school effectiveness;
- Explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school effectiveness, and
- Devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

Your reflections and opinions regarding the outcome of School Improvement Program (SIP) on School effectiveness are very important to achieve the above objectives. This is because you have first hand experience regarding school activities related to SIP and its outcome on school effectiveness. Without getting in-depth information from you, it would be impossible to finalise the study.

Your participation in the study will be on voluntary basis and you can withdraw at any time from participation without penalty. It takes you 40-50 minutes time to take part in the interviews and to ask questions that you want to ask. I also request to tape record the information you provide me not to miss important points. The information you provide will be kept confidential and it will be used only for the purpose of completing this study. I assure you that no harm will be caused to you because of your participation. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. The interviews will take place during convenient time for you. In case you want to know the outcomes of the study, one copy of the final report will be given to your school, woreda education office and zone's education department.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the consent form at the soonest to you to: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo.

### **Researcher's Address**

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia

**Consent by the participant:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to participate in the research project. I am willing to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my participation is voluntary and I may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that my name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter.

Name and Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Phone or e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

(Co-Signed by D L Edamo)

## **Appendix B1(c)**

### **Letter to the supervisors requesting their participation in the study**

**Dear Sir/Madam:**

My name is Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfillment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia. The study specifically tries to:

- Identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools;
- Discuss school effectiveness and determine strategies to assess it;
- Identify the roles SIP can play in improving school effectiveness;
- Explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school effectiveness, and
- Devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

Your reflections and opinions regarding the outcome of School Improvement Program (SIP) on School effectiveness are very important to achieve the above objectives. This is because you have first hand experience regarding school activities related to SIP and its outcome on school effectiveness. Without getting in-depth information from you, it would be impossible to finalise the study. Your participation in the study will be on voluntary basis and you can withdraw at any time from participation without penalty. It takes you 40-50 minutes time to take part in the interviews and to ask questions that you want to ask. I also request to tape record the information you provide me not to miss important points. The information you provide will be kept confidential and it will be used only for the purpose of completing this study. I assure you that no harm will be caused to you because of your participation. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. The interviews will take place during convenient time for you. In case you want to know the outcomes of the study, one copy of the final report will be given to your school, woreda education office and zone's education department.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the consent form at the soonest to you to: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo.

#### **Researcher's Address**

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia

**Consent by the participant:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to participate in the research project. I am willing to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my participation is voluntary and I may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that my name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter.

Name and Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Phone or e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

(Co-Signed by D L Edamo)



## **Appendix B1(d)**

### **Letter to the PTA members requesting their participation in the study**

**Dear Sir/Madam:**

My name is Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfillment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia. The study specifically tries to:

- Identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools;
- Discuss school effectiveness and determine strategies to assess it;
- Identify the roles SIP can play in improving school effectiveness;
- Explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school effectiveness, and
- Devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

Your reflections and opinions regarding the outcome of School Improvement Program (SIP) on School effectiveness are very important to achieve the above objectives. This is because you have first-hand experience regarding school activities related to SIP and its outcome on school effectiveness. Without getting in-depth information from you, it would be impossible to finalise the study.

Your participation in the study will be on voluntary basis and you can withdraw at any time from participation without penalty. It takes you 40-50 minutes time to take part in the interviews and to ask questions that you want to ask. I also request to tape record the information you provide me not to miss important points. The information you provide will be kept confidential and it will be used only for the purpose of completing this study. I assure you that no harm will be caused to you because of your participation. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. The interviews will take place during convenient time for you. In case you want to know the outcomes of the study, one copy of the final report will be given to your school, woreda education office and zone's education department.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the consent form at the soonest to you to: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo.

#### **Researcher's Address**

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia

**Consent by the participant:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to participate in the research project. I am willing to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my participation is voluntary and I may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that my name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter.

Name and Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Phone or e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

(Co-signed by D L Edamo)

## Appendix B1(e)

### Letter to the SIP experts requesting their participation in the study

**Dear Sir/Madam:**

My name is Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of the school community of the outcomes of SIP on school effectiveness in schools of Sidama Zone in Ethiopia. The study specifically tries to:

- Identify the structure, place and role of the SIP in Ethiopian schools;
- Discuss school effectiveness and determine strategies to assess it;
- Identify the roles SIP can play in improving school effectiveness;
- Explore the experiences of the school community of the role of SIP in improving school effectiveness, and
- Devise strategies to improve SIP so as to enhance school effectiveness.

Your reflections and opinions regarding the outcome of School Improvement Program (SIP) on School effectiveness are very important to achieve the above objectives. This is because you have first-hand experience regarding school activities related to SIP and its outcome on school effectiveness. Without getting in-depth information from you, it would be impossible to finalise the study.

Your participation in the study will be on voluntary basis and you can withdraw at any time from participation without penalty. It takes you 40-50 minutes time to take part in the interviews and to ask questions that you want to ask. I also request to tape record the information you provide me not to miss important points. The information you provide will be kept confidential and it will be used only for the purpose of completing this study. I assure you that no harm will be caused to you because of your participation. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study. The interviews will take place during convenient time for you. In case you want to know the outcomes of the study, one copy of the final report will be given to your school, woreda education office and zone's education department.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the consent form at the soonest to you to: Mr Dawit Legesse Edamo.

Researcher's Address

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia.

**Consent by the participant:**

I , \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to participate in the research project. I am willing to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my participation is voluntary and I may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that my name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter.

Name and Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Phone or e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

(Co-signed by D L Edamo)

## **Appendix B2:**

### **Letter requesting assent by the child ( translated to a simple version of their own language below- sidama language)**

Dear Student,

My name is Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfillment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. In Sidama Zone, your school and nearby schools have been implementing the School

Improvement Program. To make my study complete, I need your opinion about the program. The information you give me will be highly important as you have ample daily experiences related to school activities.

You will provide me information by discussing with your friends who are selected to discuss with you. The time for discussion will be arranged by consulting your school's principal and your parents. The discussion will take a maximum of 40 minutes. Your participation in the discussion will be on voluntary basis and you can withdraw at any time if you do not want to continue or take part in the discussion. The information you provide will be kept confidential and your names will not be mentioned in the study. There will be no harm to you because of your participation in the study. As a participant in the study, you will have the privilege of accessing findings of the study as a copy will be sent to your school.

If you are willing to participate in the study, before signing the assent sheet below, you should take this letter to your parent/s or guardians and let them read it so that they will allow you to participate in the discussion with other students.

Sincerely yours,

Dawit Legesse Edamo

Researcher's Address

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia.

## Appendix- B2 (In Sidama Language- mother tongue)

Qa'mishsha B2: Sumuummenniti Borrote Sokka

### **Ayirrado Rosaancho,**

Daawit Leggese Edamo yaamameemmo. Wodiidi Afriiki Yuniverstera dottorimma rosi rosaanchooti. "Rosu Ollii Rosichi Rosu Minna Woyyaambe Pirogiraame aananna Rosu minna laalattinonna egennotenni harditino rosaanno fushshate bareende afidhanno gede olluu adhino qeecha Sidaamu Zoone Giddo noo Rosu Minna, Itophiyaho" yaanno umi aana Rosu Dottorimma Rosu Gashshootinni, Dottorette Digire Daratu Wonshaanchimmara xiinxallanni noommo. Xiinxallo'ya jeefo gantanno gede, pirogiraame la"annohunni hedokki hasi'reemmo. Ati aattoe/ae mashalaqqe addintanni lowo horo afidhino. Korkaatuno, ikkado ikkino rosicho rosu mine hosakkinni kainohunni afi'roottohuraati/ahuraati. Aattoe/ae mashalaqqe filante gamba yitino kifilete miillakki ledo hasaawatenni shiqishattoe/ae. Hasaawaho ikkitanno yannano rosu mini murrichinna maatekki ledo amaalamatenni qinaabbanno. Hasaawu bati'ranni bati'riri 40 daqiiqa calla adhannoha ikkanno. Hasaawu giddo assatto/a beeqqo meessi fajjoni baxxe assattota/ata ikkitanna hasi'rahoogittoro/aro aye woteno agurte fula dandaatto/a. Sayisatto/a mashalqqe sayikki mannira sa'annokkitanna maaxantino gedeenni xiinxallote loosi aana calla hossannota qaagiiisseemmohe. Konne assateno su'mikki horontanni xinxallote loosi aana difulanno. Xiinxallote beeqqaancho ikkakkinni illitannohe gawajjo horontanni dino. Xiinxallote beeqqaancho ikkakkinni, xiinxallote gumi kooppe afi'rate qoossokki agarantinote. Korkaatuno, rosikki minira xiinxallote guma kooppe sonkanni daafira hakkaanni afi'ratto/a yaate.

Xiinxallote beeqqaancho ikkate sumuu yaattoha/aha ikkiro, sumuummete woraqata malaatisakkira alba assite, konne woraqata maatekira woy lossanchikkira illishsheenna nabbabbe wole kifilete miillakki ledo hasaawatto/a gede atera fajjo aa hasiissannonsa.

Addintanni galateefateemohe,

Daawit Leggese Edamo

Xiinxallaanchu Teesso

P.S.K. 05

Bilbilu Kiiri: +251911922145

Hawaasa, Itophiya

**Assent by the student/child:** (This is translated into the Sidama language below)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to participate in the research project after getting consent from my parents or guardian. I am willing to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my participation is voluntary and I may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that my name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter. Thus, I agree to participate in the research project.

Name and Signature of the student \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Phone or e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

### **Rosaanchu/Qaaqqu Sumuumme**

---

Ani, \_\_\_\_\_, shiqqinoeta xiinxallote hasiissanno tittirshu borro nabbawenna huwate anewiinni agarranniha huuro'ya xorshate gedee qeechinni beeqqate sumuu yoommo/a. Qaalixa'motenna gaamote hasaawirano sumuu yoommo/a. Beeqqo'ya meessi'ya fajjonni ikkitinota afoommo daafira hasi'ra hoogummoro/aro agure fula dandemmo/a. su'mi'yano xiinxallote loosi aana fulannokkitanna adhinoonni mashalaqqe xiinxallote loosi aana calla horoonsi'nannita sumuummete borro sokkara qummi assinoonnie. Hakkunni daafira, xiinxallote pirojektera beeqqate sumuu yoommo/a.

Rosaanchu \_\_\_\_\_ su'manna \_\_\_\_\_ malaate

\_\_\_\_\_ Barra \_\_\_\_\_

Bilbilu kiroy woy Imeele \_\_\_\_\_

Xiinxallaanchu su'manna malaate \_\_\_\_\_ Barra \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B3:**

### **Letter to the parents/guardians requesting their consent to let their child participate in the study**

**Dear Parents/Guardians,**

My name is Dawit Legesse Edamo. I am a doctoral student at University of South Africa. I am conducting a study on "The Experiences of the School Community With Regard to the Outcomes of School Improvement Program on School Effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia" in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Education Management. The school in which your child is attending his/her education and nearby schools have been implementing School Improvement Program. To make my study complete, I need the opinion of your child about the program. The information your child gives me will be highly important as he/she has ample daily experiences related to school activities.

He/she will provide me information by discussing with his/her friends who are selected to discuss with him/her. The time for discussion will be arranged by you and his/her school's principal. The discussion will take a maximum of 40 minutes. His/her participation in the discussion will be on voluntary basis and he/she can withdraw at any time if he/she does not want to continue or take part in the discussion. The information he/she provides will be kept confidential and his/her name will not be mentioned in the study. There will be no harm to him/her because of his/her participation in the study. As a participant in the study, he/she will have the privilege of accessing findings of the study as a copy will be sent to his/her school. You will also be give a copy of the assent form signed by your child.

If you are willing to let your child participate in the study, sign the consent form on the next page so that your child will participate in the discussion with other students.

With kind regards,

Dawit Legesse Edamo

Researcher's Address

P.o.Box 05

Cell: 251-0911922145

Hawassa, Ethiopia



**Consent by the Parent/Guardian of student/child:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the written details provided for me about the research; and agree to let my child participate in the research project. I am willing to let my child to participate in the group discussions that will be tape recorded. I have taken note of that my child's participation is voluntary and he/she may not continue participating at any time. I also understand that his/her name will not be mentioned in the research and the data will be used only for the purpose of the research indicated in the letter. Thus, I agree to allow my child to participate in the research project.

Name and signature of the parent/guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Name and signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

## Appendix B4

### Confidentiality agreement request letter for the participants in the focus-groups

#### Dear participant in the focus-group discussion;

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate by signing consent forms to participate in focus group discussion. You already know that any information you provide will be kept confidential and only be used for the purpose of this study. As you are going to have a discussion with your friends, the information you and your friends provide should also be kept confidential.

Thus, I request you to show your agreement to this by signing the following confidentiality agreement statement.

With kind regards,

Dawit Legesse Edamo

#### Confidentiality agreement

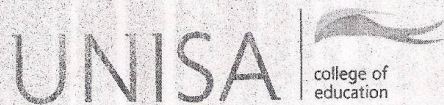
I, \_\_\_\_\_, as participant of focus group discussion in the study agree to keep the opinions and reflections of the participants confidential.

Name and Signature of the participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

Name and Signature of the researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date.....

(Co-signed by D L Edamo)

## Appendix C Ethics Clearance Certificate



### Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**D L Edamo [53341562]**

for a D Ed study entitled

**The experiences of the school community with regard to the outcomes of school improvement program on school effectiveness in Sidama Zone Schools, Ethiopia**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KP Dzvimbo".

Prof KP Dzvimbo  
Executive Dean : CEDU

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Claassens".

Dr M Claassens  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

Reference number: 2014 JULY/53341562/MC

16 JULY 2014

## Appendix D

### Interview Schedule for principals

1. As a leader of the school, how do you go about planning of activities for the school year?
2. How do you explain planning of activities for the school year?
  - Who gets involved in planning?
  - How do you identify aims of the plan for the year?
  - Which issues do you give more attention during planning?
  - How are the planned activities shared among the school community?
  - Who follows up the implementation of the planned activities?
  - How do you carryout evaluation of whether what has been planned is achieved or not?
  - What do you suggest to make planning process and implementation of planned activities more effective in your school in the future?
3. How is professional development of teachers ensured in your school?
  - What mechanisms are used to empower teachers in the school?
  - How do you carryout induction of newly deployed teachers in the school?
  - How do you explain the horizontal and vertical professional support relationship among teachers in your school?
  - What are the challenges which you are facing in carrying out professional development activities in your school?
  - What strategies do you suggest to overcome these challenges?
4. How do you explain the involvement of the school community (teachers, students, parents, supervisors, administrative staff of the school and education officers) in the:
  - teaching learning process?
  - decision making process?
  - handling misbehaviours/disciplinary problems? Conflicts?
  - participation in school activities/support to the school in general?
  - attempts to contribute to improve students' achievement?
5. Does your school have a mechanism to assist and encourage teachers and students to be actively engaged in the teaching learning process?
6. How do you go about delegating responsibilities to the school community?
7. How do you go about improving teaching learning in the school?
  - ensuring implementation of effective teaching techniques?

- availability of democratic learning environment?
  - getting feedback (how do you get feedback)?
8. How do you ensure successful implementation of continuous assessment for students' learning?
  9. What type of mechanisms do you use to control the work of teachers?
  10. How far is your school suitable and safe for students to spend time in the school?
    - availability of separate latrines for boys and girls?
    - sport fields, study sites, other facilities?
    - extra-curricular activities?
    - empowerment of students?
    - for students with special needs (if any)?
    - availability of safety policy?
  11. How do you facilitate good communication among members of the school community?
    - What channels are used for communication?
    - What does the relationship with parents and other stakeholders look like?
  12. How does your school ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of overall activities of the school?
  13. How do you review the achievements (outcomes) of the School Improvement Program in your School?
  14. How do explain the effectiveness of your school in what it has been doing so far?
  15. What strategies do you suggest to make your school more effective in the future?

## Appendix E

### Interview schedule for the supervisors

1. How do you assist the planning process of the school/s you supervise?
2. Do you follow up the planning of activities of the school/s you supervise?
  - Who gets involved in planning school activities for a given year?
  - How are aims of the plan identified for the year?
  - How are priorities set in the plan?
  - How do you follow up the implementation of the planned activities?
  - How do you carryout evaluation of whether what has been planned by the schools is achieved or not?
3. How is professional development of teachers ensured in the school/s you supervise?
  - What mechanisms are used to empower teachers in the school/s?
  - How do you follow up induction of newly deployed teachers in the school/s?
  - What strategies do you use to keep teachers up-to-date?
  - What are the challenges which you are facing while supporting professional development activities in the school/s?
  - What strategies do you suggest to overcome these challenges?
4. How do you explain the effectiveness of the involvement of the school community (teachers, students, parents, administrative staff of the school and education officers) in school affairs such as:
  - teaching learning process?
  - decision making process?
  - handling misbehaviours/disciplinary problems? Conflicts?
  - attempts to contribute to improve students' achievement?
  - participation in school activities/support to the school in general?
5. How do you go about supporting teaching learning in the school?
6. What mechanisms do you use to follow-up the works of principals and teachers?
7. How do you follow-up successful implementation of assessment techniques?
8. How far is the school you supervise suitable and safe for students to spend time in the school?
9. How do you explain effectiveness of communication among members of the school community?
10. How do you go about effectively supervising the school and its activities?

11. How do you review the achievements (outcomes) of the School Improvement Program in the school you supervise?
12. How do you explain the effectiveness of your school in what it has been doing so far?
16. What do you suggest to make the school more effective in the future?

## **Appendix F**

### **Interview schedule for the SIP experts**

1. How do you support schools to develop their school plans?
2. Do you give trainings to principals and teachers on various aspects of SIP?
  - What are focus areas of the trainings?
  - How do you check dissemination and implementation of the trainings?
3. How do you follow up the performance of the schools?
4. How do you help schools to get necessary resources to facilitate smooth running of their activities?
5. How do you explain the status of effectiveness of schools you support?
6. What are the challenges affecting the progress and performance of the schools?
7. Which strategies do you suggest to be developed to make schools more effective?



## Appendix G

### Focus-group discussion schedule for the teachers

1. How do you plan your activities for the school year?
2. Do you participate in school improvement planning?
3. How do you explain your participation in various activities of the school?
4. How do you go about teaching the subject content in your class?
  - in terms of methods?
  - in terms of assisting students of various levels and needs?
  - in terms of motivating learners?
  - in terms of maintaining discipline?
5. How do you assess the performance of your students? How often do you assess them?
6. How do you keep record of students assessment?
7. How do you get your performance evaluated?
  - who evaluates you? How often?
  - How do you get feedback?
  - For what purpose are evaluation results used for?
8. Do you get support from the principal and vice principals?
9. Do you get support from supervisors? If so what kind?
10. How do you arrange support mechanisms for your students?
11. How do you explain availability of facilities for teaching and learning process?
12. How do you explain the collaboration among teachers in your school?
13. Are you participating in professional development activities? If so what is the focus and who is handling it?
14. Do you work with parents of students you teach? How do you go about it?
15. How do you explain the suitability of the school environment for teaching learning?

## Appendix H

### Focus-group discussion schedule for the PTA members

1. As part of management of the school, do you participate in developing school plan? If so, how do you carry out the process?
2. How do you go about planning your meetings?
3. How are your activities/meetings related to maintaining quality of education in the school?
4. How do you explain your involvement in:
  - creating a link between the school and the larger community?
  - motivating parents to be active participants in school affairs?
  - decision making in the school?
  - handling conflicts between/among different members in the school?
  - management of school resources?
5. Do you work towards ensuring safe learning environment for all students in the school? If so, how do you explain that?
6. How do you see resource allocation for school activities? How do you facilitate availability of resources for the school?
7. How is your performance evaluated? Who evaluates it and for what purpose are evaluation results used?
8. What are the challenges your school is facing while implementing school improvement plans?
9. How do you support the school to achieve its goals?
10. What improvement strategies do you suggest to make the school more effective?

## Appendix I

### Focus-group discussion schedule for the students

(Translated below for students in their own mother-tongue - Sidama language)

1. Do you participate in the activities taking place in your school?
  - participation in planning?
  - decision making?
  - in committees works? ...such as discipline committees?
  - evaluation of your teachers?
  - extracurricular activities/ different clubs?
2. How do you explain the suitability of the school environment for you to learn?
3. How do you see the performance of teachers in your class?
  - delivery of the subject matter?
  - managing their classes?
  - support to students?
4. Do you get support from the school community to help you learn/achieve better?
  - from teachers? If so, how do they support you?
  - from principals? If so, how do they support you?
  - from parents/guardians? If so, how do they support you?
5. What techniques do your teachers use to assess you? how often?
6. Do you get feedback on assessment results? How?
7. Do you see improvements or changes in your school over time? If so, how do you explain the changes?
8. What do you suggest to be improved (in the school) in the future?

## Appendix I in Sidama Language (Qa'mishsha I 2) Rosaanonni Illachishshu Gaamo Hasaawi Mixo

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1. Rosu mini giddo noo loossara beeqqatto/a?
  - Mixo fushshate/qixxeessate beeqqo?
  - Qaafu adhate aana?
  - Komittate loossara? ....Amanyootu komite gedeere?
  - Rosu daninni baxxitino loossa giddo/babbaxxitino kilawe giddo?
2. Rosu minikki atera dancha rosicho afi'ratto darga ikkasi hiitto assite xawisatto/a?
3. Rosatto/a kifilera rosiissannohe rosiisaano ikkadimma magarinni la"atto/a?
  - Rosu amado shiqisha la"annohunni?
  - Kifilensa amadooshshinni?
  - Rosaanno kaa'latenni/irkisatenni?
4. Rosu mini olliinni dancha roso afi'ratto/a gede kaa'lo assinannihe?
  - Rosiisaanotewiinni? Kaa'litannoheha ikkiro, magarinni kaa'litannohe?
  - Murrootuwiinni? Kaa'litannoheha ikkiro, magarinni kaa'litannohe?
  - Maatekkiwiinni/lossaanchikkiwiinni? Kaa'litannoheha ikkiro, magarinni kaa'litannohe?
5. Rosiisaanokki keentannoho wote hiitoota keenate tekniike horoonsidhanno? Mageeshshi yanna giddo?
6. Keennihe gedensaanni keenote guma bikkakki leellinshannihe/tumo-qollannihe? Magarinni?
7. Rosikki mini giddo yanna yannantenni woyyaambe leeltanno? Leeltannoha ikkiro, tenne soorro magarinni xawisatto/a?
8. Albillitte (rosu mini giddo) woyyaawa hasiisannosire biciqqi assatto/a?

## **Appendix J**

### **Observation checklist**

1. School compound related issues
2. School facilities that facilitate teaching and learning
3. Suitability and safety of the school environment for teaching and learning
4. Arrangements to support students of various needs
5. Interaction between teachers and students, teachers and teachers, teachers and principals.
6. Parent/community visits to schools and what they do
7. Emergent issues related to the topic

## Appendix K: Thesis registration letter

0953 M1RST

EDAMO D L MR

STUDENT NUMBER : 5334-156-2

DAWIT LEGESSE

P.O.BOX 05

ENQUIRIES NAME : POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS

HAWASSA

ENQUIRIES TEL : (012) 441-5702

ETHIOPIA

DATE : 2014-03-04

Dear Student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. Kindly activate your Unisa mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources. Please check the information below and kindly inform the Master's and doctoral section on [mandd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mandd@unisa.ac.za) on any omissions or errors.

DEGREE : DED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98437)

TITLE : The effects of a school improvement program: experiences of school community of Sidama zone schools, Ethiopia

SUPERVISOR : Dr T NETSHITANGANI

ACADEMIC YEAR : 2014

TYPE: THESIS

SUBJECTS REGISTERED: TFEDM05 D ED - EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

If you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination, complete form DSAR20 (Notice of Intention to Submit) before 30 September. If this deadline is not met, you need to re-register and submit your intention for submission by 15 April and submit your dissertation by 15 June. Your supervisor's written consent for submission must accompany your notice of intention to submit.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. M Mosimege

Registrar