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"EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD."
NELSON MANDELA

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Original Article

Effect of explicit communication strategy instruction on EFL students' speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance based on debate technique: grade 11 in focus

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KEYWORDS:

Communication strategy;
Effect;
Speaking performance;
Speaking self-efficacy

Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate if explicit communication strategy has any significant effect on EFL Grade 11 Students' speaking efficacy and speaking performance based on debate technique. The study used Quasi-experimental research design that employed quantitative research approach with research instruments namely questionnaire and rubric scores. The participants of the study were Grade 11 Natural Science Students at Wallaggaa University Boarding Special Secondary School. The setting and participants were chosen based on purposive sampling technique. The existing two intact classrooms of Grade 11 were assigned to control group (N=35) and experimental group (N=35) using random sampling technique. As to preliminary issues – for reliability test, Cronbach's alpha was considered in both pretest and posttest. for questionnaire, and Pearson correlation was used for rating scale of rubric score. To this effect statistical test independent sample t-test, ANCOVA and MANOVA were employed and the result on self-efficacy questionnaire was obtained using descriptive statistics (M=3.2738, SD=0.11356) of the control group and (M=3.3800, SD=0.25414) of the experimental group) in the post test. Inferentially, the result of the computed t-test was found to be $t(68)=2.257$, $p=0.027$. As the P value is <0.05 , there was statistically a significance difference between the two groups, the value of experimental being greater than that of control group in the posttest. of self-efficacy. In addition, values of aspects of speaking performance were computed as $(\Lambda(8,61)=0.403$, $p=.000$). As $p(.000) < \text{the critical cut off point } (0.05)$ statistically a significance difference was observed which could become in coincidence with results obtained from all independent sample t-tests.. Partial Eta squared with value 0.597 (which is almost .600 implies the difference between control group and experimental group to be big. Thus, it was recommended that the intervention of communication strategy instruction be taken into consideration to enhance EFL Special Secondary school students' speaking performance thereby enhancing self-efficacy

1 Introduction

This research sought to investigate the influence of explicit communication strategy instruction on Grade 11 EFL students' speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance

based on debate technique. In learning English language, speaking is usually considered the core skill. Speaking is actually an activity involving two or more persons in which the speaker and listener react to what they say and hear each other for their communication. In speaking, we tend to get something done, explore ideas, and work out some aspects of the world. Speaking is one of the most crucial language skills in our lives. It is the most needed skill in our everyday interactions, and the way we speak reveals our identities and views of the world (Hatipoğlu, 2017). Speaking performance is the overtly observable and concrete manifestation or realization of competence. It is the actual doing of something. Students possess certain competence in given areas and that this competence can be measured and assessed by means of the observation of elicited samples of performance called "tests" and "examinations." According to Rudner and Boston (1994); Wiggins (1989) speaking performance uses tasks that require students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and strategies by creating a response or a product. Speaking performance requires students to perform a task or generate their own responses. Speaking performance is authentic when it mimics the kind of work needed to be done in a real-world contexts. Speaking performance tasks may require students to make an argument with supporting evidence in English or history or social science. Performance tasks often have more than one acceptable solution or answer and also require students to explain their reasoning. Speaking However, it is the "most complex and demanding of all human mental operations" (Taylor, 2011). Despite the fact that it is difficult, it is an important skill that needs to be taught and learned (Richards, 2008).

One to have good speaking performance, his/her perception, self-efficacy and anxiety might be affected. In support of this Hamouda (2012) reveals that factors such as, self-efficacy, perception and anxiety will have positive or negative influence on students' speaking performance.

2 Self-efficacy

In connection with self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) states that. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act. Efficacy belief is, therefore, a major basis of action. People guide their lives by their beliefs. Bandura (1997) further says that self-efficacy lie at the core of human functioning. It is not enough for a person to possess the requisite knowledge and skills to perform a task; one also must have the conviction that s/he can successfully perform the required behavior under difficult circumstances. Effective functioning then requires skills and efficacy beliefs to execute them appropriately (Ibid). Bandura (1986) has mentioned four sources of self-belief:

Self-efficacy is explained in the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory by Bandura (1997). Social cognitive theory is based on principle that people are not entirely self-directed, nor do environmental forces primarily control them rather there is a reciprocal relationship between person, environment and behavior (Bandura, 1993).

3 Speaking performance

Speaking performance is the overtly observable and concrete manifestation or realization of competence. It is the actual doing of something. Students possess certain competence in given areas and that this competence can be measured and assessed by means of the observation of elicited samples of performance called "tests" and "examinations." According to Rudner and Boston (1994) and Wiggins (1989) speaking performance uses

tasks that require students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and strategies by creating a response or a product. Speaking performance requires students to perform a task or generate their own responses. Speaking performance is authentic when it mimics the kind of work needed to be done in a real-world contexts. Speaking performance tasks may require students to make an argument with supporting evidence in English or history or social science. Performance tasks often have more than one acceptable solution or answer and also require students to explain their reasoning.

In line with the definitions above the researcher sticks to debate technique initiating and promoting speaking performance. Congruently with views of Rudner and Boston (1994) and Wiggins (1989), the researcher believes that in a debate presentation while students argue for/against, they practically demonstrate their speaking skill. This in turn helps them to show progress in speaking performance. By the same token, the researcher suggests that communication strategy might be important in order to develop students' speaking self-efficacy that could directly or indirectly be associated with speaking performance.

4 Communication strategy

Communication strategy is the way and means we employ when we experience a problem in communication, either because we cannot say what we would like to say or because we cannot understand what is being said to us. The source of the problem could be linguistic (i.e. we lack the necessary knowledge of the language), cultural (i.e. we are not aware of or can't cope with the cultural demands of the situation) or even contextual (Mariani, 2010). Communication strategy prior to impacting speaking performance might have influence on cognitive factors including speaking self-efficacy. As to the researcher's views communication strategy by bringing a change on students' speaking self-efficacy, then the results seen on this factor can bring progress on speaking performance. When such problems occur, we usually try to cope with the situation by making use of all the means which are available to us: we try to make the best possible use of the (little) language that we know; we use non-linguistic means like gestures; we ask our partner to help us.

In fact, there are controversial issues on reachability of communication strategies. The Pros, argue that teaching CSs is beneficial to the development of strategic competence (Dörnyei, 1995; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991; Faerch & Kasper, 1983, 1986; Faucette, 2001; Maleki, 2007; Rabab'ah, 2004; Tarone & Yule, 1989).

The cons on the other hand, have been concerned with the underlying cognitive process, and have found many similarities between L1 and L2 learning. Therefore, they have not been in favor of CS teaching. Bialystok (1990), Kellerman (1991) and Poulisse (1990) are well-known opponents of CS instruction. Poulisse (1990) states that L2 learners do not have to develop a special L2 strategic competence; rather they can transfer their L1 strategic competence instead.

As to concern of theoretical foundation, the current study was grounded on cognitive and social constructivist tenets. According to Doolittle (1999) the essence of constructivism is that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Several sources, like Aljohani (2017), Kouicem and Nachoua (2016), and Kouicem (2020), support this judgment, saying that cognitive and social constructivism theory covers both the individual and societal ways in which students construct knowledge.

Cognitive constructivism is associated with information processing and its reliance on the component processes of cognition. It emphasizes students' active knowledge acquisition

as an cognitive constructivism, for example, emphasize accurate mental constructions. In this study the concept of speaking self-efficacy is associated with cognitive constructivism. As to Vygotsky (1978) students construct mental signs, or psychological tools, to represent concepts and relationships, and these tools are used to facilitate "intermental" cognition. piaget1977<empty citation> cited in Abiy (2006) indicated that students mentally reflect on the use and nature of objects and then construct new knowledge by generalizing, or abstracting, new relationships. In this regard there for speaking, self-efficacy is grounded on tenet of cognitive constructivism. For cognitive constructivists, learning is the accurate internalization of external structures that exist in the "real" world.

5 Theoretical framework

The fundamental principle upheld by the theory of social/interaction list constructivism is twofold. First, individuals learn by actively getting involved in the construction of personal meaning (Williams & Burden, 1997). In the process of language learning including speaking skills, students actively construct knowledge, connect it to their previous experience and make it their own on the basis of their own interpretations. Second, the tenet is founded on the premise that language is social in nature and that language plays a key role in learning. While producing language, students use and learn language as a mediator between their own and other understands of notions or actions. Then, social/internationalist constructivism maintains the belief that knowledge is the result of social interaction and language usage and learning is a social advancement that involves language, real world situations, and interaction and collaboration among students. The learners are considered to be central in the learning process (Abidin, 2007).

6 Conceptual frame work

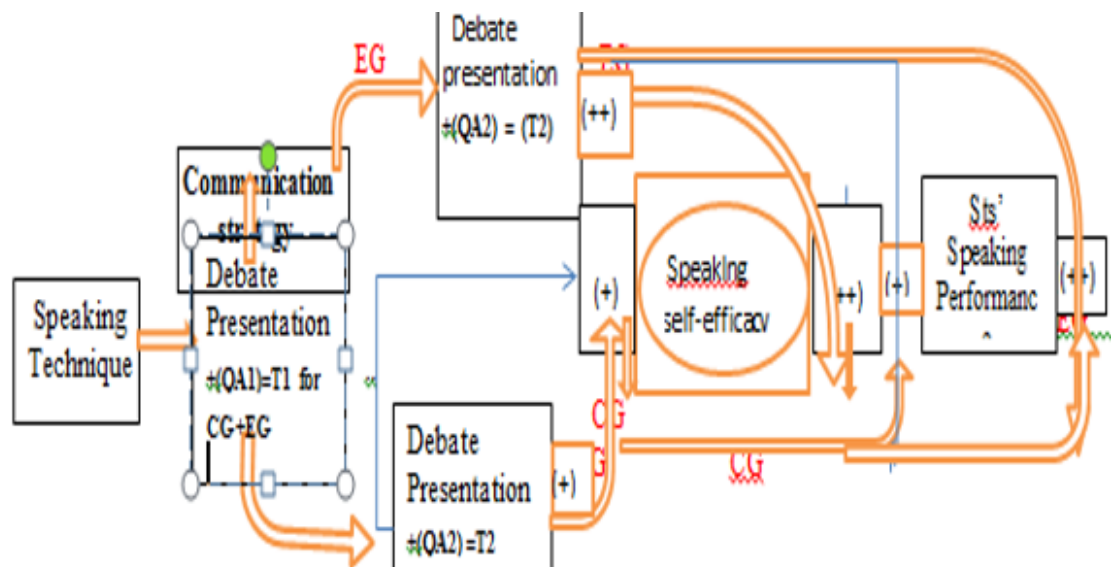


Figure 1: Conceptual frame work

Prepared by the researcher based on literature & result obtained.

Key:

- CG: control group
 - EG: Experimental Group
 - QA1: Question Administration 1
 - QA2: Question Administration 2
 - T1 :Test 1
 - T2 : Test 2
-
- (+) : Progress in speaking self-efficacy and performance without intervention
 - (++) : More Progress in speaking ,self-efficacy & performance due to intervention

Literature review and conceptual frame

Review of related literature and conceptual Frame work support and interact with each other, as the latter stems from the former. However, conceptual framework is more specific, appropriate and clearer than literature review in serving as a basis for a given study. As figure above attempts to display, the subject of study consists of two groups. Control group and Experimental group where by control group Debate presentation and Administration of questionnaire on speaking, self-efficacy took place for pretest and posttest without intervention and by Experimental group debate presentation and Administration of questionnaire (T2) took place with intervention (communication strategy on the aforementioned dependent variables. Accordingly, control group showed progress during test 2 (T2) in speaking, self-efficacy and speaking performance based on debate, which is designated by (+). Concurrently with this, speaking performance showed progress, which can similarly, be designated by (+). On the contrary, the experimental group showed more progress during test 2 (T2) in speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance based on debate, which is designated by (++). Concomitantly with this, speaking performance showed more progress, which can likewise, be designated by (+). The more progress seen is believed to be due to intervention (Implementation of communication strategy). To clarify more when Test 1 (T1)/pretest and Test 2 (T2) posttest are assessed there could be progress in both Control Group and Experimental Group. However, there could be more progress in Posttest of Experimental Group due to intervention of Explicit Communication Strategy.

This study set out to examine how explicit communication strategy instruction affects EFL Grade 11 students self-efficacy and their speaking performance at Special Secondary schools. Therefore, it seeks to address/test the following research hypotheses.

RH1: There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking self-efficacy between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy as intervention and those who did not receive the intervention.

RH2: There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention.

By proving or disproving these research hypotheses, the study was supposed to add contribution to learning and teaching of English language, particularly to speaking skill.

7 Research methods

The study followed a quasi-experimental research design that involved two groups of participants labeled the control group and the experimental group which made possi-

ble pretest-posttest non-randomized experimental design to take place. Quantitative research approach was employed and the quantitative data were collected by using instruments_ questionnaire to measure the effect of communication strategy on EFL Students' speaking self-efficacy. and rubric score to assess students' speaking performance from view point of aspects_ vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization.

7.1 Setting and participants

The setting of the study was Wollega University Boarding Special Secondary School found in Nekemt town. Participants of the study were Grade 11 Natural Science Students. The reason for selection of Grade 11 is that the researcher supposed students in the afore-said grade had more practices and confidence in getting engaged in advanced level of technique of speaking such as debate compared with grade 9 and 10. Grade 12 was also excluded for two reasons. At the time (in the year 2015) pilot study was conducted, Grade 12 was not available in both pilot study. The second reason is that had there been, grade 12, they would have been busy preparing themselves for University entrance exam, particularly during posttest intended to be given.

7.2 Sampling techniques of the study

As there are only two Natural science sections, at each grade level (9th, 10th and 11th), the existing two sections of grade 11 in the year 2015 second semester became directly subjects of the study. The presence of only Natural Science Stream in this special school is that students are expected to work towards preparing competent students, who will further their study in Science and Technology in the future. In Grade 11 there were 38 (in section "A") and 37 students (in section "B") totally 75 students in the aforementioned year and Semester in the school. From the two sections, the respective English teacher and the researcher used a simple random sampling technique to assign the subject of a study into Control group and Experimental group. Accordingly, CG and EG was written with the same size of pieces of paper. Then after, representatives of section "A" and section "B" were invited each to pick up one of the wrapped pieces of paper. Based on this simple random technique, section "A" was found to be control group and section "B" was found to be Experimental group.

7.3 Tools used in the study

In order to obtain data for this study a questionnaire on speaking self-efficacy was administered to both control and experimental group as pretest and posttest. A speaking self-efficacy questionnaire scale developed by Oxford (1990) was adapted and used in this study. The Questionnaire contained 12 items concerning learners' self-efficacy towards speaking. A four point Lickert scale type with 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly disagree' was used.

7.4 Questionnaire

A speaking self-efficacy questionnaire scale developed by Bandura (2006) was adapted and employed in this study. The questionnaire contained 12 items concerning learners' self-efficacy towards speaking which were responded from the options based on four Lickert scale type. Strongly Agree 'Agree', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'. The main

aim of administering self-efficacy questionnaire was to investigate the level of students' beliefs in their abilities to perform speaking tasks confidently.

The issues of validity and reliability were considered while making ready for use the adapted questionnaires. Accordingly, from validity aspect, the questionnaire was translated into 'Afaan Oromoo' to avoid the linguistic barrier the students may encounter. To check the appropriateness of the translation, it was also given to two 'Afaan Oromoo' PhD students for more comments and editions. From reliability point of view, the questionnaire was checked and internal consistency was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

7.5 Rubric score /Rating scales

The rating scale/Rubric score was also adapted and used in accordance with the objectives of study formulated /research hypotheses and literature review. To this effect, the rating scale was adapted from Duncan and Gustav (2006). In addition, the researcher adapted rubric scores suggested by Brown (2010).

The development and refinement of rubric /rating scale began with having the items commented on by the researcher's advisor and senior TEFL PhD students. This step helped improve the items in many respects. Initially, the comments were useful to edit /rephrase so that they could easily be understood. Thus, where there were redundancy, repetitions were avoided, and items which were vague were modified.

In assessing speaking performance, performance tests needed to take place. The performance can be concerned with demonstrating process or product (McMillan, 2018). Performance assessment is a task that student demonstrates specific skills. Speaking Performance test involves doing rather than just knowing about it. To assess speaking performance based on debate a checklist of rating scale, or rubrics were needed. Rubrics are better used for scoring in performance assessment (Lane, 2013). A rubric is a set of logical criteria for students' work that includes a description of levels of performance quality.

Using the rating scale, performance of each and every member in a group was scored by 2 pairs of raters (R1 and Rater 2) ticking (x) under the respective scale rated from 1-5. The raters were earlier informed and assigned where two of them are considered as pair 1 and two others of them as Pair 2. All raters were informed in advance I,e pair 1 to work on the first 18 items, and pair 2 to work on second other 18 items. The engagement of two pairs of raters in rating the rubric scores by sharing aspects of speaking /items work on is to ease the burden of marking/rating provided that the number of items were 36.

7.6 Data collection procedures of the pretest / posttest

Seven groups (where each group) consists of five members were formed for both control group and experimental group. These seven groups consist of $7 \times 5 = 35$ students in each and 70 students in both groups were considered for pretest and posttest assessments. The debate presentation required a group of five members. In control group 7 groups, and in experimental group, too 7 groups were formed. Then, all groups consisting of five members were given following topics which are familiarized to students.

Rural Life is preferable to Urban Life Knowledge is better than Money On-line learning is preferable to face-to-face learning Abortion should be legalized. Prostitution should

not be allowed in our country. Athletes are better than Doctors. Being wealthy is better than being healthy. Export of wheat should resume for the good image of Ethiopia.

To deal with topics assigned, groups that consist of five members were formed where one member acts as chair person, two members arguing for the motion (one being proposer and another being seconder), and two other members arguing against the motion (one being proposer and another being seconder).

After two weeks, a pretest was given for both on debate presentation that was assessed by raters scoring students' speaking performances. Ten minutes after the last debate presentation was over, questionnaire on self-efficacy was administered by the researcher and respective teacher to make students elicit their views. The administration of questionnaire took place at different classrooms but at the same time 2:45-2:55 pm for both control and experimental groups. Then, communication strategy instruction was given for experimental group. The experimental group learnt 19 types of communication Strategy_ Comprehension Checks Confirmation Checks, Interpretive Summary, Achievement, Guessing Strategies, Code-Switching, The Literal Translation Strategy, Coining Words, Paraphrasing Strategies, Requesting Help for Meaning Transferring Use of General Words, Use of Similar Sound Words, Circumlocution, Clarification Request, Expressing Non-Understanding, Repairing, a Tendency to Improve Accuracy, Retrieval Strategy, Negotiation of Form, Nothing to Say (Avoidance/Reduction strategy) as an intervention.

Finally both experimental and control groups were given similar related topics to previous ones in conducting post-test where each member in a group has the same share of task as in pretest. The topics given for posttest are as follows.

Farmers are better than Merchants Abortion Should be legalized. Affirmative actions should not be allowed for girls in our country. The government should subsidize the supply of fuel to decrease cost of Life Computers should replace teachers Universities should set higher admission criteria for students from private schools Unitary government is preferable to Federalist government.

The above procedures took place before the intervention and after the intervention. In both pretest and posttest, students were given two weeks to outline, generate and organize their ideas (providing reasons and evidences) that helped them support or oppose the motion by writing first. During this time, they put their ideas on a paper in detail, rehearsed / practiced several times. Degree of their dependence on a paper happened to decrease in accordance with frequency of their practice. and they did it until their degree of their reliance on the paper fell dramatically and until they managed talking orally almost by 90%. Then, after a week, they presented the debate orally in a class. Only glancing for main idea was possible during debate presentation in the class.

7.7 Methods of data analysis

The quantitative data gathered through questionnaires and rubric scores/rating scale were organized and displayed in tables to be analyzed quantitatively through the application of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Prior to analysis of results, coefficients for reliability testing Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson correlation and Normality assumptions for deciding between Parametric/Non parametric statistics were employed. Then, in order to see the effect of communication strategy on students' speaking, self-efficacy, Independent sample t-tests were employed. Again to see the effect of communication strategy has on speaking performance based on debate technique independent samples t-tests. ANCOVA and MANOVA were used. As speaking performance in this study consists of aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization) value of the speaking

performance depends on each constituent /aspect of speaking performance, for each an independent sample t-test was employed. Consequently, value of speaking performance is equal to results obtained from all aforementioned aspects. In confirmation, (MANOVA) Multivariate Analysis of Variance) was employed. According to [Perry \(2005\)](#) and [Pallant \(2016\)](#), MANOVA is used when there are sub-dependent variables (like in the context of the study aforesaid aspects) all at the same time. Similarly, [Hinton et al. \(2004\)](#), explain that MANOVA is applied to "examine the effect of the independent variable(s) on the composite dependent variables." One-way MANOVA, the experimental and the control groups' means were computed in order to see if there were mean score differences before and after the intervention.

8 Results /Analysis

Prior to conducting the main statistical analysis, reliability tests were checked for questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients to examine internal consistency of both control and experimental group their values found to be ≥ 0.7 in both pretest and posttest implying all the items in self-efficacy questionnaire consisting of good internal consistency /strong relationship. Besides, for rubric score, the Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to estimate the strength of the relationship between the scores by two different raters. As the computed Pearson correlation product between Rater 1 and Rater2 were with values ≥ 0.7 for all aspects of speaking performance in the both control and experimental groups, strong relationships could be observed again in both pretest and post test The results depict that there is a meaningful relationship between the scores on each aspects of speaking Performance. This implies that the rating /scoring of speaking performance of an individual student by two judges is significantly consistent and stable. With regard to homogeneity of rubric scores Levene,s Test was considered., with Sig. value > 0.05 suggesting "Equal Variances Assumed" and with Sig. value < 0.05 signifying "Equal Variances Not Assumed. In order to check Normality the researcher upon conducting a test of skewness and kurtosis for both the study groups on each aspect of speaking performance, found statistical values of Kurtosis and skewness to be between the required range of -1 and +1 showing the acceptability level. This means that the distribution of scores for each aspect of speaking performance is normal. [Cohen et al. \(2018\)](#) suggest that series of scores that ranging between -1 and +1 for both skewness and kurtosis are acceptable and taken for guarantee to conduct inferential statistics assuming that the data are reasonably normally distributed. Thus, accomplishing the pre statistical tests enabled the researcher to conduct the main statistical analysis.

In order to address the research hypotheses:

1. "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking self-efficacy between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy as intervention and those who did not receive the intervention."
2. "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention," To test these hypotheses quantitative data were collected and analyzed and the findings for (both pre- and post-test) were indicated. The purpose of this study is to describe how the intervention affected speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance based on debate technique.

8.1 Analysis and results of the pre-test questionnaire using independent samples t-tests

Table 1: Analysis and results on students' pretest speaking self-efficacy

Group	N	Mean	SD
Control	35	2.7405	0.20688
Experimental	35	2.7405	0.20688

As shown in table 1 above, an independent samples t-test was computed in comparing mean scores of the control and the experimental groups on students' speaking self-efficacy pretest. Accordingly, (M=2.7405, SD=0.20688) of the control group and (M=2.7405, SD=0.20688) Of the experimental group). The result of the computed t-test was found to be (t(68)=0.000, p=1.000). As the P value is > 0.05 there was no statistically a significant difference at all.

Table 2: Analysis and Result of self-efficacy on posttest questionnaire

Group	N	Mean	SD
Control	35	3.2738	0.11356
Experimental	35	3.3800	0.25414

The values in table 2 above directly addresses the first research hypothesis that is the effect explicit communication strategy has on speaking self-efficacy. To this effect an independent samples t-test was computed in comparing mean scores of the control and the experimental groups on students' speaking self-efficacy posttest. Accordingly, (M=3.2738, SD=0.11356) of the control group and (M=3.3800, SD=0.25414) of the experimental group). The result of the computed t-test was found to be (t(68)=2.257, p=0.027). As the P value is < 0.05 there was statistically a significance difference between the two groups, the value of experimental being greater than that of control group. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Thus, the computations of values seen in the above an Independent samples t-test exactly addressed RH1 "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking self-efficacy between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy as intervention and those who did not receive the intervention"

8.2 Analysis and results of the pre-test rubric score

Table 3: Independent sample t-test on over all aspects of speaking performance (pretest)

Aspects	Group	N	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Vocabulary	Control	35	13.3429	.000
	Experimental	35	13.6857	
Pronunciation	Control	35	12.8000	.000
	Experimental	35	13.0571	
Grammar	Control	35	12.7143	.000
	Experimental	35	13.1143	
Fluency	Control	35	12.6857	.000
	Experimental	35	13.2286	
Comprehension	Control	35	12.8857	.000
	Experimental	35	13.1714	
Message Delivery	Control	35	12.8857	.000
	Experimental	35	13.3143	
Content	Control	35	12.9714	.000
	Experimental	35	13.2857	
Organization	Control	35	12.7429	.000
	Experimental	35	13.1714	

Table 4: Independent sample t-test on over all rubric scores (posttest)

Aspects	Group	N	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Vocabulary	Control	35	14.0571	.000
	Experimental	35	15.6286	
Pronunciation	Control	35	13.4571	.000
	Experimental	35	14.8571	
Grammar	Control	35	13.2857	.000
	Experimental	35	14.9143	
Fluency	Control	35	13.2286	.000
	Experimental	35	14.9714	
Comprehension	Control	35	13.3714	.000
	Experimental	35	14.8857	
Message Delivery	Control	35	13.4857	.000
	Experimental	35	15.0857	
Content	Control	35	13.5143	.000
	Experimental	35	15.0571	
Organization	Control	35	13.3143	.000
	Experimental	35	14.9429	

The one-way ANCOVA result in table 5 above showed that ($F(1, 67)=16.901$, $p=0.000$) or $F_{1,67}=16.901$, $p(0.000)<$ the critical cut off point (0.05). Therefore, there was statistically a significant difference between the two study groups on the dependent variable after the covariate was statistically removed. Thus, it could be inferred the excelling of an experimental group was ascribed to intervention (communication strategy instruction). Any how the partial Eta squared with value of 0.201 is small size.

Table 5: Summary of the results of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA)

Source	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	0.24	2	0.12	16.901	.000
Intercept	0.50	1	0.50	...	.000
Pretest	0.01	1	0.01	...	.000
Group	0.20	1	0.20	16.901	.000
Error	...	67	...		
Total	...	70			
Corrected Total	...	69			

Table 6: Summary of the results of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on message delivery

Source	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.134	2	1.067	...	.000
Intercept	5.608	1	5.608	...	.000
Pretest	0.000	1	0.000	...	.000
Group	1.782	1	1.782	49.915	.000
Error	2.392	67	0.036		
Total	921.35	70			
Corrected Total	4.526	69			

As seen from table 6 above, the value, is found to be $F(1, 67)=49.915$, $p=0.000$. $p = (0.000)$ which is $<$ conventional cut-off point (0.05). Thus, the value on speaking performance from aspect of Message Delivery indicated that there was statistically a significant difference between the two study groups after controlling the scores on the same variable pre-test administered before the intervention. The overall implication was that the difference between the study groups was due to Communication strategy intervention. The partial Eta squared with value of 0.427 shows moderate effect size of difference.

8.3 Analysis and results of the posttest rubric score

Table 7: Summary of the MANOVA results on combined aspects of speaking performance

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	0.403	...	8.000	61.000	.000

Looking at the table 7 above the result of each aspect of speaking performance as an independent sample t-tests show are < 0.05 (the critical cut off Point). Again the computations of outputs from MANOVA is $(\text{Lambda}(8, 61)=.403, p=.000)$. As $p(.000)<$ the critical cut off point (0.05), a statistically significance difference was observed. Being in coincidence with results obtained from all independent sample t-tests. Therefore, there was statistically a significance difference between posttest control group and Experimental group. This means that the two groups were at different levels of speaking performance in all aspects. Hence, it could be inferred that the intervention communication strategy improved overall aspects of speaking performance. "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique" between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication

strategy and those who did not receive the intervention," This results of confirmed the hypothesis.

In general results from tables 4 to 7 above directly addressed RH2 "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique" between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention,"

9 Discussions

The first research hypothesis was intended to address "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking self-efficacy between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy as intervention and those who did not receive the intervention." The results of posttest computed using an independent sample t-test based on data from questionnaire indicated descriptive statistics with mean of experimental group excelling mean of control group, and showed inferential statistics with P value < the alpha level /critical cut off point 0.05 which suggests the existence of statistically a significant difference between control group and experimental group. The surpassing of experimental group result is attributed to the of intervention communication strategy.

The second research hypothesis sought to test "There is statistically a significant difference in posttest mean score of speaking performance based on debate technique" between Special Secondary School students of grade 11 who received communication strategy and those who did not receive the intervention." The results of posttest computed using an independent sample t-test based on data from questionnaire indicated descriptive statistics with mean of experimental group excelling mean of control group. Besides, inferential statistics from independent sample t-tests for each speaking performance aspect is with P value < the alpha level /critical cut off point 0.05. Again the value of P value of speaking performance from aspect of vocabulary and Message Delivery is < 0.05 indicating the existence of statistically significant difference between the two study groups after controlling the scores on the same variable pre-test administered before the intervention. On the top that Which suggests the existence of statistically a significant difference between control group and experimental group. The surpassing of experimental group result is attributed to the of intervention communication strategy. In strengthening this, results obtained from MANOVA on combined sub-variables_vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension, message delivery, content and organization is again with P value << the critical cut off point (0.05) implying the existence of statistically a significance difference between control and experimental group. The as seen in all statistical tests using independent samples t-tests, ANCOVA and MANOVA P value is << the alpha level of .05. The presence of statistically a significant difference which indicated the experimental group surpassing the control group is due to intervention of communication strategy.

10 Conclusions

The results obtained from data analysis show that the intervention helped the experimental group develop their speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance (with better manifestations of SP aspects indicators like vocabulary, pronunciation grammar, fluency, comprehension, message, content and organization) in comparison to the control group. Participants in the experimental group were instructed to employ 19 types of communication strategy that help them enhance participants speaking self-efficacy prior to pro-

moting their speaking performance. According to the results obtained the intervention improved students' speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance of the experimental. Therefore, below are the recommendations made by the researcher. To begin with, in order to improve students' speaking self-efficacy and speaking performance, it is imperative that explicit communication strategy instruction need to have a room by EFL teachers, curriculum (syllabus) designers, and material writers. Additionally, in order to delve deeper into the subject, future research will focus on English as a foreign language (EFL) speaking classes of special secondary schools. The study's conclusions can be applied to Grade 11 students attending special Secondary Schools from all around the country since students enrolled in the Special Secondary Schools came from quite comparable EFL learning backgrounds.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Original Article

Mediating roles of teacher educators' reading habits and preferences in determining the quality of instructions

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KEYWORDS:

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instructional quality;
mediating roles

Abstract

This study examined the mediating roles of teacher educators' reading habits and preferences in determining the quality of instruction. Using mixed-methods triangulation design, data were collected from 385 sampled teachers using questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regressions. Results confirm the prevalence of instructional paradox, where high professional literacy coexists with a pedagogical translation gap. Descriptive findings reveal a pragmatic professional profile characterized by active digital primacy $M=4.49$ and professional literacy engagement $M=4.00$ compared to significantly low aesthetic preferences $M=2.01$. While 72% of respondents exhibit persistent engagement (daily or near-daily reading), this consistency fails to correlate significantly with reflexive instructional practices $M<3.00$. Multiple regression model confirms professional motivation is the strongest predictor of instructional quality ($\beta=0.54$ $p<0.001$), yet it reveals a modality effect where fragmented digital consumption negatively mediates instructional depth ($\beta=-0.14$ $p=0.038$). The study identifies a modeling deficit in the mediation model. Academic status and experience provide the potential for excellence, but the current mediating role of reading habits functions as a private scholarly shield. Teacher educators read primarily to enrich their own internal cognitive synthesis rather than external pedagogical modeling. In conclusion, instructional quality in higher education is not a crisis of competence, but a crisis of translation. There should be a shift from private literacy rituals to transparent pedagogy, where educators intentionally integrate their scholarly habits into the shared classroom experience.

1 Introduction

Reading is a multifaceted cognitive skill that fundamentally shapes human development and daily judgment. As the hallmark of academic and social success, reading proficiency serves as the primary mechanism for acquiring the specialized knowledge, imaginative capacity, and critical perception necessary for traversing a complex global landscape. It functions as a key driver of active learning and innovation, which facilitates the transformation of raw information into rational judgment and ethical outlooks (Daniel et al., 2017; Kunter et al., 2013). More importantly, beyond mere decoding, acquiring authentic reading habits involves sophisticated thought processing, analyzing, visualizing, and synthesizing meanings (Daniel et al., 2017; Estremera, 2025). High-quality reading practices leverage executive functions such as memory retention, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving (Lopes et al., 2023; Wahab, 2023).

Consequently, regular reading serves as a key tool for both academic success and social adaptability (Manandhar et al., 2024). It emerges when the practice of reading becomes a normalized as a daily practices (Amaechi & Motalenyane, 2023). Quantitatively, reading habit is measured by the frequency of engagement and the volume of materials consumed (Lhaden & Wangchuk, 2024). Conversely, reading preference represents the internal drive toward specific genres or topics. When educators engage with materials aligned with their interests, they experience higher intrinsic motivation and concentration (Yulita & Neno, 2021). This preference acts as a gateway to establish real reading habit. Genuine habits are rarely formed without an underlying interest in the text (Nite, 2025).

In the contemporary educational setting, reading is recognized as a fundamental, lifelong experience that serves as a strong predictor of academic self-efficacy and socio-cultural cohesion (Apiles, 2025; Nwagwu & Maxwell, 2025). High-engagement reading habits sharpen cognitive processing, enrich reflective skills, and strengthen the ability to analyze and interpret complex literary meanings (Estremera, 2025; Neno et al., 2022). As Faramida et al. (2024) suggest sophisticated reading skills are a primary determinant of a student's success in mastering diverse scientific disciplines. Consequently, the ability to decode and synthesize information effectively is not merely a linguistic skill but a cornerstone of the total educational process (Sameeco & Hashi, 2025).

However, the efficacy of student literacy is intrinsically linked to the professional dispositions of their instructors. A teacher educator who lacks regular reading habits risks professional stagnation and experiences an inability to model the passion for inquiry essential to modern pedagogy (Apiles, 2025; Lopes et al., 2023). Research suggests that teacher educators serve as literary mirrors for their students. Their personal reading preferences and habits directly influence the reading culture and motivation of their students (Amaechi & Motalenyane, 2023; Sebart et al., 2025). Paradoxically, evidence indicates clear disconnect between professional expectations and actual practices. Recent inquiries, for example, have revealed that many educators view reading as a purely functional, compulsory task, which is often limited to lesson preparation, rather than a voluntary intellectual habit (Paun & Costea, 2025).

The primary theory guiding this research is Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), specifically it is linked to the concept of Observational Learning (Bandura, 1986). In the context of teacher education, SCT theorizes that students learn not only from direct instruction but by observing the behaviors and attitudes modeled by their educators (Structural Learning, 2026). Thus, exploring how a teacher's personal factors (reading preferences) and behaviors (reading habits) interact with the classroom environment certainly helps to determine the quality of classroom instructional practices. In particular, when teacher educators display an active reading life during their instructional practices, they certainly serve as symbolic models for their students. Their enthusiasm and shared reading experiences foster a literacy-rich environment, directly influencing student self-efficacy and engagement (Can & Bicer, 2021). The other complementary theory which supports the goal of this study is the Transactional Theory of Reading pioneered by Louise Rosenblatt's. He argues that meaning is not in the text but is created through a dynamic transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 2019). For teacher educators, their personal aesthetic reading experiences (reading for pleasure) allow them to transition from a rigid, efferent stance (reading only for facts) to a more productive and interactive instructional style (Emerald Publishing, 2026). Educators with rich transactional experiences are better equipped to scaffold deep comprehension for their students (Le Roux, 2024).

Different research works consistently demonstrate that teachers' reading habits are a significant predictor of pedagogical quality. Educators who read regularly apply a broader array of instructional techniques and interactive strategies (Morrison et al., 1998; Piasta et al., 2009). Within this context, Wahab (2023) found a significant correlation between habitual reading and the implementation of participatory, critical-thinking exercises. Con-

versely, a lack of reading habits among educators often leads to traditional classroom management and less effective instruction. Recent findings, for example, indicate that teacher educators cannot effectively mediate skills they do not personally possess or value (Neno et al., 2022) because when teachers possess low reading engagement, students' comprehension and fluency remain stagnant (Neno et al., 2026). It means that teachers' personal habits act as mediators which transform their theoretical knowledge into lived classroom practice, which ultimately can determine the quality of classroom instruction.

Noticeably, this literary inertia among educators has profound implications for classroom quality. Teachers' instructional methodologies are often relics of their own prior university experiences rather than products of updated and diverse reading (Aerila et al., 2023). If, as **wahab2023** <empty citation> suggests, the paramount responsibility of the educator is to foster voluntary reading inclinations in the next generation, then the educator's own intellectual life is the primary tool of instruction. While the correlation between teacher and student habits is documented (Muhamad et al., 2023), there remains a critical research gap regarding the mediating mechanisms through which an educator's personal reading habits translate into high-quality classroom instruction. This study was designed to fill the gap by investigating how these habits and preferences determine the instructional standards of teachers' classroom practices.

2 Research problem

The efficacy of teacher education is fundamentally fastened in the intellectual strength of its educators. Theoretically, teacher educators serve as pedagogical blueprints, in which the teacher educators' reading habits and classroom modeling of literacy are critical determinants of student engagement and academic achievement (Ihaden2024; Wijayanti et al., 2022). When educators consistently demonstrate a passion for inquiry, they trigger intrinsic effect that fosters a strong reading culture that ultimately enhances students' cognitive fluency, critical thinking, and creative production (Daniel et al., 2017; Tichenor et al., 2021). However, a profound discrepancy exists between this pedagogical ideal and contemporary professional reality. Despite the established correlation between proficient literacy and academic performance (Le Roux, 2024), recent empirical evidence suggests a systemic decline in the reading culture among teacher-educators globally (Apiles, 2025; Faramida et al., 2024). This literary recession is characterized by infrequent, inconsistent, concealed and purely functional reading practices. It means, educators often engage with texts solely for immediate lesson preparation rather than for holistic intellectual growth and classroom sharing (Chizoba, 2024; Ramolula & Molebatsi, 2023).

The consequences of this trend are catastrophic for instructional quality. Teachers who operate as nonreaders inevitably produce non-reading students. As the teachers lack the narrative vocabulary and empathic depth required to foster sophisticated comprehension, their students suffer hard even to read and comprehend very simple texts (Manandhar et al., 2024; Sebart et al., 2025). Furthermore, the unchecked multiplying of digital distractions and social media platforms has exacerbated this crisis by eroding the cognitive stamina and memory retention necessary for deep, reflective reading (Kesson, 2020; Manandhar et al., 2024). In particular, when educators fail to infuse their personal literacy experiences into their pedagogy, the classroom environment becomes stagnant, and students fail to explore complex disciplinary discourses across multiple subjects (Lopes et al., 2023; Sameeco & Hashi, 2025).

Besides, while existing literature has identified the decline in reading habits, there is a noticeable empirical silence regarding the specific mechanisms through which an educator's personal reading preferences (genres, complexity, and media) influence the quality

of classroom instructions. As most studies focus on the student's habit, treating the teacher's role as a secondary variable, school teachers and students reading habits, motivation, etc., (Aerila et al., 2023; Nite, 2025), there is an urgent need to investigate the mediating roles of teacher educators' reading profiles in determining instructional standards. Without addressing this gap, teacher-training institutions risk perpetuating a cycle of functional illiteracy that undermines the very foundation of modern education (Berhanneskel & Fisseha, 2024).

3 Objectives

The major goal of this study was to investigate the mechanisms through which teacher educators' reading engagement influences pedagogical efficacy. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. assess the prevailing reading profiles of teacher-educators, focusing on the frequency of habits, primary motivations (functional vs. pleasure), and specific genre/media preferences.
2. analyze the correlational nexus between teacher-educators' reading habits/preferences and self-reported instructional quality.
3. determine the mediating effect of reading habits and preferences in the relationship between an educator's academic background and their ultimate classroom instructional excellence.

4 Research methodology

4.1 Research design

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. This approach allows for the simultaneous collection of quantitative data (via surveys) and qualitative data (via reflective interviews) to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. By triangulating the breadth of survey data with the depth of educator self-reflections, the study offsets the limitations of each approach, ensuring that the mediating role of reading habits is captured both statistically and phenomenologically (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

4.2 Population and sampling methods

To ensure the right sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations was applied.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$
$$n = \frac{605}{1 + 605(0.0009)} \approx 392$$

In this formula,

- n = required sample size,
- N = The size of the study's population,
- e = error margin or the level of precision

To calculate the sample size, $N = 605$, $e = 0.03$, that is assuming more than 95% confidence level and $p = 0.05$. Accordingly, the required research sample size was 391.71, but, to avoid fraction, the number was rounded off and the sample size became 392. The calculated response rate was 98.2%, while the non-response rate was less than 2%, that is, 1.8% (7). This means, of the 605 total potential research populations, 385 teachers participated and provided the required data. In other words, the study sample size included about 65% of the university academicians. More significantly, a sample of 392 educators (approx. 65% of the population) ensures that the findings possess strong external validity and are generalizable to the broader Ethiopian teacher education context.

To ensure the findings are generalizable while maintaining high precision, a multi-stage probability sampling strategy was utilized. First, as the population was divided into departments (strata): (the College of Language Education, College of Science and Mathematics, College of Social Sciences, College of Business/Technology, College of Teacher Education, and the Sport Academy), and to ensure proportionate representation across disciplines, Stratified Random Sampling technique was used. This ensured that the diverse disciplinary reading cultures were proportionately represented. Following this, systematic random sampling was used. That is, to select participants from each stratum, participants were selected using a K th interval system (N/n , e.g. every 2 interval). That means, within each department, participants were selected using an interval ($k = N/n$) from the official staff roster in order to ensure an unbiased selection process (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012).

4.3 Data collection tools and procedures

To identify the complexity of reading habits, preferences and their instructional impact, two primary instruments were developed: First, the teacher educator literacy survey (TELS), which is a dual-structured questionnaire including Likert-scale items (quantitative) to measure frequency, duration, and pedagogical application, alongside open-ended prompts (qualitative) to capture key insights in reading preferences was modified:(TALIS) 2018, retrieved from www.talis2018.org.uk) Second, semistructured reflective interview was developed to focus on classroom literacy experience sharing practices. The interview was conducted with a purposive sub-sample of senior educators. It should be noted that senior educators were purposively sampled for interviews due to their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) longevity, allowing for a more longitudinal reflection on how reading habits evolve with teaching expertise These sessions utilized stimulated recall and critical incident technique in order to allow educators to narrate specific instances where their personal reading habits directly modified their classroom delivery. Regarding procedure, data collection followed ethical protocols including informed consent. The surveys were administered in person to maximize return rates (achieving high face-to-face engagement). Interviews were conducted in neutral, relaxed settings (e.g., professional breaks) to encourage authentic self-reflection and minimize social desirability bias.

4.4 Data analysis methods

The study employed a complementary analytical framework. First, quantitative analysis in which data from the closed-ended survey items were processed using SPSS (v.28).

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to examine teacher educators’ profiles of reading habits, preferences, frequencies, reading volume and motivation, while mediation analysis (Process Macro) was used to determine the statistical significance of reading habits as a bridge between educators’ reading habits and preferences, and instructional quality. Second, qualitative analysis such as interview transcripts and open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This involved transcribing, coding, categorizing and interpreting to identify patterns in how educators translate personal literacy into pedagogical scaffolding. Then, a triangulation process in which quantitative trends were compared against qualitative narratives to provide a holistic conclusion on the teacher educator’s role as a literacy model was applied.

4.5 Instrument validity

The data collecting instruments different steps. First, the questionnaire was adapted from an internationally developed teacher survey (TALIS) 2018, retrieved from www.talis2018.org.uk. Second, the questions underwent expert content validation and a pilot study (n = 60) to ensure internal consistency. Based on the comments and test results 52 questions out of 60 were identified for the final study.

4.6 Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the university review board (IRB) and that participant anonymity was strictly maintained. All participants were instantly informed the purpose of the study and were ensured that anything linked to personal identity would be kept confidential and the data to be collected would be used only for the research purpose.

5 Analysis and Results

5.1 I. Demographic profiles

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by biological sex

Demographic variable	Classification	Frequency (F)	%
Biological sex	Male	230	59.7
	Female	155	40.3
	Total (N)	385	100

Table 1 shows the biological sex of the participants. As can be seen from the table, the participant pool exhibits a gender diverse composition, with a notable skew toward male representation (59.7%) while the female represents 40.3%. The demographic stratification by biological sex strengthens the stand that the findings reflect a comprehensive overview of the instructional population.

Table 2: Age distribution of the respondents

Age Category	Generational Classification	F	%
22-27	Emerging	4	1.0
28-35 years	Early-career level	45	11.7
36-45 years	Mid-career/Prime professionals	199	51.7
46+ years	Senior/Veteran	137	35.6
Total	Sample (N)	385	100

Table 2 unveils the age distribution of the participants. The demographic profile reveals a seasoned professional group. The majority of the respondents (51.7%) are in mid-career category followed by senior or veteran group (35.6%). This implies that the teacher educators have adapted their reading habits to meet the demands of a high-level career. Overall, the data shows a very specific trend in that over 87% of the teacher educators are over the age of 36. Fortunately, the research included more of an experienced and mid-to-late career professional sample. Thus, as the most majority of the participants of this research are mid-career and mature professionals, the findings would be stronger and more generalizable.

Table 3: Educational attainment and scholarly profile

Academic credential	Level of attainment	F	%
Doctorate (PhD/D.Ed.)	Terminal degree	193	50.1
Master's (MA, MEd, MSc)	Advanced degree	174	45.2
Bachelor's (BA, B.Ed., BSc)	Undergraduate degree	18	4.7
Total	Sample Aggregate (N)	385	100

Table 3 displays the teacher educators' educational attainment and scholarly profile. It is clear from the table that the research environment is composed of a highly credentialed, mature, and professionalized sample with over half the sample (50.1%) holds a terminal degree (doctorate). Collectively, as a combined 95.3% of the teacher educators hold postgraduate degrees, the participants possess the necessary intellectual capital for sophisticated literary engagement.

Table 4: Years of professional and pedagogical experiences

Experience	Level	F	%
1. Terminal degree		193	50.1
2. Master's (MA, MEd, MSc)		174	45.2
3. Undergraduate degree		18	4.7
4. Aggregate (N)		385	100

Table 4 reveals the teacher educators' years of professional and pedagogical experiences. The most majority of the teacher educators (approx. 98%) are not only experienced practitioners, but also they are credentialed scholars (95% Masters/Doctorate, table 3). This study, thus, engaged highly advanced and expert demographic profiles both in academic experiences and credentials. The minimal presence of entry-level staff (2.1%) denotes the findings would represent an expert consensus among established educators rather than the transitional views of novices.

5.2 II. Questionnaire

Table 5: Teacher educators' motivation for reading

Item description	Mean	SD	Motivational Category
1. Reading facilitates the conceptual enrichment of my thoughts and expressive capacity.	4.72	0.49	Intrinsic cognitive
2. Reading is a fundamental instrument for me to advance my teaching practices.	4.77	0.46	Professional (Dominant)
3. My engagement with literature is essential for the execution of independent scholarly research.	4.48	0.46	Academic/Professional
4. I leverage my literary experiences to enrich the learning environment for my students.	4.15	1.09	Pedagogical, social aesthetic pleasure and intrinsic enjoyment.
5. Reading is a vehicle for the development of my communicative active proficiency (oral/written).	3.74	0.72	Functional skill
6. I utilize reading as a mechanism for stress mitigation and emotional refreshment	2.76	0.89	Psychological regulation
7. I engage with literary texts primarily for aesthetic pleasure and intrinsic enjoyment.	2.42	1.07	Recreational
8. Reading is a recreational pastime to enjoy leisure.	2.35	1.01	Extrinsic

Note: Likert Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), N=385.

Table 5 displays teacher educators' motivation for reading. As can be seen from the table, the motivational profile of the participants is characterized by pragmatic instrumentalism. The given data proves that there is a statistically significant lean toward professional optimization ($M=4.77$; $SD=0.46$) and intellectual synthesis ($M=4.72$; $SD=0.49$). This indicates that reading is viewed predominantly as a professional and cognitive necessity. More significantly, the low standard deviation on Items' 1, 2, and 3- ($SD= 0.49, 0.46\&0.46$ respectively) confirms that almost every single person in this study agreed that reading helps their cognitive, academic and professional development.

Conversely, the low mean scores for reading for aesthetic pleasure and intrinsic enjoyment ($M=2.42$; $SD=1.07$) and recreational pastime ($M=2.35$; $SD=1.01$).

Table 6: Teacher educators' reading preferences

Item description	Mean	SD	Key insights/Interpretation
1. Scientific & Academic Inquiry: (Preference for scientific & research books)	3.64	1.2	Moderate Interest
2. Professional engagement: (journals, articles)	4.00	1.0	High engagement
3. Political discourse: (Interest in socio-political literature)	3.23	1.1	Neutral/Mixed
4. Printed texts: (Consumption of daily newspapers)	2.39	0.9	Low Interest
5. Periodical texts: (Preference for magazine content)	2.40	1.1	Low Interest
6. Digital reading (Favoring online/web-based texts)	4.49	0.7	Primary channel
7. Media favor: (Cinematic adaptations over source texts)	3.32	1.3	Neutral/Mixed
8. Fiction consumption: (Engagement with novels & short stories)	2.01	0.07	Very low
9. Sports journalism: (Interest in athletic/sporting coverage)	2.46	1.0	Low Interest
10. Theological reading: (Engagement with religious texts)	2.47	0.9	Low Interest
11. Adventure narratives: (Preference for action-oriented books)	2.26	0.9	Low Interest
12. Suspense & Crime: (Interest in detective or mystery)	2.28	0.0	Low Interest

Note: Likert Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), N=385.

Table 6 reveals teacher educators’ reading preferences. It is clear from the table that the teacher educators’ preferences indicate a distinct shift toward utilitarian and digital-first consumption. Specifically, there is a decisive preference for digital reading ($M=4.49$) $SD=0.78$ and professional engagement ($M=4.00$) $SD=1.02$. This suggests that the teachers prioritize accessibility and career-related growth over leisure-based content. Accordingly, the data analysis confirms that the teachers overwhelmingly favor online platforms, which makes it the primary channel for information delivery. In contrast, traditional print media, specifically newspapers ($M=2.39$) $SD=0.92$) and magazines ($M=2.40$) $SD=1.12$), show significant decline and become the least popular texts. In other words, while scholarly and professional literature become at the top of the teacher educators’ favorite, leisure categories such as fiction ($M=2.01$) $SD=0.07$) and adventure ($M=2.26$) $SD=0.97$) reside at the bottom of the preference scale. This indicates that the teachers experience purpose-driven reading habit.

On the other hand, the table displays that there is a notable openness to media favor ($M=3.32$) $SD=1.39$) with a significant portion of the teacher educators opting for cinematic adaptations over traditional literary consumption. This is followed by political discourse ($M=3.23$) $SD=1.12$). Thus, as the participants are characterized by a high degree of digital literacy and preference for information that provides tangible professional value, there should be strategic system to leverage teachers’ motivation for leisure reading (like fictions) in order maximize their aesthetic engagement.

Table 7: Teacher educators’ frequency of reading practices

Engagement classification	Temporal recurrence (Metric)	F	%	Behavioral Profile
1. High-frequency (Habitual)	Daily engagement	157	40.8	Ritualized Habit: Reading is integrated into the daily cyclical rhythm.
2. Consistent	Every 48 hours	120	31.2	Substantial Integration: High-level maintenance of literary habits.
3. Moderate (Cyclical)	2-3 per week	90	23.4	Occasional Engagement: Reading is a planned
4. Weekly/Bi-weekly	Sporadic	15	3.9	Fragmented: Reading occurs only in specific windows of availability.
5. Monthly/periodic	Rare	3	0.8	Incidental: Minimal cognitive dedication to reading
6. Non-engaged	Zero recurrence	0	0.0	Absence of behavior

Table 7 shows teacher educators’ frequency of reading practices. The data illustrates a vigorous temporal commitment among the surveyed teacher educators. Altogether, 72% of respondents reflect habitual or consistent engagement (daily to every other day reading practices). This high level of behavioral ritualization indicates that for the majority of the teacher educators, reading is not merely a task-oriented activity but a fundamental component of their daily cognitive life. On the other hand, the low variance in the sporadic and residual levels further reinforces the finding that the population is polarized toward active, high-frequency consumption rather than passive or occasional readers.

Briefly, the analysis reveals a population characterized by everyday reading practices, with 40.8% of respondents exhibiting daily engagement. From a socio-cognitive perspective, this indicates that reading has achieved ritualized or habitual status within the group’s professional identity. When combined with the every 48 hours readers (31.2%), teacher educators demonstrate frequently persistent reading engagement. This high frequency suggests that the information seeking phase of their professional life is strong and stable.

Table 8: Teacher educators' reading habits

Type of Engagement	Annual volume	Frequency	%	Research significance
1. High density	> 20 books	11	2.9	Scholarly/hobbyist reader: Advanced literacy
2. Active/Moderate	6-20 books	170	44.2	Consistent reader: Sustained habit
3. Casual/Incipient	< 5 books	189	49.0	Occasional/selective reader: dominant level
4. Non-participant	0 books	15	3.9	Non-reader: absent book-based

Table 8 displays teacher educators' reading habits. The book reading distribution reveals a bipolar clustering of habits with the vast majority of the teacher educators (93.2%) oscillating between incipient/casual readers (49%) and active/moderate readers (44.2%). Notably, the hobbyist readers those who are exceeding 20 volumes annually represents a statistical minority (2.9%). This suggests that the high-density readers remain an elite or specialized behavior with the least percentage in this demographic context. The aggregated median falls within the < 5 books' range. This implies a preference for carefully chosen or essentialist reading behavior rather than spread-out volume.

Overall, the descriptive data establishes a group that is largely active but not necessarily prolific. While 44.2% of respondents fall into the active/moderate reading level (6-20 books), the majority (49%) remain in the incipient reading level (< 5 books). However, table 7 (reading frequency), displays a different story with 72% of the sample reads daily or every other day. This indicates that while the teacher educators may not read and finish many books, they are still engaged in constant, short-form reading. Correspondingly, Willingham (2023) explains that 'Modern professional literacy is characterized by high-frequency, low-volume consumption, where the habit is constant even if the unit of reading is fragmented,' (p.288).

Table 9: Distribution of material engagement and resource modality

Item description	Mean	SD	Modality type
1. I predominantly utilize web-based platforms and electronic texts as my primary information source.	4.28	1.03	Digital first
2. I consistently engage with digital peer-reviewed journals and professional articles	3.69	1.26	Professional
3. My reading habit is largely centered around formal academic volumes and scholarly books.	3.68	1.22	Scholarly
4. I dedicate significant time to the review of structured lecture notes and internal pedagogical documents.	3.46	1.28	Direct/Instructional
5. I rely on prescribed textbooks as a principal source of information.	2.76	1.12	Curricular
6. My consumption frequently includes specialized or general-interest magazines.	2.14	0.77	Cadaverous/deficient
7. I engage with fictional prose, novels, and short stories with high frequency.	2.08	0.98	Cadaverous/deficient
8. I maintain a consistent habit of reading traditional daily newspapers.	2.02	0.67	Cadaverous/deficient

Note: Likert Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), N=385.

Table 9 presents the teacher educators' types of reading materials, engagement and resource modality. The analysis of this resource modality reveals a definitive transition toward digital primacy or e-texts (M=4.28; SD=1.03). This shows that the participants significantly favor electronic and web-based environments over traditional print formats.

The data suggests a hierarchy of utility, where scholarly reading sources, especially on-line journals ($M=3.69$; $SD=1.22$) and academic reading materials ($M=3.68$; $SD=1.22$) hold substantial weight. This proves that the teacher educators prioritize reading sophisticated academic materials and so they are more likely career-oriented readers.

On the other hand, the reliance on lecture notes ($M=3.46$; $SD=1.28$) versus textbooks ($M=2.76$; $SD=1.12$) shows the teacher educators' curricular dependence rather than transformative and interactive instructional approaches. This suggests that the teacher educators more likely prefer condensed, direct information materials over long-form foundational books. Conversely, legacy media and creative narratives such as newspapers ($M=2.02$; $SD=0.67$), fiction ($M=2.08$; $SD=0.98$) and magazines ($M=2.14$; $SD=0.77$), have reached a state of functional obsolescence within this group. This implies that these formats are no longer vital to the respondents' lifestyle. Furthermore, the preference for lecture notes over formal textbooks suggests a shift toward information efficiency, where readers prioritize curated, high-density summaries over expansive foundational texts.

Table 10: Literacy-pedagogical integration and reflexive instructional practices

Item description	Mean	SD	Key insights/Interpretation
1. I explicitly integrate my personal identity as an avid reader into my classroom instructional delivery.	2.90	1.0	Transitional gap; lacks experiential modeling
2. I allocate instructional time to share literary experiences (fiction/articles) with my students.	2.86	1.1	Low narrative sharing (Low integration)
3. I provide students with intentional classroom think-time to synthesize & articulate their understandings.	2.78	1.0	Low discursive space
4. I engage in collaborative reflection with peers regarding teaching challenges and literary integration.	2.60	1.0	Low collegial discourse
5. I maintain a consistent habit of reflecting on specialized texts directly related to the active curriculum.	2.55	1.0	Low conceptual reflection
6. I utilize my specific literary encounters as empirical examples during the instructional process.	2.52	1.0	Low exemplary modeling

Note: Likert Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), $N=385$.

Table 10 illustrates teacher educators' literacy-pedagogical integration and reflexive instructional practices. The data reveal a significant pedagogical translation gap. While the respondents identified as professional and academic readers in previous metrics, their reflexive classroom instructional practices is limited to ($M=2.52$ to 2.90). This means integrating personal reading experiences to classroom pedagogical enactment remains notably low. This suggests that reading habits are currently being used for personal professional development ($M=4.77$; 4.48) rather than being actively leveraged as a classroom instructional tool ($M=2.52$; $SD=1.03$). In particular, the systematic lack of affective modeling ($M=2.72$; $SD=1.16$) and discursive space ($M=2.78$; $SD=1.01$) indicates that while teachers are consuming content, they have yet to formalize a methodology for transferring that literacy culture to their students. It visibly reveals the gap in literacy-pedagogy integration.

The most significant point is that while the teachers highly value reading for their own personal growth (scholarly and functional purpose), they invest little to translate those habits into classroom instructional activities (with most Means falling below 3.00). Thus, there found a broken intersection between teacher educators' reading trends and classroom pedagogical enactment. In other word, the empirical data reveals a significant pedagogical translation gap. It is because though teacher educators exhibit high professional engagement ($M=4.00$; $SD=1.02$) and daily reading frequency (40.8%), their scores

for literary-pedagogical integration consistently fall within the minimal to low range (M= approx. 2.52-2.90). Specifically, experiential modeling (M=2.90; SD=1.00) and affective cultivation- (the acts of sharing personal reading passion to inspire students) (M=2.72; SD=1.16), are remarkably at the minimal level. This suggests that the quality of instruction is currently hindered by functional-driven habits. It means, teachers are using their reading habits for personal, intellectual synthesis, but are failing to leverage these habits as a catalyst to transform their students learning. In addition, teachers lack of reflexive assessment (M=2.71), where teachers systematically evaluate how their reading influences student outcomes, indicates that instructional quality is being treated as a static delivery of content rather than a dynamic, literacy-driven practices. The mediating role of reading habits is, thus, latent, that is, the potential for high-quality and inspiring instruction exists, but it is currently blocked by a lack of discursive space- (the habit of providing students intentional classroom think-time to synthesize and articulate their understandings) (M=2.78). Strikingly, the data analysis reveals a paradoxical pedagogical disconnect. Despite their high academic status (table 3) and frequent engagement (table 7) with scholarly texts (table 9), these terminal-degree holders show limited success in reflexive instructional practices. This suggests that high educational attainment does not automatically translate into the ability to model literacy in the classroom.

Table 11: Correlational analysis of reading habits and preferences and instructional practices

Relationship Path	Correlational Coefficient (r)	Sig. (P-value)	Significance Level
Professional reading preferences → Instructional accuracy	0.76	0.001	Highly significant
Digital reading habits → Innovative methodologies	0.62	0.01	Significant
Annual reading volume → Reflexive practices	0.41	0.05	Moderate
Leisure (literary texts) reading habits → Affective modeling	0.18	0.142	Non-significant

Table 11 shows the analysis of the relationships between teacher educators’ reading habits and preferences (independent variables) and their classroom instructional practices (dependent variable). The analysis of Pearson Correlation metrics reveals a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.76$, $p = 0.001$) between professional reading preferences and instructional accuracy. There is also a statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.62$, $P = 0.01$) between reading habits and using innovative methodologies. The analysis suggests that when teacher educators deepen their engagement with specialized texts, they can advance the technical quality of their classroom lesson delivery. However, there is a non-significant relationship ($P = 0.142$) for the link between leisure reading and affective modeling. This suggests a disconnection between educators’ literary reading habits and classroom modeling. It means, teacher educators fail to convert their personal enjoyment of fictions into classroom inspirational tools to trigger students’ reading culture.

Table 12: Multiple regression analysis to identify the predictor of quality of instructions

Dimensions of Reading Habits	Beta	Sig. (P-value)
Professional motivation	0.54	0.001
Digital primacy	-0.14	0.038
Annual volume	0.29	0.002

As can be seen from table 12, multiple linear regression model is used to determine how much of the variance in instructional quality can be explained by the various dimensions

of reading habits. The table exhibits that professional motivation ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$) is the primary predictor of quality instruction. In other word, for every standard deviation increase in professional reading, instructional quality improves by 0.54 units. Still, annual reading volume ($\beta = 0.29$, $p = .002$) is also found to be a significant positive predictor, which confirms that long-form reading practices remain a vital pillar for instructional sustained-depth. Conversely, digital primacy ($\beta = -0.14$, $p = 0.038$) is found to be a statistically significant negative predictor. This suggests that teacher educators' over-reliance on fragmented digital consumption may actually detract them from the cohesive narrative depth of a lesson.

Briefly, professional reading habit acts as a full mediator between teacher education and quality of classroom instructional practices. Here, without the habit of reading, the educator's foundational training remains stagnant. On the contrary, digital preference acts as a partial mediator as it provides quick information. It is because while an e-reading preference increases the speed of information retrieval, the p-value (0.038) possibly warns a decline in the quality of conceptual synthesis. Significantly, the p-values across this study provide empirical confirmation of the instructional paradox. The high significance ($p < 0.001$) of professional reading ensures that the teacher educators are surely content-competent. Nonetheless, the regression weights alert that the digital-first habit is a double-edged sword because it offers efficiency but reduces the knowledge and information density we need to be shared in the classroom.

5.3 III. Interview

Below is the thematic analysis of the interview excerpts followed by an integrated analysis connecting these voices to the earlier statistical results.

Table 13: Results of the thematic analysis of the interview data

Theme ID	Emerging Theme	Description/Evidence
T-01	Instrumentalism & Professionalism	Reading is viewed as a functional tool for academic promotion, citation, and status rather than pedagogical transformation. Interviewee 01, 03, 05 & 07
T-02	Digital preference (e-reading)	A shift toward mobile and computer screens due to accessibility, convenience, and 'anywhere' reading culture. Interviewee 04
T-03	Time constraint	Heavy workloads, post-pandemic compressed semesters and administrative duties act as primary barriers to deep reading. Interviewee 06 & 08
T-04	Leisure-professional gap	Absence of recreational reading in adulthood, despite strong childhood foundations in fiction. Interviewee 01 & 02
T-05	Peer-mediated habituation	Reading habits are significantly influenced by social circles and fellowship rather than institutional training. Interviewee 02

Table 13 shows the thematic analysis results of the interview data. Based on the analysis, the interviewees confirm the high mean scores for professional optimization ($M=4.77$, $SD=0.46$) and professional engagement ($M=4.48$) (T-01) found in the quantitative data. However, the qualitative 'why' is startlingly pragmatic. Reading is described as a requirement or a means to ease academic promotion. This validates the earlier conclusion that

the teacher educators read as a scholar-researcher first, and a teacher-mentor second, and the motive is self-preservation and career advancement.

Table 14: Data triangulation results

Quantitative Results	Statistical	Qualitative Evidences	Interview	Integrated Interpretation (Synthesis)
Digital primacy (M=4.49)		'E-reading wherever I am.' (walking, taxi waiting)' Interviewee 04		Fragmented Texts: The digital shift is a survival response to a mobile lifestyle. However, reading in taxis/waiting rooms explains the 'Shallowing Effect' where frequency is high but pedagogical depth is compromised.
High reading frequency (72%), but low instructional practices (M < 3.00)		'...Stretched out by regular meetings... no enough labs.'- Interviewee 08.		Structural burden: The pedagogical failure is not a lack of teacher will, but a systemic time constraint. Teachers are constant readers but silent practitioners because the workload leaves no space for creative delivery.
Professional motivation (M=4.77) as the primary driver.		'Easing my academic promotion... citation requirements.'—Interviewee 01 & 03.		Functional/Instrumental Drive: Reading has been dominated by the need for promotion, which effectively displacing the art of teaching with the science of promotion.
Poor leisure reading habit (M=2.42) & low aesthetic interest.		'I used to read fictions... now little time for leisure.'—Interviewee 01 & 02		The Aesthetic Collapse: Veteran educators have transacted their childhood love of stories for adult professional journals. This explains why they teach content well but fails to inspire students affectively.

Table 14 demonstrates how the two data streams feed each other to create high-quality results. As can be noted from table 7, the quantitative data show a group that reads almost every day, yet the qualitative data from Interviewee 08 explains that they are 'suffering hard from the routine heavy workload.' This creates a latent expertise. That means, the teacher educators have gained adequate knowledge from e-books and journals, but they lack the habit of infusing their reading experiences into classroom practices. As the teachers do not implement reading reflection schedules, their knowledge and reading experiences never transition into classroom practices. Additionally, the negative impacts of digital reading found in the quantitative analysis, (table 12), are explained by Interviewee 04. If educators are reading while travelling by taxi, they are engaging in collecting inadequate information. This confirms that while digital technology has solved the problem of access, it has inadvertently created a barrier to real immersion. Here, the quality of instruction stays low because the quality of the reading environment is chaotic and again, teachers are vulnerable to consuming short-lived and fragmented texts.

6 Discussion

This study looked into the mediating roles of teacher educators' reading habits and preferences in determining the quality of classroom instructions. Data were collected from 385 high profile university teachers categorized in six specialized colleges and a sport academy. Results prove that the teacher educators are highly credentialed and pragmatic that read with high frequency but low recreational intent. The mediation analysis suggests that these educators use their reading habits as a professional filter. They consume high-level academic content which then feeds directly into their scholarly improvement. On the other hand, the low scores in instructional practice indicate that the

mediation is currently internal. Teachers are using reading to improve their own knowledge, but they have not yet fully mediated that experience to classroom instructions to inspire their students.

Among the most striking findings is that while the frequency of reading is high (40.8% for habitual readers plus 31.2% for consistent readers = 72%) the reflexive instructional practices (table 10) remains in the minimal to low integration range ($M = \text{approx. } 2.71$). Here, it is clearly noticeable that the reflexive instructional practices gap lags significantly behind personal reading motivation ($M=4.77$). This reading value-action gap aligns with UNESCO (2023) and ISTE (2023) reports which found that over 40% of teachers feel inadequately trained to translate their own competencies into student-centered pedagogies. Surprisingly, the respondents are found to be active information seekers, yet they struggle with affective modeling ($M=2.72$): (the act of instilling a love for literature in students). As Mokoena and Hendrickson (2026) denote, reflexive teaching requires educators to move beyond 'technical transfer' to become 'narrative mentors.' This study provides convincing empirical proof that high personal literacy does not automatically equate to high instructional quality.

The results suggest that while high-frequency reading is constructive for the teachers' intellectual synthesis, it is not automatically translated into a high-frequency instructional habit. So, as teachers become silent readers, the mediating role of frequency is currently internalized. Such reading practices serve the teacher's own cognitive maintenance, but contribute little to trigger a corresponding frequency of narrative sharing or exemplary modeling in the classroom (Gomez-Vazquez & Sterling, 2026). Recent studies in transformative practices also emphasize that reflexive teaching is not merely the delivery of information but a catalyst for curriculum transformation (Mokoena & Hendrickson, 2026). Thus, the lack of modeling literacy experiences to inspire students' love of reading indicates a hard bottleneck in which teachers are reading daily, but they hardly share their experiences to transform their students' learning.

This study proves that reading habit is the engine of pedagogy because reading habit acts as a key mediator between teacher education and classroom quality. Without the habit of reading, the educator's foundational training remains stagnant. Thus, to maximize and achieve instructional excellence, teacher education must pivot toward integrated literacy where professional reading is strengthened by the structural depth of classroom exemplary modeling and transformative pedagogical enactment. On the contrary, this study disagrees with the most traditional faculty development models which assume that increasing a teacher's content knowledge (via reading) automatically improves instructional quality. However, the finding unveils frequency-practice decoupling where daily reading does not lead to classroom sharing. This disproves the linear assumption that high academic achievement guarantees high quality delivery. More significantly, this finding aligns more closely with the 'pedagogical translation gap' identified by Zimmerman (2026). It is suggested that knowledge acquisition and pedagogical externalization are two distinct cognitive processes.

Overall, the research uncovers a startling latent expertise and a paradoxical pedagogical disconnect. Despite their advanced degrees and decades of experiences, these educators show a marked hesitancy to integrate their personal digital-first reading habits ($M=4.28$, table 9) into their classroom reflexive instructional practices ($M=2.71$, table 10). Similarly, multiple regression analysis testifies that while professional motivation ($M=4.77$) is a positive predictor of quality, fragmented digital primacy acts as a significant negative mediator ($\beta = -0.14$, $p = 0.038$). This suggests a 'shallowing effect' in modern scholarly habits. Besides, it proves that pedagogical habits are deeply isolated and that even for the most experienced and educated experts, transitioning from personal literacy to instructional modeling requires specific and targeted intervention.

7 Conclusion

This research investigated the critical link between the teacher educators' intellectual consumption practices and the qualitative output of their classroom instructions. By comprising a strong sample of education professionals, the study analyzed how reading habits and preferences mediate the transition from personal expertise to pedagogical excellence. The data analyses provided overwhelming evidence of highly credentialed, frequently engaged teacher educators. Evidently, with a 72% daily engagement rate and a near-universal commitment to professional optimization, the educators are intellectual powerhouses as their reading is purely functional. Hence, this investigation is framed within the context of an instructional paradox, where high levels of professional engagement and chronicity do not automatically transform into classroom reflexive instructional practices. The minimal scores in instructional integration serve as the decisive call to action. The findings identify a profound reflexive instructional failure, but the failure in the quality of instruction is not hindered by a lack of teacher competence, but by a failure in habit-mediation. That is to say, the literacy experiences of the teacher educators have become an internal asset or a private scholarly shield as they invested more in internal professional growth rather than an external pedagogical bridge that is used to ignite students' passion for reading and learning curiosity. This suggests that high educational attainment does not automatically translate into the ability to model literacy in the classroom. Thus, there is a critical need for pedagogical translation frameworks even among the most academically advanced educators.

More significantly, the teacher educators are found to be latent expertise: their intellectual energy is present, but the mediating circuit is broken at the point of classroom delivery. To achieve true instructional excellence, teacher education must axle from a culture of private consumption to reflexive and collaborative practices. The teachers must move from the shadows of their silent reading habits and emerge as active and exemplary modeler showing students not just what to think, but how a deeply read life directs the way one succeeds in learning. It is concluded that the quality of instruction in teacher education is currently suffering from a modeling deficit. To revitalize the mediating route, it is no longer enough to be well-read. The teacher educators must perform their literacy in action. They should transform their reading habits from a silent consumer into a visible narrative mentor. Institutions can unlock the latent intellectual energy of their faculty and achieve true instructional excellence by promoting community learning and community of practices, and by providing tailored-made, pedagogy-driven and reflexive instructional modeling training.

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Data can be made available on reasonable request.

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Original Article

Ethiopia's education and training policy (2023): a paradigm shift toward competency, autonomy, and equity

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Abstract

The 2023 Education and Training Policy (ETP) represent Ethiopia's most comprehensive education reform in over three decades. It introduces major reforms, including competency-based curricula, university autonomy, expansion of early childhood education (O-Class), and strengthened accountability mechanisms such as the Approach, Deployment, Results, and Improvement (ADRI) audit model and performance contracts. This paper analyzes the objectives, core components, and implementation strategies of the 2023 ETP, comparing them with the 1994 policy framework to demonstrate a significant paradigm shift in governance, curriculum, assessment, and equity orientation. Drawing on official policy documents, program evaluations (e.g., GEQIP-E), and international education reports, the study identifies enabling factors, implementation risks, and policy implications. While the policy is well aligned with global and African education reform agendas, its success will depend on phased implementation, institutional capacity building, and sustained, equity-focused financing.

1 Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a key driver of sustainable development, social equity, and 2020 agenda emphasize inclusive and equitable quality education for all, highlighting the importance of lifelong learning and competency development (UNESCO, 2015). African education policy frameworks, particularly the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), underscore the need for competency-based education, science and technology integration, and governance reforms to strengthen learning outcomes across the continent (African Union, 2016). Despite these initiatives, disparities in access, quality, and equity persist in many low-income countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2022). These global and continental trends provide an important contextual backdrop for Ethiopia's recent education policy reform.

Since the adoption of the 1994 Education and Training Policy, Ethiopia has made notable progress in expanding access to primary and secondary education. Gross enrollment rates have increased substantially, and gender parity has improved in many regions (Ministry of Education, 2023). Nevertheless, learning outcomes remain suboptimal, with national and international assessments indicating low proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas (World Bank, 2020). These

persistent challenges highlight the need for comprehensive reform that addresses quality, equity, and institutional effectiveness, motivating the development of the 2023 Education and Training Policy.

The 2023 ETP aligns with international and African policy trends by strengthening governance structures, implementing competency-based curricula, introducing continuous assessment, expanding early childhood education, and enhancing accountability and quality assurance mechanisms (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2023; World Bank, 2024). By situating the policy within both global and African contexts, this study demonstrates that Ethiopia's reform seeks not only to address national priorities but also to conform to recognized international standards of educational quality and equity.

2 Conceptual and theoretical framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is informed by Policy Implementation Theory and Human Capital Theory. Policy Implementation Theory emphasizes that successful reform depends on alignment between policy objectives, institutional capacity, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring mechanisms (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education particularly in early childhood development and competency formation enhance individual productivity and contribute to long-term social and economic development (Becker, 1993).

Within the context of Ethiopia's 2023 ETP, this framework links policy inputs—such as curriculum reform, governance restructuring, early childhood education expansion, and teacher professional development—to outputs including improved competencies, learning outcomes, and institutional performance. Curriculum reform emphasizes competency-based approaches, integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM), and incorporation of indigenous knowledge to ensure relevance and contextual grounding. University autonomy grants institutions greater authority over governance, curricula, and financial management under Proclamation No. 1294/2023, while maintaining accountability through performance contracts and standardized audits. Early childhood education expansion prioritizes nationwide rollout of O-Class programs supported by targeted teacher training and curriculum development. Teacher professional development focuses on continuous training, mentoring, and capacity-building initiatives to support effective implementation of competency-based education.

Implementation mechanisms mediate the relationship between policy inputs and outcomes. The ADRI audit model provides a structured framework for quality assurance through continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement. Performance contracts strengthen accountability by linking institutional outputs to measurable standards. Decentralized decision-making empowers schools and universities to respond to local needs while remaining aligned with national objectives. Strategic partnerships and external financing through initiatives such as the General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) further support effective policy implementation.

The anticipated outcomes include enhanced student competencies, improved learning outcomes in core subjects, and strengthened institutional effectiveness. Equity and inclusion are central objectives, with particular emphasis on girls, children with disabilities, and learners in marginalized or crisis-affected regions.

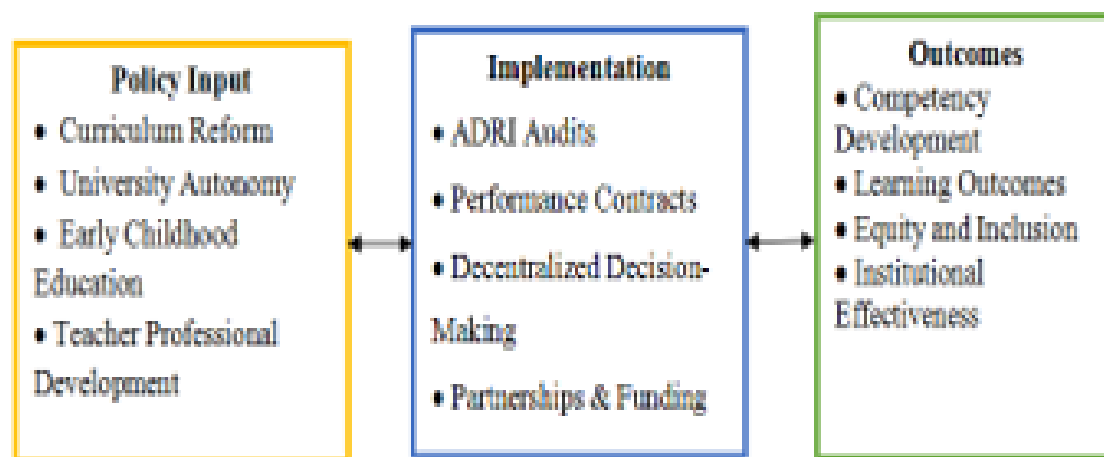


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for Ethiopia's 2023 education and training policy

3 Literature review on education policy

3.1 Global education policy trends

Globally, education policies increasingly emphasize competency-based learning, inclusive education, and robust quality assurance systems. High-performing education systems such as those in Finland, Singapore, and Canada prioritize curriculum relevance, teacher autonomy, and continuous assessment rather than rote learning (OECD, 2019; Sahlberg, 2015). International frameworks, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), advocate lifelong learning, inclusive access, and effective integration of technology to enhance learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2020). These trends reflect a shift from quantity-focused expansion toward quality, equity, and skills-oriented education.

3.2 African education policy context

Within Africa, the African Union's CESA 16-25 framework provides a strategic roadmap for improving educational quality and aligning education systems with socio-economic development objectives (African Union, 2016). Countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, and South Africa have adopted competency-based curricula, strengthened teacher professional development, and introduced reforms promoting university autonomy (Altbach & de Wit, 2020; Moon, 2022). However, many countries continue to face challenges related to limited institutional capacity, resource constraints, and regional inequalities—challenges that are also relevant to the Ethiopian context.

3.3 Ethiopian education policy evolution

Ethiopia's 1994 Education and Training Policy emphasized access expansion and administrative decentralization to regional governments. While these reforms significantly increased enrollment, the policy relied heavily on centralized assessment systems and provided limited early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2023). In contrast, the 2023 ETP introduces transformative reforms, including university autonomy under Proclamation No. 1294/2023, competency-based curricula from kindergarten through Grade

12, nationwide expansion of O-Class programs, enhanced teacher professional development, and ADRI-based quality assurance mechanisms.

3.4 Theoretical underpinning

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) provides a rationale for prioritizing investments in early childhood education and competency development as foundations for productivity and national development. Policy Implementation Theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973) underscores the importance of institutional capacity, stakeholder engagement, and effective coordination for translating policy intentions into practice.

4 Research methods

This study employs a qualitative policy document analysis approach. Primary sources include the 2023 Education and Training Policy, Proclamation No. 1294/2023 on university autonomy, and GEQIP-E program documents. Secondary sources consist of UNESCO and African Union policy reports, World Bank publications, and peer-reviewed academic literature. The analysis focused on policy objectives, core content, implementation strategies, key differences from the 1994 policy, and potential challenges in achieving intended outcomes.

5 Findings and discussion

5.1 Objectives of the 2023 policy

The 2023 ETP articulates five primary objectives: enhancing the quality and relevance of education in line with national development goals; promoting equity and inclusion for marginalized populations; expanding and professionalizing early childhood education; granting universities greater autonomy while ensuring accountability; and reforming curriculum and assessment systems by shifting from rote learning toward competency-based approaches that foster higher-order thinking skills.

5.2 Main contents and implementation strategies

University autonomy is operationalized through Proclamation No. 1294/2023, granting institutions increased authority over governance, curricula, and financial management, coupled with accountability mechanisms such as ADRI audits and performance contracts. Curriculum reform introduces competency-based approaches across subject areas, integrating STEAM, indigenous knowledge, ethics, and skills development. Assessment reform replaces high-stakes terminal examinations with continuous, formative assessments aligned with national benchmarks. Early childhood education expansion focuses on nationwide rollout of O-Class programs supported by teacher training, curriculum materials, and systematic monitoring. Quality assurance is strengthened through ADRI audits and oversight by the Education and Training Authority. Equity measures prioritize crisis-affected regions and vulnerable groups, supported by donor-funded programs including GEQIP-E and GPE.

5.3 Differences from the 1994 policy

Compared with the 1994 ETP, the 2023 policy represents a clear paradigm shift. Governance moves from centralized control to institutional autonomy with structured accountability. Curriculum shifts from content-heavy instruction to competency-based learning. Assessment transitions from high-stakes examinations to continuous evaluation. Early childhood education expands from limited provision to nationwide O-Class programs. Quality assurance evolves from accreditation-focused models to continuous improvement frameworks, and equity becomes an explicit policy priority.

Table 1: Comparison of Ethiopia’s 1994 and 2023 ETP

Dimension	1994 ETP	2023 ETP
Governance	University autonomy under Proclamation Ministry of Education control; limited institutional autonomy with accountability mechanisms	Competency-based, integrates STEAM, indigenous knowledge, skills development
Curriculum	Theory-heavy, content-focused, rote learning	Continuous, formative, competency-based assessments linked to national benchmarks
Assessment	High-stakes, terminal examinations	Nationwide O-Class rollout with teacher training and curriculum support
Early Childhood Education	Limited provision	Continuous Professional development, mentoring, and capacity-building programs
Teacher Professional Development	Ad-hoc training; limited capacity-building	ADRI audits, institutional performance contracts, continuous monitoring
Quality Assurance	Accreditation-focused	Explicit focus on girls, children with disabilities, crisis-affected regions
Equity	Limited focus	Aligns with National priorities; SDG4, CESA 16-25, UNESCO 2030, and international best practices
Alignment	Policy less aligned with global/continental frameworks	Enhancing quality, equity, and decentralization effectiveness
Key Goal	Access expansion and decentralization	

6 Discussion and implications

The 2023 ETP reflects a comprehensive effort to modernize Ethiopia’s education system. While university autonomy has the potential to enhance innovation and responsiveness, it requires phased implementation and strong institutional capacity to mitigate governance and financial risks (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Curriculum reforms align with global recommendations emphasizing competencies and learner-centered pedagogy, but their success depends heavily on teacher preparedness and sustained professional development (Moon, 2022). Expansion of O-Class programs offers substantial long-term benefits, although challenges related to teacher supply, resource allocation, and monitoring remain significant (Heckman, 2011).

The ADRI audit model introduces an innovative quality assurance approach focused on continuous improvement. However, insufficient capacity or excessive compliance demands could undermine its effectiveness (University World News, 2025). Equity-focused strategies are promising but require adequate financing, flexible implementation, and context-sensitive approaches, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected areas (UNICEF, 2023).

7 Recommendations

Teacher professional development should be strengthened through nationwide continuous training, coaching, and mentoring programs. University autonomy should be implemented gradually, guided by clearly defined capacity benchmarks. ADRI audits should be piloted and refined before full national rollout. Equity-focused financing mechanisms should prioritize marginalized populations and underserved regions. Performance contracts should reward measurable improvements in learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness rather than procedural compliance alone.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Original Article

Determinants and opportunities of educational resource conformity for effective instructional delivery in pastoralist-areas of Ethiopia: a contextual analysis

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KEYWORDS:

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Affecting;
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Role;
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Pastoralist

Abstract

The research investigated determinants and opportunities of educational resource conformity for the educational provisions in pastoralist areas of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia with purpose to lay a strong educational platform which can have lasting effects on improving responsiveness of educational resources (human, material, financial and technical) for the society's life. Target sites of the study were Fentalle, West Hererghe, East Hareghe, East Bale, Guji and Borena pastoralist community areas. Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used to give shape to the study. Data were collected from sample students (n=418), teachers educational experts (n=493) and family households (n=200) selected through stratified random sampling. Binary-mode questionnaires, interviews and FGDs were used in collecting data for the purpose of triangulation. The findings indicated uneven access to resources (technical), fluctuating environmental security due to violence (Sociopolitical), non-responsive of instructional skills and overall practices (Institutional), minimum on-job training for teachers (professional), striking traditional practices hampering educational success (socio-cultural), and weak stakeholders' contributions for the development of educational programs (managerial) to have been overriding determinants. The accompanying recommendations are for units in charge of coordinating pastoralist-area education to reconsider policy and strategy, with due concern on the proper utilization of time, materials and human resources.

1 Introduction

The research focused on clarifying determinants of resource conformity to educational practices in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist livelihoods of Oromia Regional State. Every educational process is intended to be responsive to societal needs in terms of cultural transformational needs, economic needs, security needs or technological needs (Coetzee, 2023). To be responsive to such needs, the system of education must have ways of selecting, organizing, distributing and utilizing resources in an efficacious manner (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). Society does not only have needs but also contributions for the betterment and quality of education that transforms it (George & Dantew, 2017). In that, quality

education is one which the society values, develops and benefits from in all corridors; it is not what society keeps as an untouchable scene for ceremonial purpose.

While access to educational opportunities can have its own contributions and impacts overall, the community members' recipients' deep reliance on unchanging trends at accessing can have bearing effects on their success at an equitable rate (Zickafoose et al., 2024). Such unchanging style can lead to failure in equitable access for different strata in society. Equitable equal success could also be jeopardized (Bauman et al., 2005). Quality education is the system of functional change in society which goes to socio-economic improvement. It also leads to life-building and sustainable phases with positive transfer from earlier to newer generations (Fulbright-Anderson & Auspos, 2006). Quality education develops the best practices in society into strong arms for sustainable changes. That could be realized when educational resources correctly conform in use with educational intents (Aina & Abdulwasil, 2023).

In the light of the life-changing quality of education, the social gains so far attuned to educational resource provision from the past to the present may have been progressive but insufficient to be compatible with the 21st century demands (African Union, 2024). This may be due to mismatch between educational experiences delivered through schooling and the societal values given priority at local levels (Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2008). It may be evident also that, society members consider education to be the master-key for selected few strata rather than (for) all. In that, education for all may have also been understood as reaching all people with educational opportunities, which seems to be something externally posed or provided (Pathak, 2023). The notion of viewing education as a remedy for all human aches may not reversibly be understood well when considered from the pragmatic perspective of the trend. Not the least, education may be understood as the sophisticated and highly demanding process which only those having smart economic base can get good matches for.

The reality, however, is that, education, whatever the form, goes as smart as a society takes it (McClure et al., 2008). In that, the functional values of education to the sedentary agricultural, mixed agricultural areas and pastoralist nomads could be different. It goes without saying that, education for the society through societal undertaking is the base for all forms of innovation in the 21st century societies. With respect to pastoralist nomadic society, the very lifestyle and equitability of educational provisions do not seem to be consonant (Jones, 2009). Pastoralists in Ethiopia are not immune to this pressure since they face challenges of economic pressure behind seasonal migration, which also levy heavy demand in terms of sustaining their children's education. Times pass, but the nomadic society members are seldom experiencing changes through education owing to large-scale interruption triggered by nomadic lifestyle.

Giving high emphasis to temporary gain through cattle rearing and leading the common life of passing from season to season is a group practice, which through passage of time can negatively affect the very socioeconomic base unless education supports in a functional manner (Shagari et al., 2013). So, this research focused on identifying and clarifying determinants and opportunities for educational resource conformity to curricular undertakings in pastoralist communities with the purpose to shape the educational resources for quality education among the pastoralist people of Ethiopia.

Three cases could be traced as rationales. One such a rationale is that, feasibility of education in the now and succeeding generation marks what not only a certain community but also the nation gains from. As far as a nation rightly invests on changes through education, it breaks the shell of poverty, idleness and social insecurity. The other point is that, educational provisions could be strengthened through practical effects. So, solving the society's problems in a sustainable manner can, in turn, enrich educational practices. In the third place, building the educational base of society helps to lay the ground for

the development of learning and education community with the capacity for pragmatic values of practices rather than mere superstitions (Pena & Galigao, 2025).

Providing a context-oriented education is the most essential but most demanding system (Putter-Smits et al., 2013). Perhaps, it can be viable through the involvement of the society as the base of change (Cromwell, 2006). Raising society members' awareness about the values of education can be one of the breakthrough mechanisms for the creation of good footing and success in education (Alexius, 2016).

In line with that, a study which assessed challenges of educational resource utilization in pastoralist communities through secondary education with specific reference to Maasai communities came up with the finding that, resources for formal education were given at a low rate due to mismatch between educational provisions in schools and the actual needs of the people (Alexius, 2016). Kibera (2013), in a study that focused on analysis of factors affecting provision of education for pastoralist children in mobile primary schools in Marsabit, Kenya, identified cases of preservice and in-service teacher education as a challenge to provision of mobile schooling backed up by generalist (conventional) provision, which hardly matched with the pastoralist livelihoods. The study also underlined shortage of water, demand for children's labor on household chores, and lower economic status of households to have been daunting challenges to educational resource arrangement and utilization pastoralist education. To that end, the studies so far held did not consider resource conformity in pastoralist livelihood education.

Oxfam (2005) presents the severity of mobility on school success in pastoralist areas by tracing the case in Eritrea and Touareg that, in terms of education, the mobility of nomads and pastoralists was a significant issue, which kept pastoralist and nomadic children away from attending a static school during the formal schedule. Yet, mobility being an inevitable matter of sustenance in pastoralist livelihoods, alternative mechanisms to keep schooling running may have become a breakthrough. Such an alternative, on its part, must be aligned with what the pastoralist people value. In that regard, Krätli and Dyer (2009), in the research on mobile pastoralism and education, stressed the fundamental problems of education with pastoral people to be in creating something they believe in, and something they can really participate in as their own, right from the beginning. Krätli and Dyer (2009) assert, by far, that challenges of pastoralist education lie in the understanding on the very expectation level about pastoralists' perceptions and expectations of formal education, nature of formal education in relation to their perceptions and experiences with aspects of educational provisions, mapping the conceptual terrains by analyzing key debates in relation to terms such as education, schooling and learning, that are often misleading, using innovative procedures and approaches for education for nomadic education worldwide.

Society by its very nature is the cradle of education since it embraces diverse practices which host individuals' roles. Krätli (2001) earmarks the paradox of pastoral society to exist in the perception that, they have low enrollment and success in school but strong life-skill to maintain their livelihoods in the drylands, performing with high level of individual and social commitment. What modern education does is to make functional choice among educational experiences such that, there could be possibilities of making experiences more pragmatic and less sterile, through culture-responsive provisions. In that regard, one of the centers of doubt among educational stakeholders remains to be nonmatching feature of educational provisions in schools to cultural bases (Ceka & Murati, 2016).

Mass investment on education is also of less emphasis as found out through different research works. This is so manifest in corridors of Africa as underlined in Alexius (2016) who stresses non-viability of formal education in Tanzania to the Massai society's needs to tackle stringency in school attendance and resultant dropout. Coupled with that, society has an inbuilt culture and traditions which should contribute for and be supported by

educational provisions gained through schooling, be it formal or non-formal. However, the extent to which educational resources are organized and utilized for the betterment of learning achievement and societal standard is the other sort of question (Kileli, 2013). Most often, practical conformity aspects seem to be nonaligned and alienated with reality on the ground in the society arena (Edem et al., 2024).

Society is diverse not only in location and culture but also educational needs. With pastoralist community in view, the educational need may be not only economic but also cultural transformation. Research has proved essentially that, pastoral households are still less likely to diversify their livelihoods, while semi-pastoral and agro-pastoral households keep livestock more as an additional insurance against failure in other livelihood activities such as farming. This indicates combining livestock production and farming has improved or at least constrained declines in livelihood outcomes (Tsegaye et al., 2013). So, inducing new ways of production or extending entrepreneurial skills may not suffice since culture is vaster than running small businesses. The way through to quality educational opportunity could be creating a sustainable cultural base which can certainly transform society's view of change as envisioned by the education sector. This cannot be successful through injection, nor through indoctrination but conviction (Adriansen, 1997). Such a conviction requires provision and utilization of diverse educational resources in a sustainable manner (Endalew Kufi, 2014).

2 Research problem

In Ethiopia, researches held in the context of pastoralist community denote misalignment of the education resource system to the livelihood situation of the people which, in turn, problematizes children's right to education, shortage in teachers' overall and subject-related preparations, pressure of traditional practices which is quite triggering for dropout and shortage of facilities (Ambisa, 2020; Ephrem, 2017; Guyo, 2014). Zeyin (2022) investigated pastoralist education in Ethiopia, and found out great mismatch between the livelihood, culture and seasonal demand of the community and the conventional educational arrangements. Gatdet (2024) investigated determinants of youth participation to formal education in Gambella, Itang, and came up with the findings that, low perceptions of education, seasonal mobility in search of water and pasture, style of parent occupation, low level of parent education, livestock holding size, distance to school, and insecurity significantly influenced participation in education. Berhanu (2017) held a similar investigation on children's participation in schooling and education in pastoralist woredas of Afar Region, and identified challenges in terms of supply-side and demand-side constraints. The supply-side constraints included inability to attract and retain qualified teachers, financial or budgetary backdrops, poor standard of school equipping and low perception of the community members on modern education. The demand-side constraints included dispersed settlements, parents' seeking of child labor, early marriage (for girls) and peer-pressure (Berhanu, 2017).

Keeping schools running during times of seasonal migration is the other point of concern. Youth society among pastoralist communities also desire life-improving and employable skills, changing the way of thinking by raising their knowledge levels, offering material improvement for schools, helping the education of the pastoral community rather than reaching in time of crisis, and improving pastoral-nomadic life standards through supply and strong setup of health and sanitation services (African Education Trust, 2007).

As seen from the above research works held prior to this study, there were different challenges and constraints on pastoralist-area education, which could be categorized under various determinants. In the researches so far held, the issue of educational resource conformity was not touched vividly. Determinants in educational resource arrangement

and use have not been assessed sufficiently as well. Hence, the current study investigated determinants and challenges of educational resource conformity for pastoralist-area schooling in Ethiopia, by taking selected sites in Oromia as case-centers. The succeeding key questions were formulated to guide the research:

1. How far do school locations conform with the pastoralist area location and living conditions?
2. How far do instructional resource arrangements conform with the cultural and economic context in the pastoralist areas for both the community members and their children?
3. What factors need foremost attention in order to make educational resources conforming with the pastoralist education for quality and depth in provision?

3 Objectives of the research

General: The research was carried out to identify conformity of instructional resource arrangements for educational provisions in pastoralist community settings of Oromia.

Specific objectives:

1. To substantiate locational conformity of educational resources for pastoralist society schooling;
2. To elucidate the instructional conformity of educational resource arrangements for pastoralist-area children's education;
3. To identify leading determinants of educational resource provision for pastoralist-area schooling.

4 Research methods

4.1 Research Purpose and variables (Issues)

With the purpose of unveiling context-sensitivity of education for Human resource development in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist areas of Oromia Regional State, the research looked into the locational, instructional and collaborative conformity issues related to educational resource provisions for educational services provided in pastoralist community settings. The major issues of concern were the viability of educational resources such as schools and learning environments, context-specificity and sensitivity of educational provisions, and context-friendly aspects of interventions made to tackle educational problems (Bascia, 2014). Overall, the research followed the school-context model, which stipulates that, the school climate, classrooms features and the external ecology outside schools affect educational provisions (Chua & Baildon, 2024).

4.2 Description of the study area

The study focuses on education in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist areas of Oromia, that is held among the largely livestock production and partly agricultural. Selected areas of the study included East Shewa (Fentalle), Eastern Bale, Guji, Borana and East and West Haerghe were targets of the study as they experienced pastoralist and semi-pastoralist livelihoods.

4.3 Research design

The research design selected for this study was descriptive survey with cross-sectional nature, which was preferred for its viability to denote range of conformity along with determinants on educational resource use in Pastoral area schooling (Olsen & George, 2004). Pivotal issues dealt with physical set up of schools, distance, provisions related to children's learning and the return of education for human resource development in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist areas. To the grand, the research touched upon survey of the interrelationship between possibilities of access and success in educational provisions as two inseparable verges in transforming the life of pastoralist society.

4.4 Data types and sources

Data for the study were collected from primary sources in both quantitative and qualitative forms, and (were) organized in the form of experiential testimony, stakeholder-reaction and customer-case analysis of educational intervention across programs in pastoralist areas. Experiential testimonies included the values community members and students as well as schools and offices attached to education with respect to accessibility, equity and sustainability of educational provisions. Customer-case analysis enclosed the expectation and observed achievements so far attained on the part of supporting agencies and host community, and the thought dimension they have had on the likely success and failure of educational programs in pastoralist areas. Tracer-survey of previous was also made on interventions regarding the role of government and non-government organizations, in private or through integrative efforts, for the betterment of pastoralist-area education, with special emphasis on determinant factors. Documents related to training given, agreements reached and achievements gained were also considered in the data collection.

4.5 Samples and sampling techniques

In order to determine sample population, first of all pastoralist clusters, schools and target population size were identified. Based on the identified population, the sample size formula given by Yamane (1973): $n = N / 1 + Ne^2$; where N constituted population size; e referred to error (0.05) with 95 percent and n represented sample size.

Samples for the research were drawn both randomly and purposively. Multi-stage cluster sampling technique, moving from a broad to a narrow sample horizon (Taherdoost, 2016) was used in order to be focused; in which case, pastoralist and semi-pastoralist districts of Oromia Regional State were clearly identified. The respondents to questionnaires were selected from purposively selected districts and randomly identified schools through stratified random-sampling. For the purpose of inclusiveness in data collection, first, sample schools were selected from primary and secondary levels of education. Based on the identified school samples, sample students, teachers/experts and family households were selected as per their local settlements and experiences through stratified random-sampling technique. Student samples were selected through stratified random-sampling on the basis of their grade levels as per their compositions and sex distributions. Samples among community members, teachers and education experts were also identified through purposive sampling technique as per their roles and experiences.

4.6 Instrumentation and validation

Data for the study were collected through questionnaires, observation checklist, focus-group discussion and interview. The instrumentation procedures was such that, first the tools were developed in English holding the pivotal questions and referent points; and, then, passed through expert reviews at seminars. Upon assuring unanimity among researchers, the research team shared the questions and developed the Afaan Oromoo version. The Afaan Oromoo version was looked into for final pertinence to the research pivot, and the task of production or duplication was accomplished before the field work for data collection. Chronbach's alpha reliability check was employed, and the reliability coefficient of good standard was registered ($r = 0.83$). The qualitative items were peer-reviewed by professionals of pertinent qualification, and all enrichments were made.

4.7 Procedures of data collection

Data for the research was collected through direct interaction with the participants. For that purpose, the researchers worked with trained assistants who were assigned to data collection. So, the researchers trained data collectors pre-hand, and then supervised the tracking of the data collection process. Data was collected in the order such that, first experiential testimonies were collected from sample offices and households through questionnaire; and then, documentary data was collected.

4.8 Procedures of data analysis

Data analysis followed the order of research questions and subsequent research data. The collected data were organized and presented in the form of a standard tabulation and interpreted in due accord. Accordingly, quantitative data were organized into descriptive form and their values were presented from frequencies. Qualitative data from semi-structured interview and FGD were also organized categorically as per the guiding questions and thematically analyzed.

5 Results and discussion

Data for this research were presented in frequency values in terms of percentage and, then, interpreted. First, quantitative data focusing on students' experiences were dealt with. Then, data related to parents' roles, experiences and contributions were presented and interpreted. On the basis of the interpretation, supplementary ideas were added from qualitative data through thematic categories in-depth explication. By and large, areal references were made use of in organizing the data for the purposes of focus and clarity.

5.1 Locational determinants of conformity in resource arrangement for schools

The opening question of the research dealt with locational determinants in terms of accessibility of schools in terms of time which focused on identifying length of time children spent while going to school and turning back home. Reference to home-school distance was made in relation to the essential feature of the favorability of the learning ecology

in addition to the in-school facilities (Alshumaimeri, 2023; Bascia, 2014). Even, school safety is weighed in terms of home-school distance which requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving policymakers, educators, parents, and law enforcement agencies (Os-gube et al., 2025). The issue of home-school distance was taken as a burning issue for the reality that, students' commuting to the schools was highly correlated with the amount of time they took to travel to school and from (Rodríguez-López, 2015). Boussauw et al. (2014) confirm also that, home-school distance matters much when it comes to school accessibility and related school attendance. The subsequent data were organized as in the succeeding table, and interpretations followed:

Table 1: School-home distance in time

Response Options	f	%
One hour	181	43
Two hours	31	7.4
Three hours and above	11	2.6
Uncertain	195	46.7
Total	418	100

From the data provided in table 1 above, it could be ascertained that, most of the students travelled one hour to reach their schools (181, 43%) whereas a considerable number of respondents indicated their taking two hours to reach schools (31, 7.4%), and only a few respondents asserted taking three hours to travel school-home (11, 2.6%). Perhaps, there were others who expressed the length of time to be diverse (195, 46.7%). The average time in terms of hours for children to travel to their schools and get home was found to be 2 hours and 30 minutes. So, to most of the students in the research horizon, home-school distance was not distinctively known.

Table 2: Problems Related to Home-School Distance

Response Options	f	%
Missing classes owing to coming late	148	31
Feeling tired while learning	92	94
Failure to complete home work	41	61
Others if any	9	20
Total	411	80

From the data in table 2 it could be plain that, children were missing classes being late to school, as indicated by 148 respondents (35.3%). A considerable number of respondents also denoted feeling tired while learning to have been the other challenge (92, 22.6%). Failure to complete homework (41, 10%) was also traced to be the other group of respondents. A relatively considerable number also marked diverse challenges that existed regarding time to and fro schools (90, 21.5%). In spite of the normality or average nature of home-school distance with variation in extent, there existed setbacks with respect to punctuality, tiredness and failure to complete homework. In relation to the home-school distance, a research held in Morocco (Bammou et al., 2024) revealed a very huge impact of the time range on children's feelings of tardiness, absenteeism and weak performances. In the research case above, as well, missing classes owing to coming late was highly pronounced.

5.2 Programmatic arrangements to boost school attendance

The other portion dealt with supports due students at the time of challenges related to distance between home and school. Students were asked to indicate types of arrangements made by schools in order to help them.

Table 3: Supports for students as related to home-school distance

Response Options	f	%
Making some adjustments on the class entry time	95	23
Allowing students entry as they may	92	22
Conditions for homework and classroom completion	144	34
Arrangement of special tutorials and study time	87	21
Total	411	100

Data in table 3 above denotes that, majority of the students (144, 34%) evidenced getting adjusted conditions for the completion of homework and class work through in-school arrangements. A considerably higher response from data-providers 25, 23% indicated adjustment of class entry time to have been in place. higher number of respondents (92, 22%) confirmed their getting arranged entry time even when being late. Arrangement of special tutorials and study time constituted the other set of responses (87, 21%). The overall reflection was that, efforts were duly made to help school-children manage homework and classroom completion as scheduled; yet, there was evidenced barrier related to family expectations on children's education and life-style of the people. With respect to family expectations, conditions were such that, parents tilted towards using children's labor at home since the entire life of the pastoralist community demanded seasonal migration in search of pasture and water. So, the conventional system of lesson-delivery which works well for the rest agrarian communities does not serve the pastoralist community school system.

5.3 Instructional (pedagogic) conformity of resources for pastoralist-area education

5.3.1 School-Based Arrangements

In an ideal learning-teaching atmosphere, school-based arrangements matter as well as programmatic schema. In this regard, students' seating conditions were surveyed as they pertained to free physical setup and conducive learning in the classroom. For that purpose, students were asked to reflect on seat-arrangements and their responses appeared as in the table:

Table 4: Classroom seating conditions

Response Options	f	%
One for two	51	43
One desk for three	243	58
One desk for four	39	7
Conditionally diverse arrangements	82	40
Total	411	80

As noted in table 4 above, majority of the students' ascertained seating condition to have taken the ratio of one desk for three (243, 58%). Conditionally diverse arrangements on students' classroom seating arrangements were also evidenced in considerably higher rate of responses (84, 20%). Some of the responses also witnessed desks to have been arranged each for two students. Irrespective of the classroom composition and nature of desks, that rate of witnessed distribution would be very fine, apart from the existence of other different seating arrangements (37, 9%). The overall implication was that, seating conditions across schools did not attract a uniform reflection on the part of the students. The researcher's very observation also revealed that, in some of the classrooms, there were stuffy arrangements.

5.3.2 Classroom composition in terms of size

This part of the research referred to the classroom composition of students in terms of class-size, not otherwise. In that regard, the succeeding data were witnessed by students.

Table 5: Class-size condition

Response Options	f	%
25 students per section	168	41
30 students per section	51	12
40 and above per section	199	47
Total	418	100

The students' responses indicated the classroom-size to have been 25 as witnessed by higher number of respondents (168, 41%). A class-size of 30 (51, 12%) and of 40 and above (199, 47%) were also witnessed. So, majority of the responses obtained a large portion denoting the classroom composition to be 40 students and above. Wadesango et al. (2017) ascertain in this regard that, even in the normal condition, the class-size should be as low as 30. They also underline a large class to be nonconductive to cater to individual differences. They also found marking and provision of adequate learning materials to be the major constraint in large class sizes. Supervision in general and discipline were also indicated to have perplexing in most large class sizes. In that regard, pastoralist-area schools need to get some adjustments at policy level with regard to distributive role-assumption.

5.3.3 Textbook distribution

The other point of concern on the part of students' responses was textbook distribution, which was asserted to have had the succeeding form.

Table 6: Reaction to textbook distribution

Response Options	f	%
One textbook for two students	149	62
One textbook for three	27	9
One textbook for four and above	38	4
Diverse as per grade-levels	136	93
Total	411	80

From data in table 6 above, it could be plain that, the textbook distribution was with the ratio of 1:2, with the workable implication for the majority denoting one textbook to be shared between two students (192, 46%). Perhaps, other forms of distribution were witnessed to have existed as 1:3 ratio (29, 7%), and 1:4 ratio (34, 8%). So, though the highest rate of response tilted to 1:2 ratio, a considerable rate denoted one textbook to have been shared among three or more students. The researcher's very observation and discussion with teachers notified that, diverse textbook distributions existed across different schools, especially in rural schools. That was a vivid indicator of needs for further supplies. Whereas it would be a different issue to state the very pertinence of text-contents to the life-experiences of the pastoralist community, how textbooks were distributed among the students across schools mattered considerably. The availability, accessibility and usability of different readers also matters with regard to alternative working materials.

5.3.4 Chalkboard feature

Though it could be more vital to observe chalkboard features directly in order to signify the standards to which it was used, it became relatively essential to obtain information about students' reaction. The point was essentially stressed in line with Alokuk (2018) who asserts blackboard to be a very useful learning arrangement that promotes pedagogical gain (on the teacher's side) and constructivist perspectives (on the students' sides). Blackboard also provides collaborative (team-spirit) and user-friendly environment (self-regulatory learning) for teaching-learning in terms of communication, assessment, and over all information management system. Proper use of the blackboard could also boost higher interactivity that can, in turn, lead to higher learner engagement basically impacting positively on better learning outcome and pedagogical gain. So, it became very essential to substantiate how students considered the features of chalkboards in their classrooms. The subsequent question and responses so far provided were stated as under:

Table 7: Students' reactions to the chalkboard features

Response Options	f	%
Wide and clear	134	44.44
Small and worn	7	17.8
Wide but worn	149	77.2
Total	410	80

From the data presented in table 7 above, chalkboards were witnessed to have had wide size but worn out surfaces in majority of the cases (197, 47.2%). A relatively higher rate of responses also denoted chalkboards to have had wide and clear or plain features (144, 34.4%). Cases in which chalkboards were small and worn out were reported though with a minimum rate of response (77, 18.4%). Related assertions through observation by experts and the researcher brought evidences such that, chalkboards were worn and unsuitable for lessons. The overriding implication was that, the nature or feature of chalkboards was different at diverse conditions, and that, there was need to revisit each and every school and classrooms for smooth teaching and learning to be effected effectively.

5.3.5 Instructional-technology supports

This part dealt with instructional technology and learning support provision and use. Students were asked to provide their own experiential testimonies on the availability,

accessibility and sufficiency of the instructional technology used in their schools, and the data was presented as under:

Table 8: Conditions of instructional technology arrangements

Response Options	f	%
Education radio-program	14	9
Audio-Visual support	78	19
Visual supports	132	06
Models	92	43
Total	411	80

From data set in table 8 above, it could be plain that, in majority of the cases, pictures (198, 47%), audiovisual learning supports were used. Visual technology supports were also used as evidenced by some of the responses (126, 30%). Models were used in a limited extent (94, 23%). With the need to keep conditions at equilibrium and realize sufficient provision for different learning styles, it would be necessary to give more emphasis to the even distribution for instructional supports with due breadth and depth considered. More important, the balance between availability and accessibility of resources must be ascertained as is true for the case in usability. Further attention is also required with respect to consistency in the system of using instructional technology and learning support modalities (Kilbane & Milman, 2025).

5.3.6 Security of the travel condition from home to school

Regarding travel security from home to school, data indicated the succeeding features to have existed.

Table 9: Peacefulness of the travel situation

Response Options	f	%
Peaceful and favorable	147	12
Destabilized and unfavorable	92	94
Based on the variation on conditions	134	57
Total	411	80

From the data in table 9 above, it could be inferred that, the learning atmosphere through which children moved to and from school was peaceful and favorable, as the students reacted (172, 41%). However, there were also reflections which underlined variation or stability condition where peaceful atmosphere was easily disrupted on conditions (99, 24%). Quite considerably, the research data denoted variation in stability condition, which spontaneously affected smooth undertaking of lessons (142, 35%).

5.4 Lifestyle conformity of resources in pastoralist

5.4.1 *Pertinence of Learning Skills to Community Arena*

Table 10: Relatedness of learning skills with community-life and practices

Response Options	f	%
Well-integrated and favorable	82	71
Non-matching	132	19
It all depends on the condition	240	82
Total	411	0

From the data set in table 10 above, it could be ascertained that, skills learned at school had relatedness to community's life variably based on conditions to the most (202, 48%). Perhaps, cases where learning skills had mismatch with life styles (129, 31%) were also manifest. Conditions where learning skills were well-integrated and favorably set to match with community-life styles were also reflected, though with minimal rate (87, 21%). With respect to efficiency of instructional resources at schools, most of the families denoted resource conformity to be lower or less efficient (81, 40.5%). A relatively higher rate of responses (74, 37%) also denoted efficiency of instructional resources to be very low, and least rate asserted it to be high (27, 13.5%). The remaining respondents were uncertain about instructional resource efficiency. Though responses were diverse across family layouts, it could be ascertained from the gist that, instructional resources need to be looked into from the standpoint of supply, distribution, use and improvement.

With respect to the intersection and matching feature of children's education to the pastoralist livelihoods, majority of the respondents (70, 35%) denoted educational skills provided at schools to be unrelated to their practices at home. A higher and substantially considerable rate of response was also given that, educational skills were somewhat related to livelihoods in pastoralist settings (65, 32.5%). Responses that denoted educational skills to be well-integrated with community practices in pastoralist settings constituted low rate (39, 19.5%). While further data must be referred to in order to substantiate and check the pertinence of the provided responses through qualitative explication, it could be ascertained that, attention must be given to the relatedness and responsiveness of lessons provided for pastoralist-area livelihoods to be dealt with.

The overriding implication comes that, in order to bring about a unanimous situation where school-provisions could be responsive to community-life style, further envisage needs to be made locally across the schools and community-arena. More pivotally, practices at school, be it curricular, co-curricular or extra-curricular; need to be devised as per the lifestyle students are in across the pastoralist community. Supportive evidences are there regarding skill-conformity to the life style of society, which evoke that, where there is mismatch between educational resource provisions and societal lifestyle, the turn over effect would be stringent decline in using skills and daunting failure in all aspects (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). Altan (2020) asserts also that, education has marking effects on the present and future of society in a progressive manner. With that, every educational provision, whatever the situation may be, needs to conform with the lifestyle of the present society in order to evoke further changes and development. In the research case above, however, there were differences among the pastoralist society closets in relating educational provisions with the lifestyle of the society. That would beget non-conformity with the lifestyle, thereby missing the indigenous ground to grow and develop.

Data from focus-group discussion with family households denoted that, schools were diversely distributed and not suitable for their children's travel to and from school:

Our children walk for hours to reach school. Added to that, the climatic con-

dition is unfavorable for walking. It is more so for managing school activities. We send our children to school as an urge. Otherwise, the supply of resources in and out of school does not encourage us to. Not only distance but also fear for children's security is also perplexing. (FGD, Fentalle, 2023).

From the qualitative reflection above, the physical location of schools as well as the climatic distribution and supply of water and transport greatly affects children's travel to school and learning in an effective manner. Taken the overall ecology and school environment as a vast resource for pastoralist area children's education, it can be inferred that, attention given to the evenness of the school setup did not accommodate the rising demand for schools.

With respect to community members' working with schools, in Fentalle 76 (38%) of the respondents evidenced having active roles in providing school resources whereas data from East Bale (173, 84%) ascertained community-members to have paid only occasional visits to schools whereas 31 (15%) asserted working ties with schools to have been non-existent. In the case of West Harerge, majority of the respondents marked their not having any nexus with schools at large whereas community-school nexus was marked to have been occasional in Bule-Hora (134, 69%). So, only temporary visits and provisions were evidenced to have been in place at large. In a like manner, addressing issues related to learning to community members was indicated to have been held once in a semester by majority (95, 46%) of the respondents. With respect to community members' allocation of resources and working in close contact with schools, data from interview and focus-group discussion showed that, members of the community in pastoralist closets believed in representation of heads who could communicate with school heads and officers for possible supplies and contacts. That frame of communication heightened the communication gap as asserted below:

We know that, schools are very much necessary for our children. For that purpose, we have programmed contacts with education offices and support renderers seasonally. We do so through people represented to visit the offices and school centers upon request, and contact us back for support or any other action. (FGD, Guji, 2023).

From the data obtained through interview and focus group discussion, it could be clear that, the society members' closeness to school through support and solving of problems was handled in a representational and mediator-role. On the one hand, the existence of triangulated means of contact with offices, support providers and schools was an advantage for both the educational and societal benefits. On the other, however, absence of systematic and progressive exchange backup by very high reliance on individual representatives was a very huge rift in sharing information for both resource distribution and utilization in pastoralist areas. According to Ambissa (2022), in pastoralist livelihood areas, conventional schooling system is hard to manage. Herder to do is sedentary life situation as the nomadic life both a resource-base and a point of identity. So, the matter of working in close contact with the community in pastoralist livelihood is the issue of working and reaching them by giving top priority to considering their life perspectives. Working in close contact with the pastoralist area community could help the incorporation of indigenous knowledge of the pastoralist society in the curricula (2022).

Coming to means of verifying students' learning standards, majority of the respondents (104, 51%) denoted lesson-based examination or classroom to have taken the majority response rate from Medele-Welabu. Majority (151, 78%) of the respondents from Bule-Hora also marked students' learning standard to be average at large. In the case of West Harerghe, a similar response was marked (68, 73%) by majority of the respondents.

With regard to students' completion of the school-year, the highest rate of responses (89, 43%) indicated student turnover to have been higher in the second semester while quite a considerable rate of responses (67, 33%) denoted high rate of dropout to have been in the first semester. Perhaps, with respect to rate of dropout, only a few students were witnessed to have left schools (29, 21%). Points of uncertainty about dropout were also witnessed by some respondents (21, 10%). To the majority, then, the second semester was noted have bearing feature of dropout for students. That needs concerted action as to why they dropout and what to devise to secure their attendance.

6 Discussion

The succeeding discussion was made on the above analysis guided by the research questions focusing on locational conformity of educational resources for pastoralist society schooling; instructional conformity of educational resource arrangements for pastoralist-area children's education, and leading determinants of educational resource provision for pastoralist-area schooling.

6.1 Regarding Locational Conformity of Educational Resources

The stakeholders reflected schooling in pastoralist areas to have diverse nature of access for children in terms of distance, resource distribution and supportive services. Stakeholders also underlined school-community ties to have been temporary and inconsistent. Experiential reflections denoted somehow user-friendly conditions to have existed with respect to school distribution in some sample areas such as Fentalle whereas the distribution was rarely so in Harerghe, Guji and Borana. Varying security cases were also reported at all places with different degrees of affection.

6.2 Instructional Conformity of Educational Resources

By instructional resources is meant resources in the school compound that are used for the facilitation of teaching and learning overall. These include, but not limited to, physical arrangements, curricular arrangements and collaborative interventions for the realization of the students' learning.

In that regard, services due students in terms of classroom facilities, playground, shades, health services and water ranged between existence in the largest extent and non-existent across the sample research areas. Collaborative interventions to make education responsive to effective learning in pastoralist areas were also temporary and weak as evidenced in the data provided. Conditions were that, students' school completion rate dropped as they progressed in stages from primary level to higher levels.

Striking conditions were manifest in terms of dropout due to seasonal family mobility, especially in the second-semester; parents' low attention to invest on children's education; traditional practices of early marriage and labor-seeking; insecurity of the learning environment; non-alignment of curricula and educational resources to the pastoralist livelihoods.

7 Summary of findings

On the bases of the interpreted data and analysis made, the following sets of summary have been made:

7.1 Regarding Overall Contextual Conformity

With regard to locational conformity of educational resources, access to schools was found to be diverse across the target schools, for which case reconsideration of the distance between home and schools appears to be essentially timely. For instance, in Fentalle, most of the students and parents underlined home-school distance to be sound. But, in West Harerghe, it was found to be very long. Access in terms of resources was also varied across target areas since textbooks, seating conditions, water supply, instructional supports and technology as well as feeding conditions was not at the proper rate to ensure equity in the real status.

In-school instructional backups such as instructional media and technology were also evidenced to have been insufficient and below standard. In that case, educational supports were reported to have been worn in spite of having the right size. Schools were also said to have faced shortage of water and shade. Access in terms of physical, mental and emotional set-ups was not to the standard to support effective learning as well.

7.2 Regarding Instructional Provision and Follow-up

Regarding instructional provision and follow-up, a contextual base has not been laid for teachers to act in the pastoralist community as far existing trends are concerned. In such areas where parents highly demand children's labor and school-children are forced to undergo dropout a strategic teacher skill could be necessary in order to serve the community with special induction about education and how that can serve existing needs and future envisage for the people. All the data referred to such initiatives have been overrun. The overall instructional arrangement with its leadership roles appears to be like an inverted pyramid where performance follow-up and reports serve reports to the top offices rather than serving the grassroots needs and answering reality-based questions. In that case, students' not comprehending what the future has in store for them in terms of life-skills, knowledge-base and further progresses to come, and parents' lacking understanding about the value of education for their livelihood play striking roles on human resource development in pastoralist areas. Above all, non-pertinence of sedentary school setup for students' progressive learning remains to be a persistent question.

7.3 Regarding the creation of secure learning environment

Education, largely understood as the basing of the current practices on the past achievements, and laying the future on the existing achievements, highly requires the co-action of different actors who must be proactive and forward-looking. Such a futuristic procedure partly demands preparation on the part of the community and partly the school system. At this point, the interrelationship between the community and the school in creating a secure learning environment still lags behind the phenomena bearing insecurity. In the data, non-anticipated disputes in the form of intergroup and intra-group conflict and subsequent violence were reported. Both causes and effects were anticipated to have emanating from within the community, not otherwise. Since it is hard to invest on education and violence equally to reach innovative changes, the foundation for secure

learning environment becomes essential. That is what the gist of the condensed findings reveals.

The other version of insecurity, perhaps invisibly devastating, is the persistent exposure of school children to early marriage. In most of the pastoralist livelihoods, women and girls bear the caring role and responsibility which includes handling all family chores, caring for children and old members of the community, looking after the cattle, and doing other related businesses. Getting into family responsibilities at the early age implies a heavy loss of productive taskforce which could, ultimately, be pejorative for the community. Although banning cultural practices of intimacy through marriage is both unethical and non-working, the research reveals the necessity to provide continuous education and follow-up, still, on harmful traditional practices, especially on early marriage.

7.4 Responsiveness of educational practices for the pastoralist livelihood

This focused on the pertinence of the curricula and overall instructional practices to the pastoralist livelihoods in terms of knowing the learning and living environment, learning from the pastoralist hearth and outer environment, and living within the pastoralist environment with duly productive. Reactions from different corridors revealed the nonalignment of educational practices at schools with livelihoods from the lower to the higher levels. Perhaps, this could be common to all environments else but the case of pastoralist community becomes crucially demanding as it relates to bringing up the generation the way it can uptake, overtake and improve livelihoods in a modern way. For that purpose, educational responsiveness remains to be inevitable.

7.5 Institutional collaboration and cooperation among key stakeholders

From the provided data and related analysis, it was evidenced that, institutional cooperation was minimal though there were some forms of collaboration. To elaborate, collaborative actions were responsibly held in order to have contributions to build a scheme or solve problems through a one-shot system. Cooperation surpasses that as it needs planned and progressive role-taking in the school as a partner which could similarly be held on the part of the schools and the overall educational institutions in the pastoralist areas. For instance, TVET institutions in the pastoralist areas could have roles in preparing children with hands-on skills for improved business-making in the existing environment. Health extension workers could provide a club-based induction, which could help the children as well as the families to learn more about self and environmental health at prevention and protection levels. Several other cooperative induction processes could be used but the networking system does not seem to have been based firmly.

8 Conclusions

On the bases of the discussion above, the following conclusions were drawn. In the first place, the physical setups of the schools were not pertinent with the pastoralist community livelihoods as they were very much sedentary. Though having fixed schools could save unwarranted mobility and destabilization in lesson provision, some means of keeping lessons running during community-migration should have been strongly emphasized. For the successiveness of lesson-provision, community-based teacher induction could have also been necessary at the proactive level. That part, still, remains to be the

missing link in education. Materials, environmental resources and education strategies were not well-organized to support progressive learning as well. The trend of investing on education first; and, then, awaiting the return from education is not well thought over as well.

In that sense, educational provision in pastoralist areas sees minimal resource conformity due to shortage in context-oriented provision. Conditions through which children could grow exercising educational skills for better employability and economic use are not well-established by far. For instance, nature of schools, schedules, lesson provision-modes and follow-up techniques are not vividly related to the livelihood situations of the community. A pastoralist-responsive curriculum, teacher education and instructional policy also lack.

From the standpoint of creating a secure learning environment, holistic action to regulate peaceful and guard safety and continuity of learning was not well-ascertained. In reality, learning and living are interrelated, and where the living conditions face insecurity, learning faces shortage of breath. Though such a case could be a different point in research, working on the disputes and violence at within clan and between clan levels was found to be minimal in effect. Moreover, harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and using child labor for family chores were core issues of concern.

To tackle the challenges and come up with progressive solutions, cooperative networks among educational stakeholders could have been very essential. Yet, in the pastoralist livelihoods, such chains of cooperation and networking were developed to the standard.

Developmental and responsive interventions to make classroom lessons match in with community livelihoods were also rare in pastoralist livelihoods as far as the current research is concerned.

9 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn above, the succeeding recommendations were given:

1. Educational resources organized for schooling and education in pastoralist areas need to be related to the life demands and expectations of the society and the living conditions thereof. For that purpose, ministry of education, region education bureau and the pastoralist area development coordination centers should revise the pastoralist-area education policies and directives for context-friendly educational provision to be realized.
2. Schools and educational coordination centers should work on aligning school time and programmatic arrangements in line with the lifestyle of the pastoralist community.
3. Cognizant of the need to create a student-friendly and futuristic progress through generations of learning, educational resource selection, organization and utilization should be related to the livelihood of the community from which student join schools. So, policy developers, curriculum designers, educational experts and teachers should devise means of
4. Above all, attention must, highly, be given to the incorporation of the pastoralist society's indigenous knowledge assets into the curricula for the purpose of making the educational resources user-friendly, context-intimate and the educational system participatory. So, educational spearheads (policy designers, curriculum developers, officers and support renderers) need to have integrally sharp contacts for the processing and incorporation of indigenous knowledge and experiences of the pastoralist community in to the school curricula.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Research Review Article

Evolution of leadership theories and their implications for educational settings

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of leadership theories and their implications for educational settings through qualitative content analysis, adhering to a naturalistic paradigm. Leadership theories have evolved significantly, beginning with traditional approaches like the Great Man Theory, which posits that leaders are born with innate qualities. The Trait Theory suggests that leadership traits may be inherent or developed, while the Behavioral Theory emphasizes leaders' actions over their attributes. Later, contingency and situational theories highlighted the role of environmental factors, emphasizing adaptability. Modern perspectives focus on the interactions among leaders, followers, and contexts, giving rise to shared, collective, collaborative, and inclusive leadership theories. Complexity leadership further expanded the focus to encompass entire organizational systems. This theoretical evolution has profoundly influenced educational leadership, shifting the focus from individual traits to recognizing leadership as a dynamic social process. Educational leaders are now encouraged to prioritize collaboration, shared decision-making, and empowerment. Transformational, servant, and distributed leadership approaches emphasize building strong relationships, fostering a positive school culture, and engaging teachers and staff in decision-making processes. Given the complexities of modern educational systems, no single theory can fully address all leadership challenges. Thus, effective leaders must adapt and integrate multiple theories to align with their institution's goals and needs, fostering innovation and delivering quality education.

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Collaboration;
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1 Introduction

The evolution of leadership theories represents a comprehensive examination of leadership trends across various contexts and theoretical foundations, with profound implications for educational settings. Leadership, as a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon, has consistently captured the interest of researchers worldwide. Scholarly studies reveal diverse theoretical approaches to understanding leadership, ranging from trait and behavior-based models to relational and information-processing perspectives (Northouse, 2016). Leadership has been extensively studied using both qualitative and quantitative methods across various contexts, including small groups, therapeutic groups, and large organizations (Benmira, 2021).

Despite extensive research, leadership continues to generate captivating debates due to its complexity. Some researchers conceptualize leadership as a trait or behavior, while

others adopt process-oriented or relational perspectives. Leadership theories in education often originate from business management concepts but are adapted to meet the unique demands of school environments, where factors such as size, demographics, and context influence the type of leadership required.

This seminar project explores the evolution of leadership theories, beginning with early models focused on traits and behaviors. It examines general and contingency theories in educational leadership, instructional leadership approaches, and the emergence of charismatic-transformational leadership within school-based management. The study also addresses challenges posed by logical empiricism (Jude et al., 2022) and explores contemporary models, including distributed leadership and postmodern perspectives (Maslanka, 2004).

The study employs a literature review methodology, synthesizing a wide range of sources, including books, journals, and reports. Data collection involved rigorous searches of reputable databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Sage Journals to identify relevant literature on educational leadership theories and their application.

Using qualitative content analysis within a naturalistic paradigm, the researchers identified key concepts, coded data, and synthesized findings. The analysis was guided by existing research frameworks, integrating data that aligned with these frameworks and insights that provided alternative perspectives.

This approach offers a detailed narrative of the progression and application of leadership theories over time, providing valuable insights into their influence on educational practices. By examining the historical development of leadership theories, this paper seeks to deepen the understanding of their relevance and applicability in educational contexts, contributing to education policy discourse and advancing effective leadership in education.

2 Literature review

2.1 Concepts of leadership theories

A theory is a principle or set of principles that explains the relationship between two or more observable facts or events. Leadership theories are schools of thought developed to explain how and why certain individuals become leaders. The evolution of leadership theories signifies an ever-changing landscape of understanding and applying leadership. Over time, these theories have adapted to incorporate novel research findings, respond to societal shifts, and align with emerging trends (Benmira, 2021). The scientific study of leadership traces back to the pioneering work of Max Weber (1864-1920), a founding figure in sociology. A comprehensive review by Stogdill (1974) categorized leadership studies into various frameworks that encapsulate the essence of leadership research in the 20th century (Homer, 1997). Leadership theories generally reflect diverse approaches, with some emphasizing traits and qualities, while others focus on behaviors, influence, or situational factors that contribute to effective leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Educational leadership theories, often adapted from business management concepts, continue to evolve through interdisciplinary research. Analyzing the evolution of these theories offers valuable insights into their historical development, cultural influences, and effectiveness in fostering positive change. By understanding and comparing various leadership theories, educators can identify leadership styles best suited to address specific needs.

2.2 Historical development of educational leadership theories

The evolution of educational leadership theories reflects changes in understanding and practices within the educational field. Since the 1970s, educational leadership theories, primarily rooted in the United States, have drawn heavily from management principles in industry and commerce (Hunt et al., 2019; Jude et al., 2022). These frameworks have continued to evolve, incorporating interdisciplinary ideas and models that remain dynamic and open to further development.

Different perspectives on leadership have emerged, distinguishing leaders from non-leaders based on various characteristics. The progression from the Great Man Theory to Trait Theory, Behavioral Theory, Contingency Theory, and Transactional-Transformational Theory highlights the historical trajectory of leadership theories (Halaychik, 2010; Khan et al., 2017; Maslanka, 2004).

This paper examines the evolution of leadership theories in three distinct phases. The first phase focuses on early theories centered on traits and behaviors. The second phase explores general and contingency theories in education, along with instructional leadership models. The third phase delves into the contemporary era of leadership theories, encompassing distributed, transformational, and postmodern approaches.

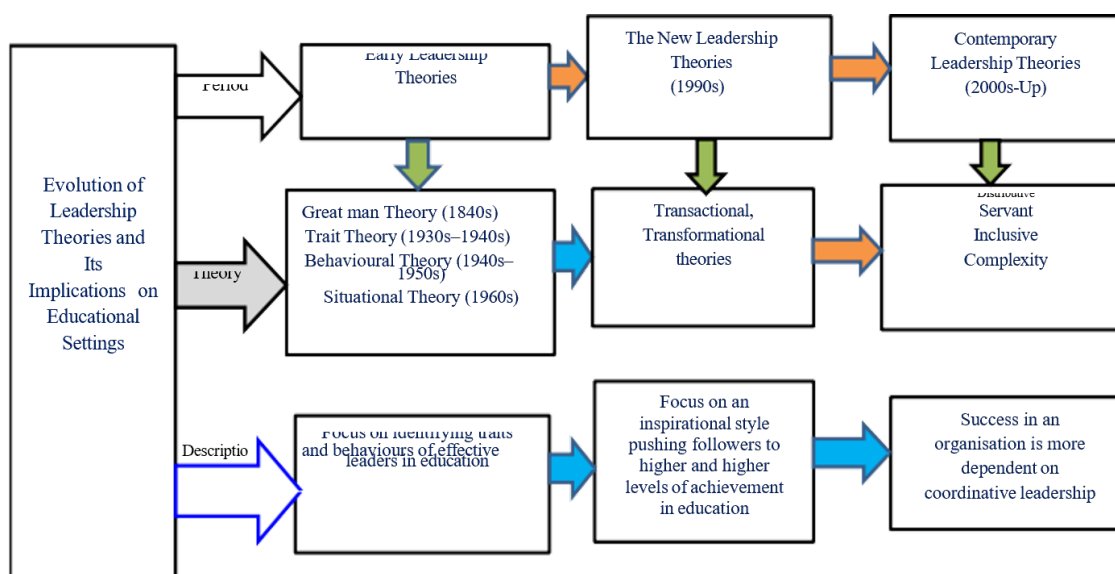


Figure 1: Evolution of Leadership Theories

Source: Adapted from Benmira (2021) and Maslanka (2004).

2.3 Early leadership theories (1930s-1980s): from control to influence

Between 1900 and 1929, leadership was primarily defined as centralized control, where the leader imposed their will on followers to gain obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation. However, by the 1930s, the concept of leadership began to shift toward viewing it as influence rather than mere control. Leadership was now understood as a dynamic interaction between a leader's personality traits and the characteristics of the group, recognizing that leadership could be shaped by both the leader and the followers. In the 1940s, a group-oriented approach emerged, defining leadership as the behavior of an

individual directing group activities. This new understanding distinguished leadership through persuasion from coercion, laying the groundwork for the Great Man and Trait theories, which dominated leadership thinking during this era.

2.4 Great man theory (1940s)

The Great Man Theory, proposed by Thomas Carlyle in the 1840s, posited that leaders are born with innate qualities that make them uniquely capable of leading. According to this theory, leadership cannot be learned or acquired; it is an inherent gift. Historical figures such as Julius Caesar, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, and Napoleon Bonaparte were often cited as examples of "great men" who possessed these exceptional traits. During the 19th century, research focused heavily on identifying the personality traits and other qualities of effective leaders, aligning with the core tenets of the Great Man Theory. This perspective framed leadership as the domain of rare individuals born with the ability to lead and shape history.

However, as the understanding of leadership evolved, criticisms of the theory emerged. Modern research increasingly recognized that leadership could be cultivated through education, training, and experience. This shift broadened the scope of leadership development, acknowledging that while some individuals may have natural leadership tendencies, others can acquire these skills through effort and practice.

The Great Man Theory has several strengths, including its recognition of exceptional individuals and its celebration of the achievements of remarkable leaders. It also emphasizes the inherent diversity in human capabilities, encouraging the appreciation of unique strengths. Moreover, it promotes the belief in the potential of extraordinary individuals to enact positive change. However, the theory has faced several criticisms. First, it lacks scientific evidence and is not empirically validated. Second, its male-centric focus historically excluded women and overlooked diversity in leadership. Lastly, it overemphasizes innate traits while neglecting the influence of societal factors and the potential for skill development.

In terms of educational implications, the Great Man Theory's emphasis on innate qualities has led to the identification and nurturing of leadership potential in students. However, its limitations highlight the importance of fostering collaborative, critical thinking, and empathetic skills to address the diverse challenges of modern society.

2.5 Trait theory (1940s)

Ralph M. Stogdill in the late 1940s, aimed to identify specific personal characteristics that distinguish effective leaders. Unlike the Great Man Theory, Trait Theory acknowledges that leadership traits can be inherent or developed through training and practice. The theory proposed that qualities such as high energy, integrity, expertise, intelligence, and confidence are crucial for effective leadership (Johns & Moser, 1989). By outlining these traits, the model sought to define common characteristics of successful leaders across various contexts (Benmira, 2021).

One of the strengths of Trait Theory is that it is supported by decades of empirical research, providing credibility and offering benchmarks for identifying and evaluating leadership potential. It encourages self-development, helping leaders identify their strengths and weaknesses, and offers practical applications for organizations in selecting and grooming potential leaders. However, the theory has also faced significant criticisms. First, it neglects the context in which leadership occurs, focusing solely on individual traits and

ignoring the role of followers and situational factors. Additionally, it fails to identify universal traits applicable to all leadership contexts, and provides limited guidance on how to develop leadership skills. Furthermore, the theory places undue emphasis on physical traits like appearance, which may not be universally relevant.

In educational settings, Trait Theory has several implications. It is useful for identifying and selecting educational leaders by assessing their traits and leadership potential. It also helps teachers recognize students with leadership qualities and develop those skills for future roles. Moreover, it encourages self-improvement among educational leaders, motivating them to evaluate and develop their leadership abilities.

2.6 Modern perspectives

While Trait Theory contributed to understanding the role of personality in leadership, modern leadership models now underscore the importance of integrating situational and relational factors to gain a more holistic view of leadership. In summary, the early leadership theories of the 1930s-1980s laid a foundational framework for modern leadership studies. The Great Man Theory emphasized innate leadership qualities but was criticized for its exclusivity and neglect of situational factors. Trait Theory built on this by identifying specific traits associated with effective leadership and acknowledging that these traits could be developed. Together, these theories highlight the multifaceted nature of leadership and paved the way for more comprehensive models that integrate individual traits, behaviors, and contextual dynamics.

2.7 Behavioral theory (1940s-1950s)

Behavioral Theory focuses on the actions of leaders rather than their inherent traits. Unlike Trait Theory, which focuses on inherent qualities, Behavioral Theory shifted the focus to the actions and behaviors exhibited by leaders. This theory suggests that leadership is largely a learned skill rather than an innate quality, and effective leadership behaviors can be cultivated through training and development (Northouse, 2016). It emphasizes what leaders do, rather than who they are, but does not extensively account for situational or environmental factors that influence leadership (Benmira, 2021). One prominent model derived from Behavioral Theory is the Managerial Grid developed by Blake and Mouton (1985), which posits that great leaders are made, not born. The theory further suggests that leadership behaviors can be cultivated in the right environment through proper training. Research from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan led to the identification of two broad categories of leadership behaviors: task-oriented behaviors, often referred to as initiating structure, and people-oriented behaviors, known as consideration. Task-oriented behaviors involve structuring roles and providing specific instructions to enhance group performance, while people-oriented behaviors involve showing concern for employees' well-being and treating them with respect.

The strengths of the Behavioral Theory lie in its ability to shift leadership research from innate traits to observable actions, broadening the understanding of leadership. It also provides a valuable framework for leaders to assess and improve their leadership behaviors, allowing for a balance between task-oriented and relationship-oriented actions. In educational settings, this theory has significant implications. It suggests that school leaders, such as principals, should be mindful of their behaviors and how they interact with students, teachers, and staff. Furthermore, it promotes the idea that leadership skills can be developed through training, workshops, and mentoring, enhancing the leadership abilities of educators. Additionally, the theory emphasizes the importance of creating positive, motivating environments that inspire both students and teachers. Leaders are

encouraged to seek continuous feedback and reflect on their practices to foster a culture of improvement.

However, the Behavioral Theory has faced criticism for its lack of consistent research linking specific leadership behaviors to performance outcomes such as morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. Furthermore, the theory does not identify a universal leadership style that works in all situations. While it suggests that the “high-high” style—characterized by high task and high relationship behaviors—is most effective, research has not consistently supported this claim. The effectiveness of this style may vary depending on the specific context and situation (Northouse, 2016).

2.8 Situational theories (1960s)

Situational Leadership Theory emphasizes that effective leadership depends on the specific context in which it is applied (Khattak et al., 2023). This theory advocates for leaders to tailor their approach based on the unique circumstances of their followers, arguing that there is no one-size-fits-all leadership style. It suggests that a leader must assess the readiness and competence of their followers before adapting their leadership style to meet the needs of the situation (Northouse, 2016). The theory identifies four main leadership styles: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Directing involves closely supervising followers with clear instructions, coaching provides guidance while allowing followers to contribute, supporting focuses on building relationships and offering encouragement, and delegating grants followers autonomy and decision-making power. Each of these styles is best suited to different levels of follower competence and commitment, which may vary depending on the task or situation (Khattak et al., 2023; Maisyaroh et al., 2019).

One of the strengths of Situational Leadership Theory is its practicality. It offers clear, actionable guidelines for leaders in various contexts, making it easy to understand and apply. The theory encourages flexibility and adaptability, urging leaders to adjust their style to suit the evolving needs of their followers. It also promotes individualized attention to followers, recognizing that each person may require different forms of guidance and support. In educational settings, situational leadership is particularly useful.

Teachers and administrators can use it to adjust their teaching or leadership strategies based on the specific needs and readiness levels of students and staff. By recognizing and addressing individual differences, educational leaders can create more inclusive and supportive environments that enhance student engagement and academic performance. Situational Leadership Theory also emphasizes the importance of understanding the motivation levels of both teachers and students, helping leaders create positive learning environments.

Despite its practical benefits, Situational Leadership Theory has faced criticism for its lack of empirical research supporting its assumptions. Some scholars argue that the theory’s conceptualization of followers’ development levels is ambiguous, particularly how competence and commitment are combined to define different development stages. Furthermore, there is some uncertainty regarding the definition of commitment itself and how it relates to confidence and motivation. These criticisms point to the need for further research and clarification to better understand and evaluate the effectiveness of Situational Leadership Theory (Khattak et al., 2023; Maisyaroh et al., 2019).

3 The new leadership theories (1990s-2000s)

Recognizing the limitations of focusing solely on one aspect or dimension of leadership, it became clear that a more comprehensive approach was needed (Khattak et al., 2023). The many empirical studies of early leadership theories revealed that leadership meant different things to different people and in different contexts. This variability led to a fragmented field, with no solid knowledge base that allowed for valid conclusions, leaving scholars and practitioners disillusioned. The search for the essence of leadership remained elusive (West-Burnham & John, 2013). Traditional leadership theories, which typically concentrated on just one aspect of leadership, contributed to this fragmented understanding. In response to the complexities of the modern world, a new approach emerged, emphasizing the interactions among leaders, followers, situations, and the system as a whole. This shift in perspective gave rise to the popularity of transformational and transactional leadership theories.

3.1 Transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership, developed by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) and expanded by Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Kouzes and Posner (1987), focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve exceptional performance and personal growth. This leadership style emphasizes creating a compelling vision, engaging followers, and fostering a supportive and empowering work environment. Transformational leaders exhibit qualities like charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and the ability to inspire followers to prioritize collective goals over personal interests. Notable transformational leaders include Jeff Bezos, Steve Jobs, and Bill Gates (Shields & Carolyn, 2010).

This leadership approach is especially effective in organizations undergoing significant change, seeking revitalization, or needing a new direction. Transformational leaders articulate a clear and compelling vision, foster innovation, and adapt to the needs of their followers. By leading through example and building trust, they empower others to reach their full potential. Through behaviors such as intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and individualized attention, Transformational leaders drive superior results, foster a culture of growth, and contribute to their organization's long-term success (Northouse, 2016).

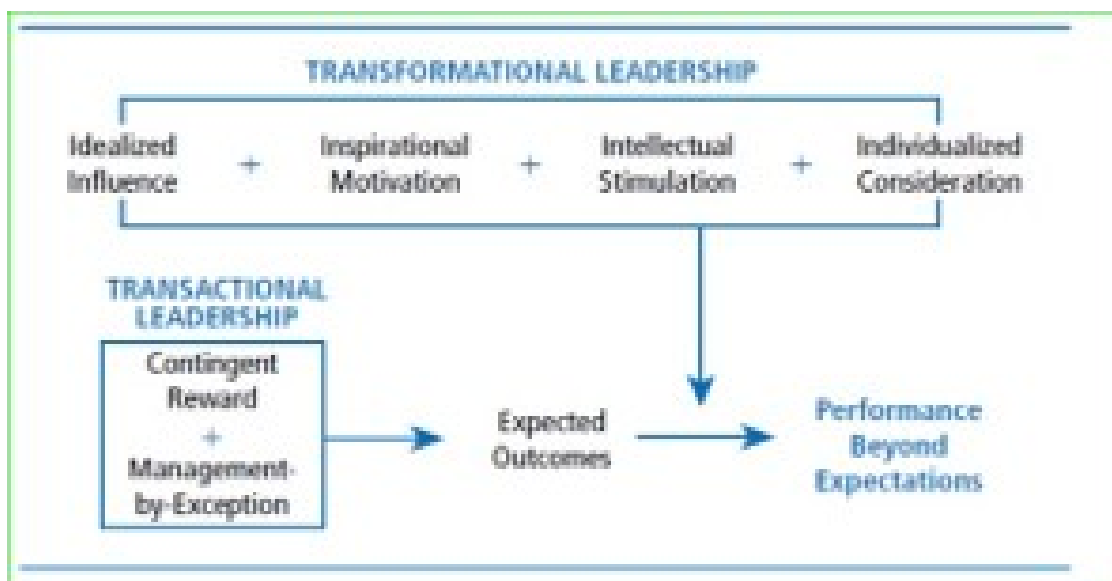


Figure 2: Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Source: Adapted from Bass and Avolio (1990).

3.1.1 Individualized consideration: the compassionate leader

In his 1978 book *Leadership*, J. M. Burns highlighted that exceptional leaders aim to develop their followers into future leaders. Individualized Consideration (IC) is a cornerstone of transformational leadership, focusing on the personal and professional growth of followers. Leaders practicing IC engage in listening, coaching, mentoring, and teaching behaviors to address their followers' unique developmental needs. By investing time and effort into understanding and nurturing their team members, these leaders empower individuals to achieve their full potential. This approach not only fosters loyalty and job satisfaction but also creates mentoring opportunities that benefit both leaders and followers.

In educational contexts, IC manifests when school leaders prioritize teachers' professional development, offering training and growth opportunities. Similarly, teachers demonstrate IC by tailoring their educational methods to meet the diverse needs of students, recognizing their unique abilities, and fostering an environment that enables them to achieve their best results (Thaddeus et al., 2019).

3.1.2 Intellectual stimulation: thinking outside the box

Intellectual Stimulation (IS) promotes creativity, innovation, and problem-solving by challenging conventional assumptions and encouraging new approaches. Leaders who practice IS engage their followers in decision-making, support risk-taking, and create safe environments for experimentation and learning from failure. This leadership style not only enhances job performance but also fosters job satisfaction by cultivating a culture of openness and creativity.

In education, IS is evident when school leaders encourage teachers to critically evaluate traditional practices, innovate, and actively participate in shaping school policies. Teachers who adopt IS create dynamic learning environments, inspiring students to think critically, explore novel ideas, and develop innovative solutions to challenges (Shields & Carolyn, 2010).

3.1.3 Inspirational motivation: sharing the vision

Inspirational Motivation (IM) involves inspiring and motivating followers through a compelling vision and encouraging words. Leaders with strong IM skills articulate a clear and ambitious vision, setting new standards and targets that inspire others to exceed expectations. By sharing their vision, these leaders foster a sense of direction and belonging, aligning individual efforts with organizational goals. In schools, IM is evident when leaders inspire teachers and students by articulating a shared vision and setting clear objectives. Teachers, in turn, use IM to motivate students to aim higher and work toward shared goals. Through emotional appeal and team-building efforts, leaders and teachers cultivate optimism and a sense of purpose, driving both individuals and the organization toward success (Shields & Carolyn, 2010).

3.1.4 Idealized influence: leading by example

Idealized Influence, often described as walking the talk, emphasizes ethical and moral leadership. Leaders exhibiting Idealized Influence align their actions with shared values and organizational missions. They demonstrate consistency, courage, and selflessness, prioritizing the collective good over personal gain. Such leaders earn respect and trust by setting positive examples and consistently acting with integrity.

In schools, both administrators and teachers embody Idealized Influence by serving as role models. Their actions inspire admiration and encourage others to adopt ethical, constructive behaviors, reinforcing the values of trust, responsibility, and collaboration within the organization.

3.1.5 Strengths and weaknesses of transformational leadership

Transformational leadership offers numerous advantages, including its intuitive appeal and emphasis on the growth and development of followers. Unlike transactional models, which focus on routine tasks and external motivators, transformational leadership prioritizes personal growth, ethics, and long-term organizational success. This approach fosters a culture of trust, innovation, and collective achievement.

However, transformational leadership has its limitations. Critics argue that it lacks conceptual clarity, relies heavily on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and can exhibit trait-like qualities. It has also been criticized for being elitist, undemocratic, and overly reliant on "heroic leadership" models. In some instances, transformational leadership can be misused or result in counterproductive outcomes. Despite these challenges, it remains a widely valued leadership approach (Northouse, 2016).

3.2 Transactional leadership theory

Transactional leadership focuses on motivating followers through a structured system of rewards and punishments. By clearly defining goals, setting performance expectations, and linking outcomes to tangible rewards or consequences, transactional leaders prioritize order, efficiency, and productivity. This approach ensures that tasks are completed effectively and consistently.

Key elements of transactional leadership include contingent rewards and Management by Exception (MBE). Contingent rewards involve negotiating tasks and rewards, such as offering bonuses for meeting targets or tenure for meeting publication requirements. MBE, on the other hand, is a reactive approach that intervenes only when performance falls below standards. MBE can be applied positively, using corrective measures to address issues, or negatively, through disciplinary actions that may suppress creativity and communication (Northouse, 2016).

3.2.1 Strengths and weaknesses of transactional leadership

Transactional leadership offers several strengths. It promotes motivation through clear rewards and consequences, ensures efficiency by adhering to established procedures, and is particularly effective during crises that require decisive action. This approach is also well-suited for achieving short-term goals and managing routine operations.

However, transactional leadership has notable weaknesses. It places minimal emphasis on creativity and innovation, relying heavily on external motivators. The approach may limit employee engagement and foster a short-term mindset, hindering long-term planning. Additionally, it does not prioritize personal development or cultivate strong relationships among team members, which can reduce collaboration and teamwork (Shields & Carolyn, 2010).

3.2.2 Educational Implications of Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership has significant implications in education, particularly in providing feedback, enforcing rules, and valuing performance. It employs two forms of Management by Exception: active and passive. Active MBE involves continuous monitoring to ensure standards are met, while passive MBE intervenes only when deviations occur.

In schools, transactional leadership focuses on exchanging effort for rewards or penalties, setting clear rules and expectations. Teachers and students receive praise or incentives for success and face reprimands for failure. While this approach can motivate less-engaged students through tangible rewards, it may stifle creativity and limit deeper engagement with the learning process (Shields & Carolyn, 2010).

4 Contemporary leadership theories

Modern leadership theories address the complexities of today's organizations by emphasizing shared, collective, and collaborative practices. These approaches aim to foster coordination and innovation across all organizational levels.

4.1 Servant leadership

Servant leadership prioritizes the needs and development of followers, empowering them to succeed. Leaders in this model focus on ethical behavior, community building, and the well-being of their team members.

4.2 Inclusive leadership

Inclusive leadership centers on a person-focused approach, striving to develop and empower followers to become leaders themselves. It values diversity, equity, and collaboration.

4.3 Complexity leadership

Complexity leadership addresses the dynamic interactions within organizations, acknowledging that success depends on systemic collaboration rather than individual actions.

Other contemporary theories include:

- Distributed Leadership: Emphasizes shared leadership responsibilities across all levels of an organization.

- Authentic leadership: Focuses on genuine, transparent leadership rooted in integrity.
- Adaptive leadership: Helps organizations navigate change and uncertainty.
- Ethical leadership: Emphasizes decision-making guided by moral principles.
- Digital leadership: Highlights the importance of leading in the context of digital transformation (Northouse, 2016).

4.4 Distributed leadership: from “Me” to “We”

Distributed leadership emphasizes collective responsibility, drawing on sociology, psychology, and anthropology to explore how leadership can emerge at all levels of an organization. This approach acknowledges that leadership is not confined to formal roles but is shared among those best positioned to lead in specific situations (Spillane, 2005).

4.4.1 *Strengths of distributed leadership*

Distributed leadership fosters collaboration and innovation by involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making. It enables educators to pool their expertise to improve teaching and learning outcomes. By providing opportunities for leadership development, it strengthens the overall capacity of schools and creates a sense of collective accountability (Mohamed El Wafiq et al., 2021).

4.4.2 *Weaknesses of distributed leadership*

However, distributed leadership can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. Role ambiguity and power imbalances may arise, leading to confusion and inequitable participation. These challenges can slow decision-making and hinder the approach’s effectiveness in urgent situations (Northouse, 2016).

4.4.3 *Educational implications of distributed leadership*

In education, distributed leadership promotes inclusivity by involving teachers, administrators, parents, and community members in decision-making. It enhances professional development, encouraging teachers to assume leadership roles and collaborate on innovative practices. By fostering shared accountability, distributed leadership aligns all stakeholders with the institution’s goals, driving continuous improvement and success (Spillane, 2005).

5 Conclusion

Transformational, transactional, and contemporary leadership theories each offer unique insights and tools for leading organizations. While transformational leadership emphasizes growth, innovation, and ethical principles, transactional leadership ensures structure and efficiency through clear rewards and consequences. Contemporary theories, such as distributed and servant leadership, reflect the complexities of modern organizations, promoting shared responsibility and collective success. By integrating elements of these approaches, leaders can create environments that empower individuals, foster collaboration, and drive sustainable organizational growth.

6 Servant leadership theories

Servant leadership, introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s, redefines traditional leadership by prioritizing the needs and development of followers over the leader's authority or power. Greenleaf's works (1970, 1972, 1977) laid the foundation for this leadership model, which emphasizes service, ethical conduct, and a commitment to fostering personal and professional growth. This approach has influenced leadership studies for over four decades, offering a transformative perspective on how leaders interact with their teams.

At its heart, servant leadership focuses on leaders' behaviors and their approach to followers. Servant leaders are attentive to their followers' concerns, empathize with their needs, and actively work to nurture their growth. The primary goal of a servant leader is to empower others, helping them achieve their full potential while fostering a positive impact on the organization and the broader community (Greenleaf, 1977).

What sets servant leadership apart is its focus on how leaders treat followers. Unlike theories that attribute leadership to inherent traits or prescribe styles based on specific situations, servant leadership emphasizes behaviors grounded in service and ethical values. It begins with the leader's commitment to prioritizing followers' needs, being honest, and treating them fairly. Servant leaders listen actively, build strong relationships, and support their followers in achieving both personal and professional aspirations.

By placing followers' needs first, servant leadership cultivates a culture of service and collaboration. In such an environment, leaders and followers work together to promote mutual respect, trust, and shared goals. When embraced across an organization, this approach fosters a collective commitment to serving others—whether colleagues, clients, or the broader community (Liden, Wayne, et al., 2008).

The characteristics of servant leadership, as identified by Liden and colleagues, include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and building community. These traits are essential for creating high-performance teams and a positive organizational culture. In educational settings, for instance, servant leaders can enhance teaching effectiveness by removing obstacles, providing necessary resources, and promoting open communication with all stakeholders.

Servant leadership also builds a strong sense of community within organizations. Leaders practicing this style focus on their team members' well-being, fostering environments where individuals can thrive. This nurturing approach contrasts with traditional hierarchical models, which often emphasize power dynamics. By adopting a servant leadership mindset, leaders create a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility, resulting in higher satisfaction and stronger commitment among followers.



Figure 3: Model of Servant Leadership

Source: Adapted from Liden et al. (2014) and van Dierendonck (2011).

6.1 Servant leadership in education: key components and implications

Servant leadership is grounded in three core components: antecedent conditions, servant leader behaviors, and outcomes. This leadership approach prioritizes behaviors that foster a culture of service, including conceptualizing, offering emotional support, prioritizing others' needs, helping individuals grow and succeed, acting ethically, empowering followers, and creating value for the community. These behaviors are influenced by factors such as the leader's personal traits, the cultural context, and the willingness of followers to embrace this leadership style. When applied effectively, servant leadership can result in positive outcomes for individuals, organizations, and society.

In education, servant leadership offers numerous strengths. A primary advantage is its focus on a student-centered approach, prioritizing students' growth, well-being, and academic success. This creates a nurturing environment that enhances student engagement and motivation. Servant leaders also work to foster a positive school culture by promoting trust, collaboration, and mutual respect among staff and students.

This approach boosts morale, strengthens relationships, and establishes a shared sense of purpose (Liden et al., 2014). Furthermore, servant leaders empower teachers by supporting professional development and mentorship, fostering innovation, and encouraging a sense of ownership and creativity. Through effective communication and collaboration, servant leadership enhances problem-solving capabilities and improves school functioning.

Ethical, values-based leadership is another hallmark of servant leadership. By modeling empathy, fairness, and integrity, servant leaders create an ethical climate that influences students and staff. This approach also emphasizes long-term sustainability by investing in individuals' growth and developing systems that endure beyond the tenure of any single leader (Northouse, 2016).

Despite its advantages, implementing servant leadership in education presents challenges. One key difficulty is the time and resource commitment required to prioritize others' needs. Educational leaders, often tasked with competing responsibilities, may find it challenging to balance individual needs with institutional goals. Decision-making can also be complex under this leadership model. The emphasis on inclusivity and consensus can delay decisions, while managing diverse perspectives and resolving conflicting interests within the school community can complicate the process.

Additionally, servant leaders may risk burnout by focusing excessively on serving others, potentially neglecting their own well-being. Resistance to change poses another challenge. Stakeholders accustomed to traditional, hierarchical leadership models may perceive servant leadership as lacking authority, which can hinder its acceptance. Overcoming such resistance requires clear communication, ongoing education, and demonstrating the tangible benefits of this approach.

These challenges, however, can be addressed through strategic leadership development, self-reflection, and adaptability. Establishing effective communication channels and providing support structures help mitigate potential weaknesses and enhance servant leadership's impact.

The educational implications of servant leadership are significant. It prioritizes student well-being and success, creating an environment where students thrive. It empowers teachers by fostering professional growth, encouraging leadership roles, and promoting collaboration and shared decision-making. Additionally, it shapes a positive school culture that values inclusivity, trust, and respect, leading to improved outcomes for students and greater teacher satisfaction. Strong partnerships with the community further enhance equity, inclusion, and external support for schools.

In conclusion, servant leadership fosters a culture of service, collaboration, and ethical behavior in education. By prioritizing growth and well-being, it creates supportive and high-performing environments that benefit the entire school community (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002; Northouse, 2016).

7 Inclusive leadership theory

Inclusive leadership focuses on creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and included. It goes beyond acknowledging diversity to actively promoting and leveraging it for the benefit of the organization. Inclusive leaders listen, empathize, and value differences, using them to enhance decision-making and foster collaboration. They promote equity, fairness, and inclusion, building strong, inclusive relationships within their teams and organizations (Carter & Abawi, 2018; Roberson & Perry, 2022).

In the context of education, inclusive leadership has several strengths, including the promotion of equity and inclusion, the enhancement of student achievement, and the creation of positive school climates. By recognizing and valuing diversity, inclusive leadership improves engagement, supports students' academic success, and fosters a sense of belonging. This leadership style also contributes to positive school climates where individuals feel safe, respected, and motivated. Furthermore, inclusive leadership supports professional growth by empowering educators and providing opportunities for learning and development, which leads to greater innovation and creativity (Angelides, 2011). The approach also builds stronger relationships among students, teachers, and stakeholders, contributing to an overall sense of community and collaboration within schools.

Despite its strengths, there are some challenges associated with implementing inclusive leadership in education. One major challenge is the mindset shift required to overcome resistance to change. Additionally, inclusive practices demand extra time and resources, particularly when it comes to providing personalized support for diverse student needs, which can be difficult in settings with limited resources. Cultural and systemic barriers such as biases and discriminatory practices may hinder the full implementation of inclusive practices. Balancing individual needs with broader organizational goals can also pose difficulties, especially in adhering to curriculum requirements and accountability measures. Furthermore, measuring the impact of inclusive leadership practices can be challenging because traditional assessment methods may not capture the full range of outcomes. Finally, sustaining inclusive leadership practices over time can be difficult due to leadership turnover and policy changes.

Educational implications of inclusive leadership theory are substantial. Inclusive leadership promotes equity and inclusion by ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, are valued and provided with equal opportunities. It enhances student achievement by motivating and engaging students through personalized learning and culturally responsive teaching. Furthermore, it contributes to a positive school climate, where respect, empathy, and collaboration thrive. Inclusive leadership also supports the professional growth of teachers through continuous development opportunities and fosters community engagement. Overall, inclusive leadership aims to create systemic change and address inequities within the educational system, benefiting students, teachers, schools, and communities (Angelides, 2011; Carter & Abawi, 2018).

8 Complexity leadership theory

Complexity leadership theory acknowledges the dynamic and interconnected nature of organizations, emphasizing the need for adaptive leadership in complex settings. It conceptualizes organizations as complex adaptive systems where behaviors emerge unpredictably from interactions within the system. Leaders, therefore, must respond effectively to these emergent properties (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008). The theory prioritizes adaptability, non-linear interactions, self-organization, and fostering connections and networks within the organization.

At its core, this theory views organizations as interconnected ecosystems where small changes can yield significant outcomes. Leaders must be agile, responsive, and capable of navigating uncertainty by experimenting, learning, and revising strategies. Complexity leadership also underscores the importance of self-organization, enabling individuals and teams to adapt and make decisions based on local expertise. Collaboration, knowledge sharing, and relationship-building are central to navigating complexity, as they enhance the organization's ability to innovate and respond effectively to challenges.

However, implementing complexity leadership theory poses challenges. One limitation is the lack of clear, actionable guidance, making practical application difficult for leaders. Its abstract nature can hinder its translation into everyday strategies, and traditional performance metrics often fail to capture its broader impacts. Additionally, hierarchical structures and entrenched power dynamics can resist the change required for a more adaptive and collaborative approach. Transitioning to complexity leadership may also demand significant time, resources, and cultural shifts.

In education, complexity leadership theory has profound implications. Educational leaders must adapt to emerging patterns and uncertainties, fostering a culture of experimentation and learning from successes and failures. Leadership should be distributed across roles, involving teachers, administrators, and staff to harness diverse perspectives and

promote collective decision-making. Encouraging team autonomy and self-organization allows individuals to apply their expertise to navigate complex challenges effectively. Collaboration and knowledge sharing within schools and with external stakeholders are essential, creating networks that enhance resource flow, information sharing, and innovation. Educational leaders should also embrace interdisciplinary and inquiry-based learning, fostering a curriculum that adapts to evolving needs.

By embracing complexity leadership, educational leaders can create adaptive, collaborative, and innovative systems. This approach promotes resilience, improves educational outcomes, and fosters a more dynamic and effective educational environment (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

9 Digital leadership

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into educational settings, digital leadership has emerged as a critical concept for effectively managing the use of digital tools in teaching, learning, and administration (Martinez & Peña-Acua, 2022). Digital leadership is a relatively new but essential form of leadership that focuses on the strategic use of digital technologies to enhance the educational experience and meet the needs of students in a tech-driven world (Ordu et al., 2021).

Several definitions of digital leadership exist in the literature. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) defines digital leadership as the ability to bring about change by using digital tools in educational management. This requires leaders to prioritize the mobilization, implementation, and integration of digital devices in teaching and learning (International Society for Technology in Education, 2021). Other authors, such as Masrur (2021), emphasize the role of digital leadership in influencing organizational goals through digital tools. According to Nancy (2021), digital leadership is a method of social impact, using modern technologies to alter behaviors, thinking, emotions, and performance in organizations and workgroups.

In essence, digital leadership involves the effective use of digital tools to drive organizational change, improve learning outcomes, and influence behavior. Educational leaders are tasked with adopting cutting-edge technologies to achieve objectives quickly and efficiently, impacting both individual and collective goals within educational institutions. The philosophy behind digital leadership is to harness technology to influence and transform educational practices, shaping a more innovative and adaptable learning environment.

10 Lessons learned from the evolution of leadership theories

The evolution of leadership theories offers several valuable lessons. One key takeaway is the recognition that effective leadership is not one-dimensional. Different leadership styles such as transformational, servant, and situational leadership serve different contexts, and successful leaders adapt their approaches based on the situation. Moreover, effective leadership is deeply connected with followership. Leaders must understand the needs, motivations, and aspirations of their followers, aligning these with the broader organizational goals. This reflects the idea that leadership is about inspiring and empowering others to achieve collective success.

Another important lesson is the significance of continuous learning and development. Leadership is an ongoing journey, and effective leaders must be willing to grow, adapt, and meet new challenges. Similarly, the evolution of leadership theories in education emphasizes that leadership is not confined to administrative roles. Teachers, principals, and other stakeholders at various levels can demonstrate leadership. Successful educational leadership involves collaboration and shared leadership, empowering multiple stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, and the community to contribute to decision-making processes and create a culture of teamwork and shared responsibility.

Theories like instructional leadership and adaptive leadership highlight the importance of prioritizing teaching and learning improvements. Effective leaders in education provide guidance and support to educators, promoting professional development and ensuring that instructional strategies align with the needs of students. Additionally, leaders must be adaptable, embracing innovation and anticipating changes in the educational landscape, such as technological advancements or evolving pedagogical practices.

11 Conclusion

Leadership theory has evolved significantly over time, with various models emerging to explain and guide leadership practices in different contexts. These include transformational, transactional, instructional, servant, distributive, complexity, and digital leadership theories. No single leadership theory can capture the full scope of leadership, particularly in complex and dynamic environments like education. As a result, effective educational leaders draw on a combination of these theories to guide their practice.

The evolution of leadership theories has deeply influenced educational settings. The shift from focusing on individual traits to understanding leadership as a social and collaborative process has been one of the most significant developments. Modern leadership in education emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making, and empowerment of all stakeholders. This shift has contributed to more inclusive, positive school cultures and more active involvement of teachers, students, and the community in the educational process.

Furthermore, leadership theories have increasingly highlighted the need for adaptability and responsiveness to change. Theories like situational leadership and adaptive leadership stress the importance of leaders being flexible, adjusting their leadership style according to the context, challenges, and needs they face. Additionally, the ethical dimension of leadership has become more prominent. Leaders are expected to demonstrate integrity, fairness, and transparency in their decisions, which contribute to a moral foundation within the educational environment. In conclusion, the evolution of leadership theories provides valuable insights for educators and leaders. By embracing these diverse leadership approaches, educational leaders can create supportive, innovative, and collaborative learning environments, empowering their staff and improving educational outcomes for students. The emphasis on adaptability, shared leadership, and ethical practices offers a robust framework for addressing the challenges and opportunities of contemporary educational settings.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on reasonable request.

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Original Article

The effect of principals' leadership styles on teachers' job motivation in public secondary schools of Amhara regional state, Ethiopia

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KEYWORDS:

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of principals' leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented) on teachers' job motivation in public secondary schools. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was employed. Data for this study was collected from five public secondary schools in Fogera Woreda. To select the participant of study, simple random sampling techniques were employed to get a total of 140 teachers, and comprehensive sampling techniques were employed to select 6 principals. Five-point Likert scale questionnaires were employed to get quantitative data from teachers. Qualitative data were collected from principal and vice principal by using semi-structured interview. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, and percentage, followed by inferential statistics including Pearson correlation and regression analysis techniques. Whereas the qualitative data were analyzed thematically using narration technique. Principals in Fogera Woreda demonstrate generally high levels of leadership, which positively correlates with teachers' job motivation. Achievement-oriented leadership shows the strongest link to motivation, while directive leadership has the weakest. A combination of leadership styles significantly predicts teacher motivation, with achievement-oriented and participative styles being the most influential. Consequently, principals' leadership styles have a significant impact on teacher motivation in secondary schools. Education stakeholders should prioritize supporting effective school leadership to enhance educational quality.

1 Introduction

Effective leadership is essential for creating high-performing schools and has become a global education policy priority (Ijaz et al., 2019). Leadership is commonly defined as the intentional influence exerted by individuals to guide group activities and relationships (Riggio, 2006). Among the major leadership theories, the Path-Goal Theory suggests that effective leaders adapt their styles to meet followers' needs, thereby enhancing motivation and performance (Northouse, 2016). This theory identifies four key styles such as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership styles. Each contributing differently to organizational success (House & Mitchell, 1975).

In education, leadership serves as a social process that significantly shapes school quality and performance (Ijaz et al., 2019). Principals, as instructional leaders, can have a strong impact when granted autonomy to make key decisions (Adel et al., 2019; Eka & Wira, 2018). However, autonomy alone is not sufficient; the effectiveness of leadership depends on whether the style fits the school context (Normandy & Sukhumi, 2019). As schools strive to meet academic goals, principals must adopt leadership styles that inspire and motivate teachers, who are the key drivers of educational success (Akhmad & Wahyu, 2022; Khan & Nawaz, 2016).

Research consistently shows that leadership style influences teacher motivation and school outcomes (Adeyemi, 2015; Agrawal, 2011). Motivated teachers are central to implementing curriculum goals and improving student achievement (Hook, 2006).

In many African contexts, leadership and teacher motivation are shaped by challenges such as limited resources, large classes, and socio-economic constraints. Studies from Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana highlight that participative and supportive leadership styles foster inclusion, resilience, and teacher commitment (Bush & Glover, 2016; Mestry, 2017; Waweru & Orodho, 2014).

2 Research problem

In Ethiopia, recent education reforms have placed teachers at the center of quality improvement efforts (Ministry of Education, 2008). Yet, problems of low motivation persist despite supportive policies and programs (Firdissa, 2006). Principals play a crucial role in addressing issues related to heavy workloads, inadequate facilities, and low salaries (Ministry of Education, 2018). While directive leadership can help clarify expectations, it may also constrain teachers' creativity and autonomy (Teshome, 2020).

National initiatives such as the Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP I-VI) and the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap emphasize effective, participatory leadership as vital for reducing teacher turnover and improving learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2018).

However, little is known about how principals' leadership styles specifically influence teachers' job motivation in secondary schools, particularly in the context of Fogera Woreda. Addressing this gap is critical to aligning leadership practices with national educational goals and enhancing teacher motivation. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effects of principals' leadership styles on teachers' job motivation in public secondary schools of Fogera Woreda and to answer the following research question:

1. How does an achievement-oriented leadership style adopted by principals enhance teachers' motivation to set and meet high performance standards?
2. How do principals' directive leadership styles impact teachers' job motivation in terms of clarity of expectations and goal achievement in Fogera Woreda public secondary schools?
3. How is the influence of principals' participative leadership styles on teachers' sense of inclusion and commitment to organizational goals?
4. In what ways do principals' supportive leadership styles affect teachers' emotional well-being and motivation to perform in their roles?

3 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was developed based on House and Mitchell (1975) path-goal theory. This framework illustrated the relationships among the study variables, as depicted below in fig. 1. In the framework, the independent variable, leadership styles, was linked to the dependent variable, teacher job motivation. The independent variable was defined by four leadership styles: directive, participative, supportive, and achievement-oriented. The dependent variable encompassed aspects of teachers' motivation related to job performance, recognition for high quality, professional freedom, and job security.

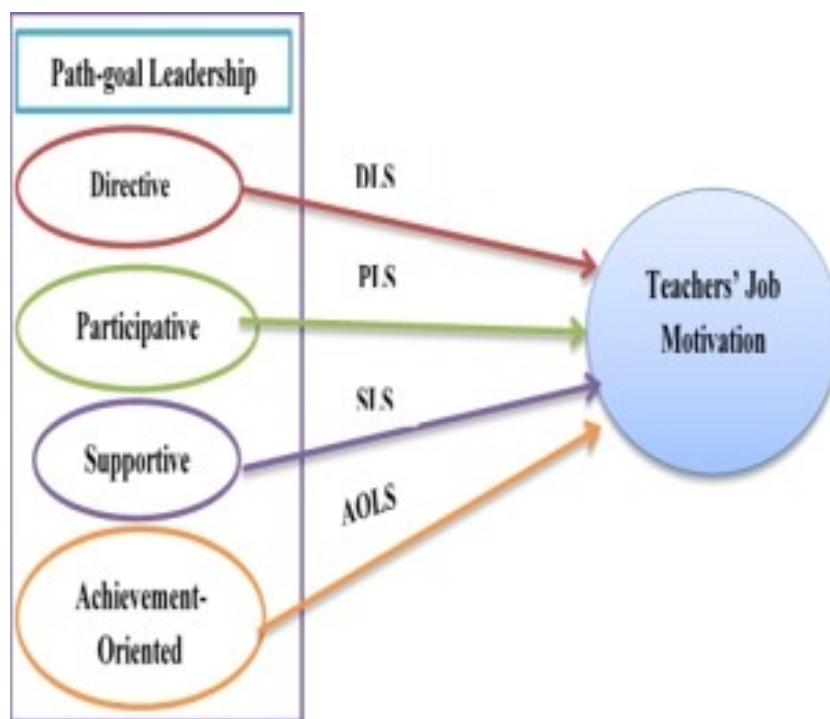


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Key

- DLS = Directive Leadership Style
- PLS = Participative Leadership Style
- SLS = Supportive Leadership Style
- AOLS = Achievement-Oriented Leadership Style

4 Research methods

4.1 Research design

In this study, mixed research design, particularly explanatory sequential mixed design was employed. It was helpful to provide a clear picture on the relationship between the principal leadership style and the teachers' job motivation in the study area. The design has strong quantitative orientation as the researcher first gathers quantitative

data through questionnaire and analyzes results, and then analyzing the qualitative data obtained through interview (Creswell, 2022). It capitalizes on the strengths and minimizes the limitations of quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Clark et al., 2008). The assumption behind using this design was that the combination of both approaches could help to better understand the issues than using either of the approaches alone.

4.2 Subjects of the study

According to data obtained from Fogera Woreda Education Office (2024), the study area had five government secondary schools with a total of 237 teachers (193 males and 44 females). The schools were led by five principals and one vice principal, making a total of six school leaders who participated in the study.

Hence, sample size of each selected school was determined using Pandey and Verma (2008) formula, as given below in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the population and samples

No.	School	Population	Sample	%		
1	Alem	221	97	0.80		
2	Addi	111	46	0.29		
3	Menguzer	...	...	...		
4	Guranba	...	...	...		
5	Kedist Hana	...	...	...		
6	Total	6	237	149	62.1	86

4.3 Data collection tools

Questionnaires and interview were used as instruments of data collection for this study. The standardized questionnaire developed by Indvik's Path-Goal Leadership (PGTQ) as cited by Saleem et al. (2020) was used. It contained 16 items, four per each of the four leadership styles such as directive, participative, supportive, and achievement oriented. The third part was used to measure teachers' job motivation. It was adopted from the established tools developed by Ololube (2006) and Sylvia and Hutchison (1985). It similarly contained 16 items, four per each of the four aspects of job motivation such as job performance achievement, recognition for high-quality performance, professional freedom, and job security. The instruments were utilized due to their established validity and reliability, which were confirmed through rigorous quantitative and qualitative procedures.

For this study, interview was held with the principals. It is an approach that facilitates data collection from participants who provide responses directly (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Kerlinger (1973) noted that individuals are often more willing to communicate orally than in writing, thereby provide more detailed information during interviews.

4.4 Data analysis

Given the 5-point Likert scale, in the analysis, mean scores and standard deviations were mainly used. The mean values were interpreted following a guideline suggested by Zaidatol and Bagheri (2009) where, the mean values from 1.00-1.80 (very low), 1.81-2.60

(low), 2.61-3.40 (moderate), 3.41-4.20 (high), and 4.21-5.00 (very high). Moreover, standard deviations were used in the analysis which indicates the distance where the mean scores are, on average, located or dispersed from their total mean.

Then, inferential statistics were performed to make generalizations about the population. Accordingly, the relationship between principals’ leadership styles and teachers’ job motivation were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Through this, the relationship between principals’ leadership styles (participative, supportive, achievement-oriented, and directive) and teachers’ job motivation were analyzed. The analysis was conducted at a $p < 0.05$ significance level with a 95% confidence interval. Correlation coefficients were interpreted based on Cohen (1988) guidelines, where $r = 0.10$ to 0.29 indicates a small correlation, $r = 0.30$ to 0.49 represents a moderate correlation, and $r = 0.50$ to 1.0 suggests a large correlation. These interpretations apply to both positive and negative correlation values. Following this, the effects of principal leadership styles on teachers’ job motivation were analyzed using multiple regression analysis technique. In this analysis, Beta values obtained from the regression analysis were used to describe the findings. Finally, data collected through semi-structured interview were qualitatively analyzed using narration analysis technique.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Three ethical issues were considered in this study such as informed consent, confidentiality and consequences. First and most, each respondent was kept informed about objectives of the study and aware that his/her participation was entirely voluntary.

5 Result

5.1 The principals’ leadership style

On principal leadership style, the information requested from 140 respondents was summarized as given below in table 2.

Table 2: The descriptive statistics of principals’ leadership style

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Directive leadership style (DLS1)	3.31	.958
Participative leadership style (PLS2)	3.46	.882
Supportive leadership style (SLS3)	3.43	.903
Achievement oriented style (AOLS4)	3.58	.785
Total	3.59	.786

Source: Output from SPSS, 2025

Table 2 shows that principal leadership (involving the four styles) received a total mean score = 3.59 and SD = 0.786 while suggesting an overall high level of teachers’ agreement. Given this finding, however, it does not mean that all the styles have a similar level as each of the styles were observed with mean scores varied from 3.31 (lowest) to 3.58 (highest).

As table 2, achievement-oriented leadership style seemed the first having received the highest mean score followed by participative compared to supportive and directive lead-

ership styles in secondary schools of Fogera Woreda. As can be observed from the table, a mean score = 3.58 and SD = .785 > the critical mean (CM) = 3.00 were observed while indicating that achievement-oriented leadership style received the highest rating from teachers. It seems that teachers feel motivated when their principal values them, provides them with constructive feedback, supports their professional growth and with good academic achievement of their students respectively,

With a mean score = 3.46 and SD = .882 > CM, participative leadership style seemed to have received the second highest agreement of teachers. In regard to this, the mean scores as observed 3.51, 3.51, 3.43, and 3.40 > CM, the teachers felt that their principal consults them when facing problem, listen attentively to their ideas and suggestions, asks them for suggestions on what assignments should be made and encourages co-operation among them during the decision-making process respectively.

5.2 The teacher job motivation

The second variable of this study was teachers' job motivation and it was examined as a dependent variable. On this variable, the respondents were given 16 statements upon which data collected were analyzed first using descriptive statistics. Related to this, summarized scores of all the items were shown below in table 3.

Table 3: The descriptive statistics of teachers' job motivation

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job performance	3.58	.894
High quality performance	3.43	.983
Professional freedom	3.21	1.026
Job security	3.75	.864
Total	3.62	.681

Overall, job motivation was rated with a total mean = 3.62 and SD = 0.681 > CM showing a high level of the teachers' agreement on their motivation in secondary schools of Fogera Woreda. There were, indeed, mean variations ranging from the lowest = 3.31 to the highest = 3.58 (as observed from table 3) showing that the four dimensions of motivation have not been felt similarly by the teachers.

As shown in table 3, the mean scores and standard deviations for each dimension are presented along with the total mean all which are observed > CM. The results indicate that the dimension of job security received the highest rating, with a mean score of 3.75 and SD = .864 while demonstrating that teachers place significant importance on job stability. This was followed by job performance, which had a mean score of 3.58 and SD = .894. In comparison, recognition for high-quality performance and professional freedom received relatively lower mean scores = 3.43 and 3.21 and SD = .983 and 1.026 respectively. This may imply that while job security and performance are key motivating factors, teachers perceive less motivation from the dimensions of professional freedom and recognition for high-quality work in secondary schools of Fogera Woreda.

The quantitative results seemed to be substantiated by the information from the interview. In this study, a total of 6 of whom 5 were main principals and 1 was vice principal were interviewed. The principals pointed out that teachers understand what might be expected of them when they are provided with structured guidance and most of their teachers aware what are required of them if they are directed even though there are

some teachers who are reluctant. The principals reveal that exercising directive leadership style sometimes influences the teachers' job motivation since it involves face-to-face interactions and collegial supervision which helps teachers to consider and focus on their teaching activities and improve their classroom performance. For example, principal-3 stated

"I believe teachers clearly understand my expectations and the school's goals through regular staff meetings, clear communication, and well-defined performance standards." He further explained that such leadership helps inform teachers about what needs to be done and how to do it, although at times, expectations may be communicated vaguely. Similarly, Principal-1 emphasized: "I ensure that some teachers understand my expectations and the school's goals through regular meetings, clear communication, and ongoing support."

Principal-2 added that additional efforts, such as maintaining peer collaboration and community involvement, are necessary due to limited resources and training opportunities. He suggested that implementing structured lesson planning and mentoring sessions could help address these challenges. Besides, principal-6 stated:

"When teachers are involved in decision-making, they feel a sense of ownership over school activities, viewing them as their own responsibilities, so that this sense of ownership can influence other teachers to feel the same way." He further explained that when trust exists in these shared responsibilities, it enhances teachers' job motivation.

The above ideas indicate that the leadership styles being practiced by principals in secondary schools of Fogera woreda have a strong impact on teachers' job motivation. In regard to this, it is observed from the quantitative finding that the teachers showed a high level of agreement on achievement-oriented leadership style. This has been corroborated with the qualitative finding. In the interview, principals commonly forwarded that achievement-oriented leadership style positively impacts teachers' motivation as the style focuses on providing clear goals, high expectations, and consistent support, which fosters a sense of direction and purpose. The principals also appreciated providing regular feedback, recognition of achievements, and development opportunities which enhance teachers' commitment.

Generally, the interviews indicate that all the leadership styles examined in this study have almost been exercised by secondary school principals in the study area. From the interviews, it could be understood that achievement-oriented, participative, supportive, and directive leadership styles are exercised by principals. So, the results obtained from the interviews were quite complementing with the findings obtained through questionnaire.

5.3 Relationship between leadership style and job motivation

Having performed the descriptive statistics, then, a correlational analysis has been conducted to see the relationship between principal leadership styles (participative, supportive, achievement-oriented, and directive) and teachers' job motivation. The findings obtained from this analysis are presented below in table 4.

Table 4: The relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job motivation

	DLS1	PLS2	SLS3	AOLS4
DLS1	1			
PLS2	.022	1		
SLS3	.039	.302	1	
AOLS4	.032	.391	.033	1

Table 5: Regression analysis

Model	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)			
DLS1	.032	.584	.560
PLS2	.391	4.0	.000
SLS3	.044	.637	.525
AOLS4	.459	6.25	.000

a. Dependent variable: TJP

b. Predictors: (Constant), DLS1, PLS2, SLS3, AOLS4

As shown in table 5, consideration is given to the column labelled Beta under Standardized Coefficients in order to compare the variables focused in this study. From the Beta column, it can be seen which beta value is the largest. In this study, AOLS1 had the largest beta coefficient ($\beta = .459$, $P = .000 < 0.05$), indicating that it makes the strongest and statistically significant contribution to predicting TJM followed by PLS2 ($\beta = .391$, $p = .000 < 0.05$) compared to SLS3 ($\beta = .044$, $p = .525 > 0.05$) and DLS1 ($\beta = .032$, $p = .56 > 0.05$) which had lower beta values and were not statistically significant predictors of teacher job motivation.

6 Discussion

Given that leading a school is admittedly exercising power to direct teachers towards goals and being teachers are main persons in a school, Normandy and Sukhumi (2019) confirm that how a principal directs and motivates them can be influenced by the leadership styles he/she exercises. Based on findings from the descriptive statistics, this study showed principals leadership style and teacher job motivation in view of teachers' information. Zaidatol and Bagheri (2009), suggesting that principals' leadership styles are in line with the established benchmarks for effective leadership and are positively associated with teacher motivation (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Yukl, 2010). The study is in line to Said and Serawit (2018) who showed more teachers' motivated feeling by intrinsic than extrinsic rewards whereas disagree with Gemechu (2018) and Sewagegne (2020) who reported low teachers' motivation. In this study, the achievement-oriented leadership style recorded the highest mean score, followed by participative, supportive, and directive styles. The correlation matrix showed a similar pattern: achievement-oriented leadership had the strongest correlations with participative and supportive styles, while directive leadership demonstrated the weakest correlations. According to Cohen (1988), correlations in the range $r = 0.50$ to 1.00 are considered robust. This finding aligns with Wasserman et al. (2016) and Wahid et al. (2024), who reported positive relationships between leadership

styles and aspects of teachers' job motivation such as perception, willingness, and initiative. Northouse (2016) supports the strong link between achievement-oriented leadership and teacher motivation by arguing that expressing confidence in teachers' abilities fosters job satisfaction. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) and Marzano et al. (2005), and Abebe (2021) similarly report significant relationships between achievement-oriented and participative leadership styles and teacher motivation. These results are further corroborated by Day et al. (2016) and Tesfaye (2023), who found that participative leadership contributes to an inclusive environment in which teachers feel valued and demonstrate greater engagement and professional growth. This study aligns with Leithwood et al. (2020) and Heck and Hallinger (2014), who found that participative leadership enhances teacher morale, instructional quality, and professional learning through collaboration and shared goals. However, it differs from studies such as Yukl (2010), which emphasized directive leadership as more effective in hierarchical school systems, and Hallinger and Heck (2011), who reported weaker links between leadership and motivation due to contextual and cultural variations.

Similarly, Bush and Glover (2016) observed that directive leadership often dominates bureaucratic schools for maintaining discipline and efficiency, unlike the present findings. Robinson et al. (2008) also noted that leadership alone cannot sustain teacher motivation without structural supports like autonomy, time, and professional development. This implies that the strong influence of leadership found in this study may overlook key contextual and organizational factors.

The regression analysis revealed that principals' leadership styles collectively explained 63.2% of the variance in teachers' job motivation. Among these, achievement-oriented leadership style had the strongest influence ($\beta = .459$) followed by participative leadership ($\beta = .391$), both showing significant contributions. In contrast, supportive ($\beta = .044$) and directive ($\beta = .032$) styles had negligible effects. These findings align with Sogol and Akoto (2017) and Mark (2015), who emphasized the impact of work conditions, and with Ghaffari et al. (2017) and Mwangi (2022), who found that achievement-oriented leadership style and participative leadership style enhance teacher motivation by fostering involvement and responsibility. Similarly, Robinson (2014) and Northouse (2016) noted that achievement-oriented leadership style builds teachers' self-confidence through setting high performance standards.

Likewise, Bell and Mjoli (2013) and Nkosi (2021) argued that participative leadership adds value to increase teachers' motivation through contributing for more engagement. In line to this, Muluneh (2024) reported a significant contribution of participative leadership to teacher motivation in secondary schools of Awi zone in Amhara region, Ethiopia. The present study, additionally shows an insignificant contribution of directive leadership to teacher motivation while corroborated by Yun et al. (2007) and Okumbe (2001) who argued that directive leadership stifles creativity and reduce motivation.

However, this study contrasts with Martin (2012), who found directive leadership effective in clarifying tasks for inexperienced teachers possibly due to contextual differences, as teachers in this study value autonomy. It also contradicts Mestry (2017), who highlighted supportive leadership as key to improving teacher morale in resource-limited settings; in Fogera Woreda, emotional support alone may not overcome systemic challenges like overcrowded classes and scarce resources.

Hallinger and Heck (2010) meta-analysis further suggests that leadership's impact on teacher motivation is often modest, explaining less than 20% of the variance, compared to 63.2% in this study. Likewise, this finding differs from Endrias (2019), who reported no significant effect of participative leadership in Gambella, and from Muluneh (2024), who found leadership explained only 36.3% of motivation variance in the Amhara region.

In summary, while several studies support the strong relationship between leadership

style and teachers' job motivation (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Wasserman et al., 2016), others caution against overestimating the role of leadership without considering the broader organizational and contextual environment (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). This study explains 63.2% of the variance in teacher motivation underscores its importance while indicating further exploration into the remaining 36.8% which may be influenced by variables not examined in this specific study.

7 Conclusions

The study, generally, disclosed teachers' high level of agreement on the leadership styles being exercised by principals and on the level teachers' motivation currently existed in secondary schools. The leadership styles being exercised by principals in all have been well conceived in motivating secondary school teachers in the study area.

The prevalence of those leadership aspects could mean that they are indispensably crucial for maintaining teachers' job motivation towards enhancing their academic performance. This was what has been reflected in the study being explained by an overall high level of teachers' motivation.

The study has exhibited the highest effect of achievement-oriented leadership style followed by participative leadership style on teachers' job motivation compared to supportive and directive leadership styles. Given this, more importantly, it is concluded that achievement-oriented leadership style has significantly the largest positive and strong contribution to teachers' job motivation.

Supportive leadership style demonstrated a positive but statistically insignificant contribution to teachers' job motivation. This could lead to infer those teachers have felt motivated due to the benevolent consultations they had had in times. Finally, the principals' supportive and directive leadership styles make no significant contribution to teachers' job motivation with the beta values they insignificantly exhibited least.

8 Recommendations

In order deliver a good leadership relevant to maintain a motivating work environment, thus, principals should need to make more focus in demonstrating the required style through putting efforts of setting and maintaining high performance standards, among others in place.

Principals need to pay more formal consideration to foster a sense of inclusion, ownership, and responsibility whereby ensuring a more engaged and motivated teachers dedicated towards achieving the school's academic goals.

Teachers, being professionally in close proximity even in experience to principals, they need to keep them motivated and engaged in schools' activities persistently through taking account of interests of schools and their own.

Woreda Education officials charged with the responsibility of overseeing schools need to get along with principals and teachers.

Supervisors need to work with principals to facilitate collective decisions that help to maintain an environment enhancing teachers' intrinsic motivation and to genuinely empower teachers and develop their emotional well-being.

Finally, it would be good to provide secondary school principals with trainings that help them update their leadership knowledge, skills, and competencies compatible to scaling up teachers' job motivation.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Original Article

Uncovering the roots of students' under performance in secondary school National Examination: A Qualitative Case Study in Eastern Ethiopia

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qualitative case study

Abstract

This study explored factors contributing to students' under performance in the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination, reflecting a national educational crisis of low pass rates. In doing so, a case study design was employed, with data collected from four major cities in eastern Ethiopia through four focus group discussions with 24 teachers and a semi-structured interview with 22 purposefully selected participants, comprising students, parents, school administrators, and supervisors. The primary data were supplemented by national statistical abstracts and official reports. The data were consolidated by deductive thematic analysis and presented in three predetermined thematic categories: student-level, teacher-level, and contextual-level factors. The factors related to the students showed issues of motivation and value orientation, preparedness and performance barriers, and gaps of basic knowledge and skills. Teacher-related factors pointed to weak instructional practices, low morale and economic hardship, inadequate professional development, and ethical gaps. The gaps and deficiencies in educational policy, implementation, governance, and accountability, misalignment of curriculum, and resource scarcity were emphasized as contextual factors. The study corroborates the notion that ESSLCE under-performance is the result of the systemic interactions between these three themes and the subsequent sub themes mentioned, which perpetuate cycles of student disengagement and poor instructional quality, including systemic inequities in educational policy. This underscores the need for coordinated policy responses that address these interwoven dimensions.

1 Introduction

Secondary school education is undoubtedly critical in any society. Its value is, however, highly variable between countries depending on the country's history, economy, culture and political climate. In the Ethiopian educational context, secondary school refers to grades 9–12, which is designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for tertiary education or employment (Ministry of Education, 2022). Beyond academic preparation, as Woreta (2024) stated, it is an important stage of socialization where students internalize the moral, ethical, and social norms that equip them for life in adulthood.

Based on these significance, the Ethiopian education system has experienced several reforms, especially after regime changes. Unlike before, the 2021/22 educational reform was policy-driven rather than being politically motivated by leadership change. The [Ministry of Education \(2022\)](#) has attributed many factors, which are related to this reform. The most urgent needs mentioned are, in particular, to align the system with international standards and enhance citizens' horizons of knowledge to achieve tangible outcomes ([Ministry of Education, 2021](#)). The main reform included, among others, the shift from the old system of 4-2-2-4 (4 years in primary school, 2 years in junior secondary school, 2 years in senior secondary school, 4 years in secondary school) to the new system of 6-2-4 (6 years in primary school, 2 years in junior secondary school, 4 years in secondary school).

As of now, [Gebreselassie and Abebe \(2026\)](#) highlighted that the implementation of the reform does not seem to be improving student outcomes. Overall, the quality of education in Ethiopia is very low in relation to SDG 4 targets being set. For this, [UNESCO \(2025\)](#) reported that Ethiopian educational landscape has faced resource, language and systemic challenges which could hamper the achievement of the SDG 4 benchmarks by 2030.

Despite facing these challenges, the enrolment rate (Grades 9-12) rose from 23% in 2011/12 to 46% in 2021/22. Actually, there exists a huge disparity between quantity and quality issues ([Tefera & Zelalem, 2025](#)). In light of this quality concern, the 2022 policy on academic integrity made significant reforms in the administration of the examination. Most notably, the responsibility for overseeing the ESSLCE moved from a secondary school setting to a university campus, accompanied by strict supervision and rigorous monitoring ([Demissie, 2024](#)). As part of this measure, MoE covers all expenses for students, supervisors and examiners during their week-long stay at the site during the exams ([Tefera & Zelalem, 2025](#)).

After the change in examination settings, the number of students who are caught cheating in academic examinations dropped from 20,170 in 2022 to 859 in 2023 and down to 120 in 2024/25 ([Tefera et al., 2024](#)). This implies that the exam administration has been effective in curbing cheating, which, before the 2022 reform, affected approximately 80% ([Tefera & Zelalem, 2025](#)). In fact, the achievement in examination integrity is irrefutable; however, it has not translated into improved outcomes, as the results of the ESSLCE demonstrate that the long-standing emphasis on enrollment over learning remains largely unchanged.

For example, the passing rate of the last four years from 2021/22 to 2024/25 remains: 3.3% (896,520 sat; 30,000 passed), 3.2% (845,000 sat; 27,267 passed), 5.4% (674,823 sat; 36,409 passed), and 8.4% (585,882 sat; 48,929 passed) ([Ethiopian Monitor, 2024; Tiruneh & Molla, 2023](#)). Moreover, evidence from statistical reports confirms that 1,161 out of 2,959 high schools in the country had a 0% pass rate for the 2021/22 school year. In 2022/23, the issue was escalated, when 1,328 of 3,106 schools none of their students pass the exams; this number rose to 1,363 in 2023/24. Although there was a slight improvement in 2024/25, in which 1,249 schools indicated a 0% pass rate ([Ministry of Education, 2025](#)). This number suggests compelling evidence of serious confusion; it raises a serious alarm about the direction the educational system is taking if corrective measures are not taken promptly.

Considering this performance crisis, numerous scholars ([Alford, 2023; Demissie, 2024; Desta, 2025; Ethiopian Monitor, 2024; Molla & Tiruneh, 2023; Tamrat, 2024](#)) have reflected their views through diverse media outlets, including radio, online platforms, newspapers, and public forums, on the seriousness of the issue. They also noted that the situation may lead to a significant loss of human capital, limit institutional capacity, and hinder sustainable national development. Despite an increasing scholarly focus on the

underperformance of ESSLCE, existing research has largely relied on quantitative analyses from the Ministry of Education aggregate statistics. These statistics provide a record of what is going on, rather than sufficient reason for a lack of achievement persists across various regional contexts.

Pertaining to this, studies such as those by [Tefera et al. \(2024\)](#), [Tiruneh and Molla \(2024\)](#), and [Tebeje and Molla \(2023\)](#) have identified general factors associated with underperformance. These scholars, however, do not give any insight into the experiences of those students who fail, teachers who prepare students, educational experts supervised schools or the institutional and community contexts in which school examinations are conducted. Furthermore, there is no theoretical account for the large disparities between the national average high and low performing cities (Dire Dawa and Harar), and (Jijiga and Chiro), respectively, which is helpful in explaining the problem as a whole.

Thus far, there appears to be no study to date that has systematically explored how factors at the student level, teacher level, and contextual level interact in these differing settings. The presence of the gap has been recognized by [Tiruneh and Molla \(2024\)](#), [Desta \(2025\)](#), and others, who emphasize the need for contextually grounded qualitative inquiry. Such research should move beyond documenting yearly score magnitudes to uncover what contributes to students' underperformance in the ESSLCE.

Thus, the study integrates two complementary systems-based models: [Scheerens \(1990\)](#) Context–Input–Process–Output (CIPO) framework and [Astin \(1993\)](#) Input–Environment–Output (I-E-O) model. Both frameworks conceptualize educational outcomes as products coming through a system but at different levels of educational process detail. The two models complement each other in that CIPO provides a structural map outlining where conditions originate (context, teacher, student), while the I-E-O model focuses on how these conditions are transformed into learning experiences (process), which ultimately affect exam outcomes. Within this dual lens, while CIPO focuses on the domains structurally and I-E-O clarifies the mechanisms of transformation.

To this end, this multi-site qualitative case study was designed to explore the three levels that have been linked to the underperformance of ESSLCE in Eastern Ethiopia in the four educationally important cities of Dire Dawa, Harar, Jijiga and Chiro. The performance of these sites varies; in Dire Dawa and Harar is generally higher than the national average score, and in Jijiga and Chiro, performance is amongst the lowest. This internal variance presents an abundance of analytical opportunities to develop grounded rationales linking the specific conditions and processes that affect exam results and to produce insights that can only be gained by analyzing it. As a result, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What Student-related factors contribute to students' underperformance in the ESSLCE?
2. What Teachers-related factors contribute to students' underperformance in the ESSLCE?
3. What Contextual-related factors contribute to students' underperformance in the ESSLCE?

2 Methods

2.1 Research design and study site

This study used a qualitative case study design with a single embedded unit of analysis, which is suitable for capturing multiple perspectives within one bounded case ([Baxter & Jack, 2008](#); [Creswell, 2014](#)). The central phenomenon being studied was factors

contributing to underperformance in the ESSLCE. That is examined through predefined themes at the student, teacher, and contextual levels. Consequently, in eastern Ethiopia, the four largest cities, Chiro, Harar, Dire Dawa, and Jijiga, with the respective public universities and the largest TVET institutions, were included to ensure contextual diversity. The site selection followed [Patton \(2002\)](#) maximum variation sampling logic, chosen to capture common patterns of underperformance across sites that differ substantially in performance outcomes in that Harar and Dire Dawa perform better than the national average, whereas Chiro and Jijiga perform below the national average. Administratively, Dire Dawa and Jijiga hold city administration status, while Harar and Chiro function as zonal centers. Oromiffa and Amharic are the most widely spoken languages across Chiro, Harar, and Dire Dawa. The Harari-speaking minority is concentrated in Harar, and Somali is predominant in Jijiga. The sites further serve as educational hubs, attracting rural students through universities, TVET institutions, and better-resourced secondary schools. This deliberate variation allows the study, guided by the CIPO and I-E-O frameworks, to explore what factors contribute to students' underperformance across these differing contexts.

2.2 Study participants

This study's participants comprised secondary school principals, teachers, and regional education experts, including students who did not meet the 50% threshold pass mark set by the Ministry of Education for university admission for the 2022/23 academic year and enrolled based on their results from either the remedial program or TVET. The other group was those who did not meet the criteria for either pathway. Family representatives were also included as participants. These participants were selected from the cities of Chiro, Harar, Dire Dawa, and Jijiga. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants, notably using a multi-site selection strategy to capture different experiences that influence examination outcomes.

From each location, three student representatives were intentionally selected to provide diverse perspectives, comprising students engaging in remedial programs, TVET programs, and those not enrolled in either pathway. In addition, the school principal, family members, and district education expert representatives were invited as they maintained a direct tie to the topics under consideration; a total of 22 people were interviewed. Additionally, four focus group discussions (FGDs), each consisting of six secondary school teachers, comprising a total of 24, provided complementary perspectives on factors influencing underperformance.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Participant Type	Jijiga (JJ)	Chiro (CR)	Dire Dawa (DD)	Harar (HR)	Total	Gender (M/F)
1. Remedial Student (RS)	1	1	1	1	4	3 M / 1 F
2. TVET Student (TS)	1	1	1	1	4	2 M / 2 F
3. Student – Neither (SN)	1	1	1	1	4	3 M / 1 F
4. School Principal (SP)	1	1	1	1	4	3 M / 1 F
5. Regional Education Expert (EE)	1	1	1	1	4	4 M / 0 F
6. Family representative (FR)	1	0	0	1	2	2 M / 0 F
Interview Subtotal	6	5	5	6	22	17 M / 5 F
7. Teachers (4-FGDs)	6	6	6	6	24	19 M / 5 F
Grand Total	12	11	11	12	46	36 M / 10 F

Note. Participants were coded by type and site; for instance, FGDHR for Harar, and an interview by type and site (e.g., RSJJ) represents a remedial student from Jijiga, with other categories identified similarly, uneven family-representative sampling due to unavailability.

2.3 Data collection procedures

Multiple instruments were employed to generate rich and contextually grounded data. In particular, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with students, families, educational experts and school leaders to highlight personal experiences and views of what happens to students after exams. Furthermore, FGDs were held with teachers to enable group introspections on issues of systems. Also, document reviews included examination reports, giving institutional and historical context. Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and all the transcripts were translated into English and subjected to a back-translation procedure by bilingual experts to ensure semantic equivalence and trustworthiness. Documents were also coded on a thematic basis. On average, individual interviews lasted 20–35 minutes, while focus group discussions ranged from 70 to 90 minutes, with each participant engaged in one to two sessions. Combined this multi-instrument, multi-site approach provided triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

2.4 Data analysis

This study employed a deductive thematic analysis, especially following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). The conceptual themes were explicitly derived from the research questions, which in turn ensured analytic focus and theoretical consistency. Initial codes were systematically generated and subsequently organized into predefined themes. Then, subthemes were identified, which lie under each broader theme. In relation to this, a codebook was developed documenting each code's label, definition, and representative data extracts. These subthemes further refined the broader themes while maintaining theoretical alignment with the CIPPO and I-E-O frameworks. NVivo 14 facilitated systematic coding, retrieval of extracts, and visualization of thematic patterns throughout the process.

2.5 Trustworthiness and rigor

This study followed the four criteria laid down by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to guarantee trustworthiness. Data triangulation was performed to ensure the credibility from data sources, and member checking was conducted of six interviewees, where summarized transcripts were shared for verification. A thick description of the research context and institutional settings was provided to facilitate transferability. Dependability was achieved through an audit trail that documenting methodological decisions and coding processes and along with the use of NVivo query logs. Reflective notes and analytic memos were used to ensure conformity, meaning interpretations were grounded in the data of participants.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Haramaya University, before data collection commenced. In line with this approval, the participants were briefed on the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the steps taken to ensure confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality was upheld by assigning pseudonyms and ensuring that responses could not be linked to individual participants. Ethical practice was followed and the right to privacy, dignity and rights of the participants in the study was respected.

The research is therefore transparent and conducted with integrity and safeguarded the data analysis and reporting ethically throughout.

3 Findings

This study explored the factors contributing to students' underperformance in ESSLCE. The data were analyzed deductively using thematic analysis, which revealed a complex interaction among three main themes: student factors, teacher factors, and larger contextual factors, each with associated subthemes.

3.1 Theme One: Student-related factors

For this theme, three sub-themes that affect student performance were identified: (1) motivational and value orientation, (2) preparedness for examinations and academic performance, and (3) gaps in prior academic knowledge and skills.

3.1.1 *Motivational and value orientation*

Participants suggested that low motivation is associated with lower values of education. This subtheme was identified as a major factor of student under performance in ESSLCE. EE-JJ explained, "With a lack of jobs and an increased emphasis placed on business and trading success, students are less inclined or able to devote the time, energy, and resilience to overcoming academic challenges." On the same issue, RS-DD added, "For instance, many graduates from university during the last few years have been working as street vendors and daily laborers. So, why would we want to put a lot of effort into our studies?"

Overall, students' lack of motivation was identified as a challenge, as the students' effort put into education does not necessarily translate to immediate, tangible outcomes. When students feel there is no link between the educational process and future labor market outcomes, or that education has no utility for social mobility, their attitude towards education is negative, and they see it as worthless. As a result, they feel that learning is imposed on them and is not meaningful to them.

3.1.2 *Preparedness and performance barriers*

Multiple overlapping pressures were identified by participants, which negatively affected students' readiness for the ESSLCE. It is also said that the environment of examination itself is a source of psychological tension, as noted in the words of SP-CH: "Students travel to university campuses for a week under strict supervision to take the national examination; it ensures the integrity of the examination but increases psychological pressures and reduces preparedness." Another common issue raised by both FGD-JJ and FGD-HR highlights: "In this particular region, it is common to observe students engaged in different trades, as the area is commonly known as a commodity pathway to centers." On the same issue, offering a contrasting perspective, EE-HR noted: "Even high-achieving students at the school level failed last year's ESSLCE, causing everyone to question the necessity of preparation." This has highlighted that internalizing last year failure rate in believing that success is nearly impossible and weaken preparation.

3.1.3 Foundational knowledge and skill gaps

One significant sub-theme that emerged from the discussions was the appearance of core academic foundational knowledge and skill gaps in which students entered secondary school. This was directly related to the promotion practices followed in the educational system, as SP-HR stated: "Students are promoted from class to class without having mastered the material, as an agenda, high enrollment is a shared objective among all administrators. Simply, the general tendency was to promote access rather than uphold quality."

In addition, FGD-DD raised the language ability as a compounding barrier: "The main problem is the competency of students' instructional language, which is minimal among most of the students." The explanation provided by EE-DD was notably comprehensive in offering a detailed account of the challenges faced by students in this context:

The outcome observed at the end of the day in the ESSLCE mainly goes to challenges encountered at lower grade levels, particularly where overcrowded classrooms and foundational literacy deficits are common in government schools, which accommodate the largest percentage of students, whereas private schools tend to have stronger performance.

To this end, the three subthemes indicate that several factors contribute to student underperformance, including motivational disengagement due to socioeconomic factors, psychological and financial stress about examinations, and the accumulation of core competencies over years of education.

3.2 Theme 2: Teacher-related Factors

This theme explores how teacher-related issues contribute to underperformance in the ESSLCE, proceeding to student-related factors. From the participants' accounts, the following four subthemes arose: (1) instructional practices and pedagogy, (2) motivation, morale, and economic status, (3) professional support and development, and (4) professionalism, ethics, and conduct.

3.2.1 Instructional Practices and Pedagogy

In this section, the recurring issues raised by participants were related to teacher recruitment, training, and the appointment, which they felt were compromising the quality of teaching. As said by the participants of FGD-CH:

Many students who have a degree in any subject other than education are now teaching because of its accessibility, and invite to take a short training course. This has created a situation where most of them see teaching as a temporary job or a stepping stone towards a better-paying employment.

To provide a clearer picture, it is more apt to quote EE-CH accounts: "Ethiopia's MoE has planned to commence, starting in the 2026/2027 academic year, a one year teaching service, involving university students before they complete their studies, in response to addressing the persistent problem of teacher shortages." From this, it is surmised that the recruitment of unqualified teachers as a quick fix to teacher shortages, and on the regular base to hire teachers from those with the poorest grades, is likely to impact classroom

instructional practices. It also suggests that poorly prepared and uncommitted teachers directly affect the learning outcomes of students.

3.2.2 Motivation, morale and economic status

Low satisfaction amongst teachers, due to inadequate compensation and lack of recognition in society, has an impact on teachers, and its consequence is on the performance of students in direct ways. FGD-DD said, "The profession's low standard of recognition has been attributed to the teachers' low salary and lack of financial incentives for them compared to other professions with similar qualifications, which has caused the decline of interest in the teaching profession." In the same vein, SP-JJ added, "High turnover is common in the teaching profession and depends on second jobs to sustain their living." What these stories reveal is that economic struggles hit individual teachers as well as the teaching profession.

It is clear that taking on a second job reduces teachers' availability, preparation, and commitment. This, in turn, leads to lower quality of instruction and poor students' outcomes. All of these factors combine to weaken teachers' professional identity.

3.2.3 Professional support and development

Participants mentioned that the continued need of the system is a lack of proper and inadequate professional development. The participants in FGD-HR stated: "The MoE organized a 15-day-long summer training program for 60,000 secondary schools teachers and school administrators in 2025 at university campuses, with a training of 60 to 120 hours in the subjects matter knowledge, pedagogy, and school administration." This action was an indicator that the issue was being recognized by institutions, but the participants raised concerns about the effectiveness of the training. The same group of participants during FGD-HR reiterated the above and added: "Given these numbers and the 15 days to get the job done, it is difficult to achieve effective skill development, particularly in the situation where the availability of qualified trainers is questionable." The discovery highlights a larger systemic issue where professional development is viewed as a quick fix and not as a long-term foundation to build real competency in teachers.

3.2.4 Professionalism, ethics and conduct

Participants noted that the lack of professional conduct and lack of standards of ethics among teachers adds to underperformance. The expected standard was demarcated with its challenge by EE-DD as: "Competence of teaching, student integrity, fairness, and impartiality among students and staff, despite the lack of adequate professional training." Other participants of FGD-JJ mentioned the difference between this standard and practice: "Professionalism is closely related to integrity, professional development, and commitment to student learning and achievement." The accounts show that the challenges are not unique, such as a failure in responsibility, a lack of commitment to learning, or a failure to establish boundaries, but indicate that it is systemic. Most importantly, this subtheme is strongly linked to the previous three sub-themes: low pay, poor training, and weak recruitment pipelines, all of which contribute to a weakening of the professional standards.

For this reason, these four subthemes put together show that teacher-related issues that affect the underperformance of ESSLCE are systemic rather than individual. A combination of weak recruitment pipelines, economic pressures, lack of professional develop-

ment, and ethical issues creates a vicious cycle that is always a detriment to instructional quality and student outcomes.

3.3 Theme 3: Contextual-related factors

In addition to the two themes mentioned above, participants highlighted the broader contextual theme as a significant contributor, and under it, four subthemes were identified: (1) educational policy and implementation gaps, (2) governance, accountability, and integrity, (3) curriculum and policy misalignment, and (4) resource scarcity and underfunding.

3.3.1 Educational policy and implementation gaps

Participants noted a significant misalignment between the centrally designed education policy framework and their actual implementation at the grass root level. EE-DD stated, "There is discrepancy between the policy framework and school practices, driven by issues of resources, capacity, and governance, particularly limited real autonomy at school levels." This can be accounted in the differing ESSLCE results between regions, zones, and even schools. In FGD-CH, a secondary school teacher elaborated on the funding dimension:

Poor funding in secondary schools had an impact on the quality of education, and therefore, achieving the policy targets is not an easy task, especially at the regional level, due to differences in the allotment of funds from one region to another.

The accounts also emphasize that the decentralized governance system, which was established to distribute responsibility, has resulted in uneven implementation in different administrative areas within the centralized curriculum framework policy.

3.3.2 Governance, accountability, and integrity

Participants identified weak institutional governance, accountability, and integrity as a foundational problem underlying many of the challenges reflected in ESSLCE results. Given that these components are complementary rather than employed interchangeably, EE-CH pointed to structural tensions: "Tensions between top-down mandates and local realities mismatches are visible as well as weak institutional capability at the woreda and school levels." In addition, FR-HR highlighted that accountability is more institutionally based and less at the community level: "The school carries a significant portion of the responsibility, while parents often consider their engagement as less significant." Another research participant, EE-JJ, offered a statement that is equally revealing:

The limited accountability is the root cause of many problems that the sector encounters, most notably the high failure rates in national exams. This situation demands more responsibility from students, teachers, administrators, and all others involved in the educational landscape, including parents. In fact, weak vertical and horizontal coordination persists throughout the system.

Taken together, these viewpoints indicate that there are several levels that accountability gaps exhibited, such as institutional-level, community-level, and individual-level, from

top to bottom. In a context where there is no single responsible body that takes accountability for learning outcomes, underperformance becomes a common phenomenon and depicts the system's malfunctioning. Moreover, it becomes challenging to pinpoint the exact areas where difficulties arise and to find solutions.

3.3.3 Curriculum and policy misalignment

In this sub-theme, participants were more specific about the impact of the misalignment between the content of the centrally designed curriculum and its suitability to the context. One participant, SN-HR, emphasized that "often curricula are developed centrally and implemented without taking local language, culture, and socio-economic contexts into account; that is, a one-size-fits-all approach." Similarly, FGD-CH stated, "Any curriculum must be accompanied by teacher development, robust supervision, and appropriate instructional resources to be effective; if these are not managed appropriately, student outcomes will not improve."

The results show that the policy framework focuses on prioritizing expansion and reform is undertaken without adequately addressing the contextual and capacity-related limitations. The secondary school curriculum has been criticized for being irrelevant to work-related competencies. Most importantly, it lacks complete integration with local knowledge systems.

3.3.4 Resource Scarcity and under-funding

Participants identified that secondary schools face significant challenges of a lack of textbooks, operational laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities, which are more pronounced from the city to the rural areas. Strengthening the notion of the above statement, TS-DD captured the scale of the problem: "Just the existence of overcrowded classrooms and high student-teacher ratios reveals the extent of underfunding and inadequate infrastructure, including the number of secondary schools available." Moreover, SP-HR discussed the structural source of these inequities:

The Federal MoE formulates a general policy, while the Regional Education Bureaus have responsibility for implementing the policy for their respective regions, and the 'Woredas' Education Offices have responsibility for providing direct services. This separation of powers often leads to uneven and unbalanced resource allocation between regions and schools and to insufficient funding for the sector.

Regarding the four research sites ESSLCE score differences, especially EE-DD described: "more private schools are present in Dire Dawa than the governments. These schools are better resourced in provision of facilities". On a similar point, one participant in the FGD-CH commented: "scarcity of resources is a common problem in Chiro secondary schools".

These examples show that decentralization does not necessarily mitigate funding disparities, particularly if it isn't coupled with equitable and robust resource-sharing mechanisms. In general, secondary schools, and particularly in rural areas, are characterized by overcrowding in classes, a lack of textbooks, laboratories, and inadequate ICT facilities, all of which have a direct impact on the performance of the students and ESSLCE.

These four subthemes illustrate that contextual and structural issues are a subtle and complex part of the underperformance issue. Policy-implementation gaps, accountability

gaps, curriculum gaps, and underfunding are not stand-alone problems but rather part of a systemic environment in which students and teachers operate, and they are major determinants of ESSLCE outcomes, irrespective of individual effort.

4 Discussion

This discussion section highlights on the three interrelated themes shaping student outcomes: student-related, teacher-related, and contextual-related factors (see sections 3.1 to 3.3).

4.1 Theme 1: Student-related Factors

Within this theme, the first significant challenge identified directly from participants' accounts was motivational and value-orientation. According to participants, students' lack of interest and commitment to learning stems from the perception that formal education may not provide sufficient financial benefit. This belief is reinforced by high unemployment rates, and the economic reality that many students, even after graduating, still rely on their family's income. This view is supported by [Liu and Helwig \(2020\)](#), who indicated that a decreased societal value of education leads to lower investment in education. What is more, [Tefera et al. \(2024\)](#) noted that only 3% of students passed the national exam, which is indicative of a systemic crisis rather than failure on the part of individual students, and thereby contributes to the motivational disengagement of students within the educational system.

The second sub-theme refers to barriers to preparedness and performance. The finding indicates that the shift of national examination administration from secondary schools to university campuses, which was designed to curb malpractice, has created new challenges. On this, [Amsale et al. \(2023\)](#) noted that the majority of students were new to the experience of remaining on campus for about a week, and they found it hard staying up late in their rooms and the noise from their roommates. Coupled with this, taking a single high-stakes exam with a multi-subject threshold of 50% or higher to score, induces exam stress. In this study area, poverty prevalence resulted in students being involved in income-generating activities, and less time was left for studying. This is related to the socio-economic conditions in Ethiopia in which students have to work alongside their studies to contribute to their families. Endorsing these, [Tefera et al. \(2024\)](#) noted that student performance during an examination could be affected when learners are put in a stressful situation without the required psychological guidance and support. To this end, it is crucial to recognize that exam preparedness barriers are a multilayered chain in addition to the above-mentioned, connected to teachers' preparation, student study habits, support structures, exam-day psychological stress, and logistical demands of the examination process.

The third and final challenge cited by participants in this section was the lack of foundational knowledge and skills. It is common to see incompetent students often advance to the next class in government schools, so this, in turn, imposes a structural constraint on teachers' ability to provide individualized instruction. The study report by [Tebeje and Molla \(2023\)](#) found, among the total grade 4 students, only 10% of them can read and comprehend age-appropriate text in Ethiopia. Similarly, [Alemu \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that from the students who were promoted to grade 9, above 50% were those who scored below the minimum cutoff points. This clearly shows that much emphasis is given in Ethiopian educational landscape to quantity over quality, whereby students who fail to meet the minimum expectations are advanced to the subsequent grade, leaving the

achievement gap to widen each year. This situation is further exacerbated by the sudden change of teaching and learning language from mother tongue to English medium at grade 9 without proper language support, which presents further barriers in all core subjects. This impact is most apparent at the ESSLCE, where deficits add up and become visible in failure rates. Taken together, this necessitates the systemic intervention, starting well before Grade 12, addressing early literacy, grade promotion criteria, and language-of-instruction policy.

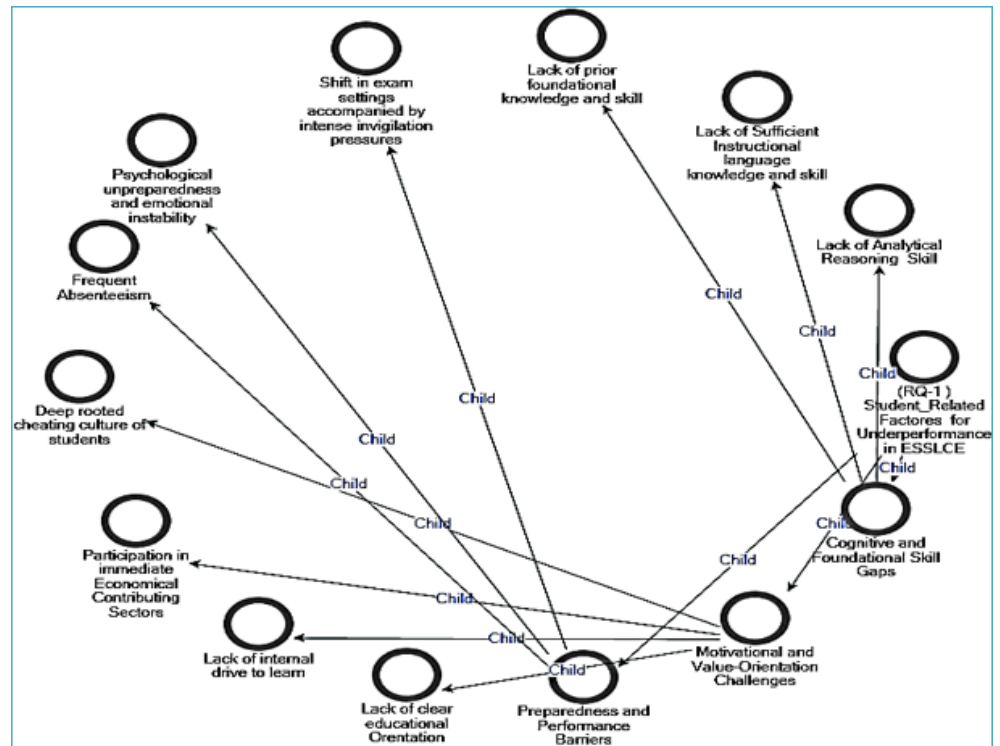


Figure 1: Student-related Theme, Sub-themes, and Codes Classification

4.2 Theme 2: Teacher-related Factors

Primarily, instructional practices and pedagogy were identified as the most contributing factors for the students' underperformance. In a general way, the result indicated a systemic weakness in teaching and learning, caused by the lack of adequate teacher preparation and the focus on teacher-centered pedagogies. This certainly points to a very important factor that contributes to the gap between teachers' capabilities and the demand for adequate student preparation in exams. Building on this, Demissie (2024) underscored that teachers' content knowledge and effective pedagogical practices, are important factors influencing the results of secondary school students. Furthermore, Faro et al. (2025) found that the teaching model employed in Ethiopia does not align with the requirements of the curriculum. In many occasions, reforms have often been rolled out before teacher training and materials were fully in place, and this can make teachers to implement the reform without understanding it (Tiruneh et al., 2024).

The second important factor is the motivation of teachers, morale, and economic difficulties. The findings suggest that teachers' inadequate salaries and persistent inflation have led to lower moral standards, and resulted teachers taking up additional second jobs. Accordingly, teachers focused on content coverage than comprehension and subject depth. This is compounded by less preparation time, classroom innovation, and, ultimately, long-term commitments, which have a direct impact on student outcomes

of learning. On this point, it is imperative to forward the study conducted by [Shishigu \(2015\)](#), which revealed that more than 90% of teachers entering the profession in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, were not passionate but that was the only choice.

Thirdly, gaps identified in the professional support and developments realized to have a direct and measurable effect on student performance. Teachers' preparation for the new curriculum was insufficient, as with many teachers entering classrooms following short-term or fast-track training in teaching profession or had not undergone any such training. This often leaves substantial deficits in subject knowledge and teaching strategies. It is worth noting that these gaps are not static, but they tend to add over time as curriculum requirements evolve faster than teachers' ability to adapt. This is due to the programs being designed centrally at the top-level of the MoE and provided only for layers of experts and officials, but failing to reach the school level, as [Shanko and Kabtyimer \(2024\)](#) indicated. This simply depicts that there is a missing link on the line from federal to regional to zonal and school levels. As for this, the policy implications are that professional development should not be seen as an occasional and partially offered add-on, but rather as a structural component of the teaching profession.

Fourth, compounding all of the above is a crisis of professionalism, ethics, and conduct rooted in systemic decline, and economic stress. In this regard, widespread malpractice and political interference have historically compromised examination integrity due to officials in nearby structures were engaged in promoting students directly, irrespective of actual preparedness to score a pass mark ([Mitiku, 2023](#)). This was intentionally done to make their respective zones or schools successful. Indeed, transferring exam centers to universities has effectively reduced exam malpractices, yet other challenges persist, including inadequate teacher preparation, policy and school reality mismatch, and weak accountability. In conformity with this, [Tamrat \(2023a\)](#) describes the teachers as "ill-qualified, poorly paid, and restive", and notes that the system generally prioritizes high enrollment counts over the achievement of the learning objectives. With this in mind, the study by [Ayechew et al. \(2023\)](#) calls for a collaborative, systematic approach to solutions, considering teacher misconduct as a shared community problem rather than a standalone for teachers.

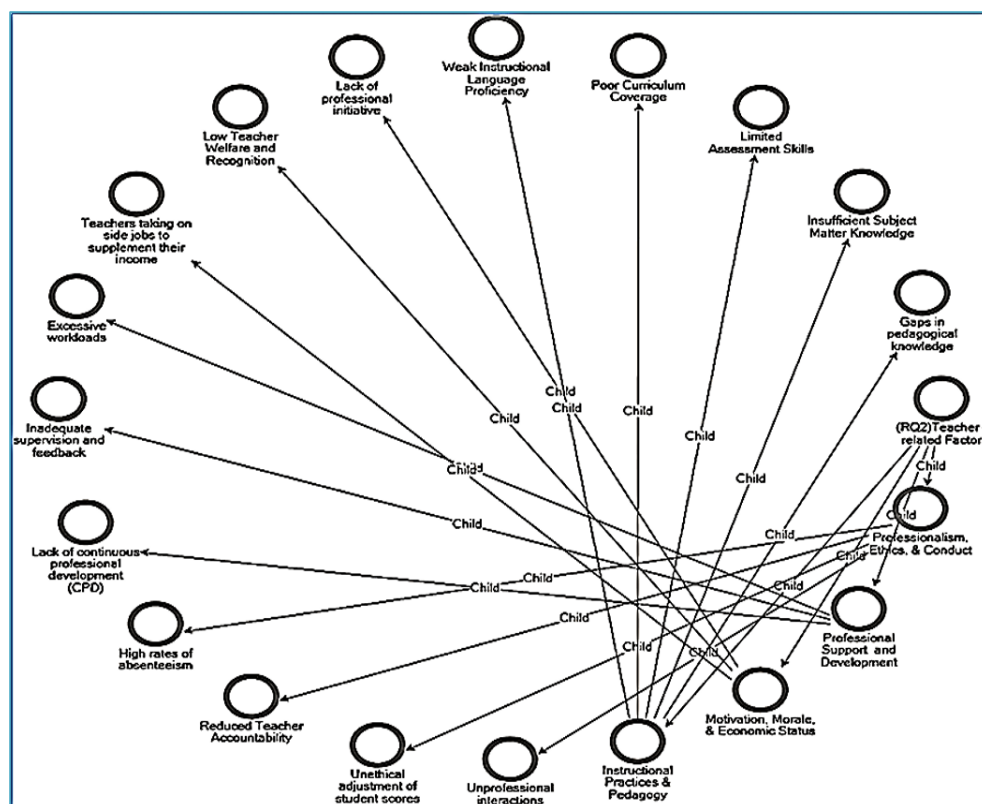


Figure 2: Teacher-related Sub-themes, and Codes Classification

4.3 Theme 3: Contextual-related factors

The initial subtheme identified was the significant discrepancy existing between the centrally designed policy and the classroom implementation layers. For this execution gap, the major drivers identified were inadequate resources and governance weaknesses. This aligns with previous research, as noted by Tebeje and Molla (2023), who argue that abrupt policy changes influence teachers' pedagogical adaptation and enable underprepared students to advance to the next level. Moreover, the introduction of new curricula, textbooks, and pedagogical approaches at regional and school levels is frequently introduced before teacher training is completed and instructional materials are distributed. Consequently, pedagogical reforms are implemented without being fully comprehended by teachers (Alemu, 2023; Tiruneh et al., 2024). In addition, inconsistent implementation of education policy, following the decentralized governance structure of regions and areas, including at the school level, has made it difficult to translate national policies into local practice in an equitable way. Specifically, Tefera et al. (2024) stressed that major educational reforms were designed with unequal participation of stakeholders from the top to the bottom, especially with weak engagement at the bottom. This forms the basis that students' actual performance in ESSLCE is different from one region to another and even from one city to another, including schools, which are in the same region or zones.

Furthermore, the results indicated that weak institutional accountability is a structural root cause of ESSLCE's underperformance at both the institutional and community and individual levels. The participants found that there was a conflict between top-down prescriptions and the local realities, as the woreda education offices and school-level actors were neither empowered nor able to mediate between the two, and thus responsibility was diffused and remains unfulfilled. Strengthening this, Berhanu and Gobie (2023) stated that decentralization merely found theoretically on papers, lack of formal edu-

cational laws and the exclusion of stakeholders' say in decision-making have caused widespread capacity and accountability deficits in the educational system. More critically, the school administration's political loyalty, over educational administrative tasks, has eroded professional culture and undermined meritocratic processes (Tamrat, 2023b; Tebeje & Molla, 2023). To this end, it is crucial to recognize that, with the absence of a clear accountability structure, learning outcomes in ESSLCE will remain the same for an extended period.

Consequently, the findings reveal a significant gap between curriculum content and the practical, economic, and contextual realities it is designed to serve. In this regard, the curriculum is highly theoretical in orientation and insufficient to address the economic demands of the day. Moreover, it disregards context-relevance by advocating a uniform approach to content delivery. Despite the policy emphasis on skill development, rote learning is a pedagogical approach that is widely employed in the classroom, as mentioned by Tebeje and Molla (2023). Problem solving skills and critical thinking skills, on the other hand, are the core skills for preparation of the ESSLCE. To this end, Demissie (2024) found that the theoretical focus has reduced the skill practices of students, and focus now is on admission to a university, rather than skills development.

Finally, the findings indicate that resource scarcity is a major structural determinant of ESSLCE failure. Secondary schools report critical shortages of textbooks, functional laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities, with conditions deteriorating markedly in rural contexts, where classroom overcrowding—frequently exceeding 50 students per class—severely constrains instructional quality. The fragmented funding structure, distributed across the Federal Ministry of Education, Regional Education Bureaus, and Woreda Education Offices, produces inequitable resource allocation both within and across regions. This inequity is compounded by a real decline in per-student education expenditure of approximately 23% between 2017 and 2022, driven by inflation and competing fiscal priorities (Tiruneh & Molla, 2024). The literature affirms that achieving SDG 4 requires not merely increased investment but structural reform of resource distribution mechanisms, a conclusion that directly applies to addressing ESSLCE mass failure.

5 Conclusions

The study indicated that students' under-performance in the ESSLCE is not the result of isolated factors but of systemic interactions among student-related, teacher-related, and contextual factors. Most importantly, these factors are mentioned as interconnected and reinforce a cycle of weak learning outcomes. At the student level, motivational disengagement, lack of preparedness, and gaps in foundational knowledge contribute to under-performance in ESSLCE. While weak instructional practices, poor morale standard due to economic hardship, limited professional development and low professional integrity, were some of the reasons for students' under-performance in ESSLCE at the teacher level. At the contextual level, misaligned policies, governance deficiencies, incoherence of the curriculum and lack of resources contribute to inequality between schools and regions were accounted for under-performance in ESSLCE. Considering the two lenses used in this research, the CIPO framework and the I-E-O model, the findings revealed that structural conditions (context, teacher, and student) and transformative processes (learning environment, instructional practices) interact and explain the persistence of weak educational outcomes. This integration clarifies that while reforms have enhanced the integrity of the examination process, there are deeper systemic challenges to learning that have not yet been tackled.

The insight developed from the findings implies that the policy intervention should move from enrollment expansion to improving the quality of education. This should focus

on targeted teacher training and recruitment reforms, including maintaining curriculum alignment. Moreover, it is necessary to fill the gaps between instructional language competencies and exam requirements. There is also a need to reinforce accountability mechanisms and keep the balance of resources allocation between regions the same. Overall, student support systems such as remedial programs and psychosocial services should be institutionalized to mitigate motivational and preparedness challenges. Unless coordinated action takes place on all of these fronts, the vicious circle of underperformance will persist and continue to erode human capital and national development prospects.

6 Limitations

The conclusions of this study are confined to four cities in Eastern Ethiopia: Chiro, Harar, Dire Dawa, and Jigjiga, and may not fully represent experiences beyond this region. Furthermore, the study draws on the distinct voices and lived experiences of stakeholders, without statistical inference. As such, the broader crisis across Ethiopia's more than 3,700 secondary schools cannot be fully captured. Besides, the account of teachers, school administrators and supervisors may reflect social desirability biases. Future studies should therefore use multi-site, data-based analysis on a wider geographic scale to give a national perspective.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

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