

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**AUTOMATIC PROMOTION PRACTICES IN THE FIRST-CYCLE OF
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WEST GOJJAM ZONE**

DEREJE TAYE

JUNE, 2003

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By
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Abstract

The effective implementation of automatic promotion requires complementary and more systematic changes in the schools. This study was designed to assess automatic promotion practices in light of these requirements.

The study was conducted in 21 schools as sources of information from the four Woredas of West Gojjam Zone. 154 teachers of the grades 1-3, 21 principals and 8 Woreda Education experts and supervisors were taken as sources of information. The data was collected through questionnaires, interview and observation checklist. The data obtained were analyzed mainly using percentage and qualitative presentation.

The results of the study reveals that the awareness of teachers about the reasons behind the introduction of automatic promotion in the schools, and about the different alternative strategies other than retention and automatic promotion in dealing with low-performing students is low. They also have negative attitudes towards automatic promotion. Teachers seem to know all the implications of automatic promotion in their teaching practices. But, in practice, teachers' utilization of continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms is poor. They are also poor in applying different corrective measures to help low-performing students individually. There is no any program arranged at school level to help underachievers before they promote to the next grade. There are repeaters in the grades 1-3 while practicing automatic promotion. The main criterion that is used in the schools to make promotion-retention decisions is attendance.

In light of these findings, it is necessary to provide schools with relevant publications on the issue of retention versus automatic promotion and encourage teachers to conduct action research in their respective schools. It is also important to provide teachers with continuous assessment and promotion guides, well-developed checklists and observational techniques and alternative materials. The involvement of parents in their children's learning and further strengthening of the existing self-contained classroom set up are also recommended. Finally, it is advisable to improve teachers' awareness and skill about all the implications of automatic promotion through in-service courses, seminars, conferences, workshops and field-trips.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Education provides people with what Noble Laureate Amartya San calls "human capabilities": the essential and individual power to reflect, make choice, seek voice in society, and enjoy a better life (World Bank, 2002). Education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality. It is also fundamental for the construction of democratic societies, and dynamic and globally competitive economies.

In particular, primary education develops the capacity to learn, to read and use mathematics, to acquire information, and to think critically about that information. Researchers have also proved that primary education promotes the achievement of seven of the eight Millennium Development Goals: poverty reduction, universal primary education, gender equity, reproductive health, and lower maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS prevalence, and infant and child mortality (World Bank, 2002). Primary education is also the get way to all higher levels of education that provide the critical mass of scientists, teachers, doctors and other highly skilled professionals that every country, no matter how small or poor, requires.

It is with the above facts that one hundred and eighty countries have committed themselves to achieve universal primary education by 2015 in such a way that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Ethiopia, as one of these countries, has extended its effort towards this goal. This is reflected in the new Education and Training Policy (ETP) and its strategic plan. For example, it is stated in the strategic plan, which

translates the policy statement into action that the goal of the ETP is universal primary enrollment by 2015 (MOE, 1998). In the same document, increasing primary enrollment from 30% to 50% and increasing the efficiency of primary schools by reducing repeaters and dropouts were two of the goals to be achieved in the years 1997/98 to 2001/02. These and other activities in the education sector clearly indicate the commitment of the government to achieve universal primary education by 2015.

In many developing countries, including Ethiopia, however, grade repeaters and dropouts are becoming obstacles in the effort to universalize primary education as intended (UNESCO, 1998;Torres, 1995). Repeating a grade means utilizing more resources than allocated to a student and leaving a school (drop out) before completing a particular cycle of education is also wastage of resources. In both cases, the meager resources allocated for education and time will be wasted and underutilized. A recent study by UNESCO (1998), for example, have proved that 16% of the resources allocated to education each year in developing countries are wasted due to repeaters and dropouts from grade 1 through grade 4. Besides, pupils who leave the system prematurely and regularly will become functionally illiterate and discourage others from entering it (UNESCO, 1986).

In Ethiopia, before 1994 about one-third of students enrolled in the first grade drop out of school and close to 11% are known to repeat grade each year (MOE, 1994). The efficiency coefficient of the primary schools (grade 1-8) is also 47.4% for girls, 52.5% for boys, and 50.6% for both sexes (Tegegn, 1998:109). This means that of all the students enrolled in grade 1 in one academic year, only about 50% graduate grade 8. Moreover, one characteristic feature of repeaters in Ethiopian primary schools is that they are more likely to be dropouts. Tilaye (1997), for example, found out

that 87.1% of female dropouts and 33.8% of male dropouts had experienced the phenomenon of repeating.

One of the reforms made to address the issue of repetition and dropouts in Ethiopian primary schools is the introduction of automatic promotion policy from grade 1 through grade 3 (MOE, 1998). This is done with the assumption that students are much more likely to complete primary school education if they manage to complete the first few year. It is also believed that automatic promotion reduces the problem of repetition and dropout rates with little or additional costs (MOE, 1996).

Schools practice grade repetition as a remedy to academic failure. Teachers, school principals and even parents believe that repeating the same grade (for one, two or more grades) will ensure learning by providing more time with nonmastered skills to repeaters (Torres, 1995; Smith and Shepard, 1987). But most studies so far conducted have disproved this assumption. Researches indicated that, even though retained students showed a relative academic gain in the year following retention, they did worse than similar students who did not repeat in subsequent years (Holmes and Mathew, 1984; Roderick, 1993; Shepard, 1994; Willson and Ramsay, 1999).

A meta-analysis study by Holmes and Mathew (1984) also showed that repetition in the early grades is negatively correlated with such independent variables as academic performance, personal adjustment (which include self-concept, social adjustment, and emotional adjustment), and attitude towards school, behavior, and attendance. A recent meta-analytic study by Willson and Ramsay (1999) also proved the same. In general, early grade repetition affects the entry point

of the school system, where essential foundations for future learning, self-esteem and self-confidence are established (Torres, 1995).

Retention in a grade also greatly increases the likelihood that a student will drop out of a school and being held back twice makes dropping out a virtual certainty (Roderick, 1993; Shepard, 1994; Torres, 1995). Much of the highest dropout rates among retained students may be explained by the impact of being overage and its social and psychological consequences. A study by Roderick (1993) confirmed that students who are overage for grade were at a higher risk of dropping out throughout school career. Students who are older than their classmates may feel isolated from and different than their peers. The teachers may also treat students who are older differently regardless of their academic performance. This association between repetition and dropout has strong implication to Ethiopian primary schools, because first-cycle primary grades in Ethiopia are dominated by overage children (Tesfa, 2001). Practicing grade repetition in these grades will, therefore, make the problem of dropouts worse.

Generally, repetition affects efficiency that it ties up school resources that could otherwise be allocated to reaching non-enrolled children, and dropout rates could also be increased in the schools. This means that repetition causes educational wastage and become obstacle in the universalization of primary education.

Therefore, it is responsive to practice automatic promotion in the lower primary grades. However, automatic promotion effected in isolation and in the absence of complementary and more systematic changes, for that matter-may diminish repetition and dropout, but not necessarily ensure learning (Torres, 1995). That is, if automatic promotion is taken in isolation, it may leave

a proportion of children functionally illiterate at grade 4. To avoid such negative effects, schools should practice automatic promotion with all its implications.

Automatic promotion implies that schools and teachers must assess each pupil's learning and take appropriate remedial measures on a continuous basis (Hussen, 2002). Teachers need to bring the classroom instruction to the needs and interests of students rather than taking the students to the instruction (Labaree, 1984). This requires teachers to assess the needs, interests and learning progress of each student in their instruction. That is, continuous assessment should be an integral part of their instruction so that they can identify the learning difficulties of students and take the necessary corrective measures. Teachers also need to change the belief that repetition is an effective remedial action for academic failure (Roderick, 1993). Similarly, schools together with teachers and parents should arrange alternative remedial programs for underachieving students.

After the implementation of automatic promotion since 1997/98, repetition and dropouts are still reported. The achievement of students on core subjects at the end of the first-cycle of primary education is not also satisfactory (below 50%) (NOE, 2000; ICDR, 2001). These two developments in the lower primary schools of Ethiopia forces the researcher to question whether automatic promotion is being implemented with all its implications or not. Therefore, this study will try to address the question in the elementary schools of West Gojjam zone of Amhara Regional State.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The implementation of the first five-year education sector strategy program (ESDP1) was undertaken in the years 1997/98 to 2001/02 in all the regions of Ethiopia except Somali. One of

the objectives of ESDP1 was increasing the efficiency of primary schools by reducing repeaters and dropouts. However, in the last five years the efficiency of the primary schools continued to be low. This was clearly seen from the increased rate of repeaters and dropouts. For instance, the repetition rates of primary schools since 1996/97 were 11% in 1996/97, 12% in 1997/98, 8.2% in 1998/99, 9.1% in 1999/2000 and 9.7% in 2001/02 (MOE, 2002). Similarly, the dropout rates were 12.3% in 1996/97, 12.1% in 1997/98, 19% in 1998/99, 17.8% in 1999/2000 and 16.2% in 2000/01(MOE, 2002).

Even in the first-cycle primary grades, where automatic promotion is introduced, repeaters and dropouts were reported. Of all the grades in the primary schools, it was also at grade one that a higher rate of repeaters and dropouts were reported. For example, the repetition rates at grade one were 10.6% and 11.1% in the years 1999/2000 and 2000/01 respectively. Similarly, in these same years first grade dropouts were 27.9% and 27.5% respectively.

On the other hand, two studies were conducted to measure the achievement of students who reached grade four since automatic promotion policy is introduced in the lower primary schools of Ethiopia. To mention one, in the National Baseline Assessment Study, children achieved a mean score of 0.643 in basic reading, 0.481 in environmental science, 0.405 in English and 0.393 in math (NOE, 2000). The results were not satisfactory.

The repetition and dropout rates reported while practicing automatic promotion on the one hand, low achievement of students who completed the first-cycle of primary education on the other, may lead one to question whether automatic promotion policy is being implemented with all its implications or not. Studying the practice of automatic promotion in our primary school is,

therefore, timely and important. This study, then assesses automatic promotion practices in the primary schools of West Gojjam Zone in Amhara Regional State which followed similar trend in implementing the first five-years of the NETP.

To this effect, the following leading questions are formulated:

1. What is the awareness of teachers about automatic promotion and its implications in the schools?
2. What is the attitude of teachers towards automatic promotion?
3. Do teachers use continuous assessment in their instruction?
4. What specific corrective measures (strategies) teachers use to help underachieving students?
5. Are there school programs arranged to help low-performing students?
6. Are there repeaters in schools where automatic promotion is practiced?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for the following reasons:

1. The research will help to examine the practice of automatic promotion in the first-cycle of primary schools and it will also help to create an awareness of the practice among teachers, school directors, managers, educational planners and officers. This awareness may help to take appropriate remedial measures to eliminate the weaknesses in the practice of automatic promotion.
2. The research will suggest recommendations to solve at least some of the major problems, which may affect the proper practice of automatic promotion.
3. It will also give highlights for those interested researchers to work on this area.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study

The research would have been more meaningful if it had been conducted by using a nation or region wide sample, but it is delimited to West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region. This is because as per the Educational Statistics Annual Abstract 1994 E.C the concentration of primary schools in this Zone was first on regional scale. The second reason to delimit the study to the above mentioned zone is that the researcher was born and brought up there. The researcher feels that the reason for selecting West Gojjam Zone as a sole setting for this research work will have no significant impact on the final outcome of the study it is hoped.

The study is also limited to teachers teaching at the first-cycle of primary education for they have better information and experience in the practice of automatic promotion.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Since this study has not been conducted on National or Regional scale, the findings which would have been the basis for fair generalization are not supposed to be free from some limitations which are likely to appear from the same study. In fact, the basis taken into consideration for not undertaking a nation or region-wide based research was due, principally, to time constraints, shortage of finance, and unmanageability of the size and number of primary schools.

The next restriction of the study, up to the researcher best knowledge, is shortage of materials which are based on exhaustive research work on this topic both in other counties and Ethiopian context, and a few source materials were repeatedly used. The last encounter the researcher can state is that some of the respondents almost found not willing to fill out and return the questionnaires on the very expected time. In general, in carrying out the study, the researcher did

not find his walks free from these limitations. However, he tried to overcome all these pitfalls and finally emerged with this outcome.

1.6 Definitions of Important Terms

In this study, the terms below are used with the meanings given to each of them as follows:

1. ***Attitude***:- in this study attitude refers to the teacher's beliefs, feelings, and commitments in practicing automatic promotion.
2. ***Automatic promotion***:- is a practice in first-cycle of primary schools which is advancing of pupils from one grade to the next higher grade at the end of the school year regardless of the educational attainment of the pupils.
3. ***Awareness about Automatic Promotion***:- refers to having a knowledge about automatic promotion and its implications.
4. ***Grade repetition/retention***:- refers when pupils are given an additional year to repeat a grade to go over the same academic content, often taught the same way, that they failed to master the previous year.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Character and Course of Promotional Policy

Appropriate standards for student promotion have been a concern since the founding of the common graded school systems. Prior to that time public education was a small scale individualized process under which each student advanced through a series of texts at his or her own pace, as determined by recitations with the teacher (Labaree, 1984; Cunningham and Owens, 1979). In the absence of a comparison group, students experienced neither promotion nor retention but rather a solitary form of forward movement. With the arrival of universal public education, student promotion suddenly became an important social issue- the result of the graded structure imposed on the new common school systems at the time of their funding.

According to the review of Labaree (1984), grading was a response to two forms of pressure exerted on the new school systems, one organizational and the other cultural. Organizationally, the sharp rise in the number of students put the common schools under intense pressure to develop a system of instruction which was fiscally, socially, and pedagogically efficient. The result was that they abandoned the inefficiency of traditional individualized instruction in favor of the economies of scale embodied in the simultaneous instruction of an entire class. The whole class learned the same material at the same time, the students could then proceed on to more difficult material as a group. This practice results in batch promotion-cohorts of students of similar age and, presumably, similar ability, moving through a progression of educational stages.

Culturally, the new schools were under pressure to embody and to transmit meritocratic values—particularly the belief that rewards are allocated according to individual ability and effort that are earned not given. To the extent that a student's rise to each higher stage came as the result of personal achievement, the school system was a hierarchy of merit. Thus, concerns about both efficiency and merit led to the grading of students. The resulting tension centered on promotion. The question was whether the primary unit of promotion was the age-cohort or the individual. The ideal case for educational efficiency has always been to move entire classes through the grade levels like an assembly line with no rejects. The meritocratic ideal has been to promote only those who have reached an acceptable level of achievement.

These alternatives embody different conceptions of the learning capabilities of children and of the goals of public education (Labaree, 1984; Smith and Shepard, 1994). Promotion by class rather than by individual student implies that, with relatively few exceptions, all children are capable of learning the same material, although not always at the same time. Schools are seen as attempting to move the great majority of students through their curricula altogether. On the other hand, individual promotion implies that students have widely varied capacities for learning, either because of differences in innate ability or differences in motivation. Schools are seen as trying to select the most able and willing students in order to propel them into higher forms of education while teaching the less capable students at less advanced levels.

This conflict between organizational efficiency and meritocratic values, between the goal of groups learning and the goal of individual selection, has been a source of controversy from the time of the first graded schools to the present day. Now a days promotional policies become more controversial when it comes to dealing with low-performing students in a given grade.

2.1.1. Automatic Promotion Versus Retention

Since the beginning of graded school system, automatic promotion and retention have been seen as opposite ends of a continuum of approaches to students having difficulty making progress in the schools (Johnson, 1984). Promotional policies fluctuate from one extreme to another. The pendulum has swung back and forth as the educational community and the public have tried to determine which practice is the proper response to low student performance.

At one time the prevailing philosophy of schools become automatic promotion. Automatic promotion is considered as the most beneficial to children. At this time rigid promotional standards are seen as punitive (Cunningham and Owens, 1979). It is believed that promotion by merit might expose children to mental stress at an early age, thus causing psychological damage. This damage become more pronounced when those children who do not achieve the minimum requirements in a given grade-usually determined by standardized test-are forced to repeat the grade (Shepard and Smith, 1986; Holmes & Mathew, 1984). Consequently these students may develop negative attitude towards school and they are more likely to drop out of school (Roderick, 1993).

As a result of the above theoretical assumptions, most examinations required for promotion in the different grades are abandoned and promotional standards become more relaxed. This relaxation of the promotional standards is justified by three arguments.

First, educators argued that schooling should be structured around the learning needs and abilities of the great bulk of its students rather than the selection and development of the most able

(Labaree, 1984). Schools should give all students equal access to a high-quality educational experience (Torres, 1995). According to these educators, the function of schools is to furnish an elementary education to maximum number of children. Other things being equal a school is best when it regularly promotes and finally graduates the largest percentage of its pupils.

Moreover, advocates of automatic promotion asserted that schools should not only adapt themselves to the academic abilities but also to the broader social needs of the average students (Dewey, cited in Labaree, 1984). In practice this meant a shift from a curriculum-centered school, with its exclusive focus on intellectual development, to a child-centered school, which included concern for the social and emotional development of the student. It is argued that a child who is well adjusted socially or emotionally will achieve better than the child who is maladjusted (Cunningham and Owens, 1979)

Second, educators argued that a zealous policy of non-promotion seriously impaired the organizational efficiency of the school (Smith and Shepard, 1994; UNESCO, 1998). Cost effectiveness is an important goal of any school, and from this perspective extensive repetition-as reflected in a large pool of overage students appear wasteful indeed.

Third, educators did not entirely abandon a concern for merit, but they now sought to foster academic achievement not by means of high standards and frequent retentions but by instituting a system of tracking (Labaree, 1984). Schools can develop what they call differentiated curricula, for example, academic, commercial, manual training, etc. Special education classes and ability grouping are also used by applying intelligent testing. Standardized tests are used as a factor in

the process of placing a student with in the appropriate track, rather than as a promotional standard.

The advocates of merit promotion, on the other hand, oppose the practice of automatic promotion for its less emphasis to students' achievement. They take the decline in students' scores on standardized achievement tests in those schools where automatic promotion is practiced (Ebel, 1980). Why, they ask, should schools be advancing students to the next grades who have not yet mastered the skills being taught in their current grade. They assert that something is clearly wrong with the structure of schooling when high schools graduate functional illiterates. Automatic promotion is blamed for much of this deficiency in achievement, for the following reasons (Ebel, 1980; Labaree, 1984; Clarizio, et. al, 1994)

1. Within a school system, a policy of automatic promotion appears symbolic of general lack of commitment to students' achievement.
2. Setting low minimum achievement levels for promotion is thought to foster low achievement expectations. Critics contend that lowering the "floor" for achievement at a particular grade level leads to a lowering of the "ceiling" as well while a raised floor leads to a raised ceiling.
3. Promoting students who have not mastered the material for their grade level is perceived as a form of dishonesty. Schools are accused of rewarding students for lack of accomplishment-which instills in them an inflated sense of their own capabilities and teaches them that one can indeed get something for nothing.
4. Promoting students according to age rather than demonstrated achievement, opponents of the policy contend, ignores the significant differences in abilities and application that mark students within a particular age group. Automatic promotion sees students as

broadly similar in learning capacity and thus seeks to deal with them collectively, but critics charge that students' abilities are distributed approximately along a normal curve, which means that schools must make individual discriminations among them.

5. Automatic promotion is seen as a prime example of a more general problem within the schools, pandering to students. Critics charge that by promoting the unqualified, schools are adjusting their curriculum and instruction to the needs and wishes of the students when, in fact, students should be adapting to school standards. Critics understand it as the function of schools to lead students, not follow them. They see other examples of this trend-particularity in the proliferation of electives in place of more rigorous academic courses, and in the relaxation of discipline.

Consequently, critics of automatic promotion, recommend schools to raise their standards for promotion from one grade to the next. If a student fails to meet these standards in a given grade, she/he needs to repeat the grade. The advocates of merit promotion try to justify the link between repetition and academic achievement of underachieving students using different theoretical assumptions. These assumptions include the following.

1. ***Fear of retention.*** Such a policy may turn out to have a significant effect in motivating a student to achieve, and also in motivating the students' parents and teachers to help promote such achievement. Merit promotions encourage students to look over their shoulders to the possibility of retention. This negative motivation influence low achieving students who are likely to respond to the stimulus since they are the population at risk of retention. In particular, the students most likely to be spurred into action by a merit promotion policy are those receiving a mid-year letter announcing that retention will occur unless performance improves.

Several implications of this motivational system should make an administrator cautious. First, retention is only effective as a motivating device for students to the extent that they find it distasteful. Reasons for such distaste include that unhappiness at being separated from classmates and the shame at being labeled low. If students feel this way in anticipation of retention, is it not possible that being compelled to experience retention might have harmful effects on their personal adjustment? Of course, proponents of retention policies argue that the policy is not in fact punitive but remedial.

If retention is a strong motivating device, then retention are likely to be fewer, but the students retained are more likely to experience it as punishment. If retention is a weak motivating device, the effect on the student is likely to be more remedial than punitive, but the number retained is likely to be large. No school system wants to make retention unpleasant simply to scare students into passing.

Second, while the fear of retention may motivate the low achieving student, it is likely to have little or no effect on the average or superior student whose scores are comfortably within the passing range. Therefore, this is not a strategy aimed at raising the minimum level of all students.

Third, the focus on motivation assumes that the problem of underachievement derives from lack of incentive. To the extent that poor test scores are the result of such factors as class background, racial dissemination, family conditions and test invalidity, the student's motivation is irrelevant, and retention will not spur the student to higher achievement.

Fourth, the news that a child is in danger of failing is likely to have an effect on most parents but the way in which this effect is transmitted to the child may vary considerably. Parents who interpret the problem as academic may seek to help the student with his or her work, but those parents who interpret the problem as disciplinary may be more likely to punish the students. At home as at school, merit promotion poses a choice between remediation and punishment.

2. Advocates of rigid promotional standards in schools recommend repetition for those students who do not meet the standards. This policy of repetition is based on the assumption that repeating the same grade (for one, two or more years) will insure learning (Torres, 1995). Pedagogically, this means that the student that did not learn or did not learn enough will learn if he or she take the same road again; that nothing was learned along the process and it is thus necessary to start from the beginning once again; that knowledge and learning operate in a linear dimension, follow fixed routes and derive from cyclic repeating and drilling. But critics argue that there is no guarantee that the same road that made the child fail will help him/her perform better. They also criticize that the social and psychological consequences of being overage for a grade when the child repeated that grade is usually harmful to the children (Roderick, 1993).

2.1.2. Promotional Policies and Students Achievement

Apart from the theoretical assumptions behind promotional policies, lots of research activities have been undertaken to justify the assumptions empirically. Such studies mainly concentrate on the relative effectiveness of retention and automatic promotion in improving achievements of low-performing students. They are usually conducted by comparing the achievements of retained students to promoted students.

Reviewers of such studies in the 1970's and early 1980's found out that the methodology used in previous studies has been seriously flawed (Jackson, 1975, Labaree, 1984) and that many of the results were contradictory (Johnson, 1984). For example, Jackson's thorough review of the literature in 1975 turned-up forty-four studies on the relative benefits of retention and promotion. Unfortunately, despite the volume of research on the subject, there are no reliable and definitive findings which could serve as a basis for policy. Jackson's conclusion about the literature was the following: "the accumulated research evidence is so poor that valid inferences can not be drawn concerning the relative benefits of these two options" (1975: 627). The problem was not that the studies failed to come up with findings favoring one alternative or the other but that more often than not these findings were invalidated by flawed methodology.

After identifying the methodological problems in the previous studies, Jackson (1975) recommended more rigorous experimental studies to reduce threats to external validity. In his "ideal" experiment, conceived to test the relative merits of automatic promotion and grade retention, a large number of low achieving students from a large and diverse population would be randomly divided into two groups. To insure that these groups are statistically comparable, Jackson suggested that students from each group be cross- matched according to variables of achievements, adjustment, and ability. The two nearly identical groups would then be retained or promoted as treatment condition. Through high school the academic achievement and social and personal adjustments of each student would be monitored and periodically evaluated. All remedial treatments supplied to failing students would be carefully defined before hand, and carefully recorded under experimental conditions.

Following these recommendations, educators like Holmes, Mathew, Smith and Shepard, etc., reviewed several studies using a method of meta-analysis. In most of the studies reviewed, the effect of retention is estimated by comparing the achievement test scores of retained students to a matched group of promoted youths. Using this method, estimates differ depending on whether students' scores are compared when they are the same age or after they have completed the same grade. Studies that use same-age comparisons generally find that promoted students perform better than retained students in the year after retention and that the academic performance of retained pupils continues to lag behind that of promoted youths in later grades (Holmes and Mathew, 1984; Holmes cited in Shepard, 1994). For example, Holme's meta-analysis study cited in Roderick (1995), indicates that retained students score on average 0.45 standard deviations lower on tests of achievement than automatically promoted students in the year after retention occurs.

Studies comparing retained and automatically promoted students after they complete the same grade and same-material (same-grade comparisons) do not show large negative effects of grade repetition on achievement and often find small positive ones. These positive effects, however, appear to be short term, lasting more than two to three years (Holmes (in Shepard, 1994)). Research findings also differ depending on the grade in which students are retained. In general, early grade retentions are associated with moderate positive benefits for school performance (Pierson and Connel, 1992). However, such effects are short term (Roderick, 1993; Shepard, 1994). Studies that compare performance of retained to promoted students in later grades tend to find large negative effects of grade retention (Holmes (in Roderick, 1995); Roderick, 1993).

In sum, results of studies investigating the effects of retention on academic performance generally indicate that retention, as a means of remediation, does not work. At best, it leaves students who are already lagging behind their peers even further behind. At worst, retention has negative effects on measured achievements, particularly in later grades.

2.1.3. Promotional Policy and Attitude Towards School

While much is known about the effects of grade retention and automatic promotion on measured achievement, studies about how these promotional policies influence students' attitude towards themselves and school are scant and results are mixed (Roderick, 1995). Qualitative studies most often show that students react negatively to retention. As reviewed by Pratt (1994), younger children often perceive retention as a form of punishment and a stigma. They also rate repeating a grade as more shameful than even wetting in class or being caught stealing. Similarly, qualitative studies of adolescents often conclude that grade retention exacerbates disengagement from school and leads to increase in frustration at doing poorly (Roderick, 1993).

Quantitative studies examining the effects of retention on self-esteem and attitudes towards school have found negative effects when retained students are compared to matched promoted youth. In their meta-analysis, Holmes and Mathew (1984), concluded that across studies retention has negative but relatively moderate effects on measured self-esteem and social attachment. Similarly, Shepard and Smith (1986), after reviewing researches conducted on the effects of retained children in kindergarten or first grade, concluded that kindergarten and first grade retention will make children have slightly more negative feeling about school and will hurt their self-esteem.

On the other hand a research conducted by Pierson and Connel (1992) suggested that retention in the early years of elementary school is not associated with negative effects on general self-worth and perceived relatedness to peers. This result is indirect contrast to those reported by Holmes and Methew (1984) and Shepard and Smith (1986). Perhaps the first reason for these differences could be due to the differences in methodologies (Pierson and Conell, 1992). Another reason could be that the negative effects of retention on students' self-esteem and attitude toward school reveal itself in the later grades. A child who is retained or overage for a grade in early grades, continues to be overage in later grades. Youths who are older than their classmates may feel isolated from and different than their peers, particularly during adolescence (Roderick, 1993). Teachers may also treat youths who are older differently, regardless of their academic performance. Therefore, early grade-repetition, leading to being overage in later grades, may cause negative effects on students' self esteem and attitudes toward school.

In any case retention, in the early grades or later grades, do not have positive (if not negative) effects on self-esteem and attitude toward school on the part of the repeaters. Moreover, opponents of retention argue that the effects of retention are more negative for academic achievement than for personal adjustment. They also suggest that long-term effects are more strongly negative than short-term effects.

2.1.4. Promotional Policies and School Dropout

Opponents of grade retention cite the strong relationship between grade retention and dropping out as evidence that school systems' policies are placing youths at risk of early school leaving. Indeed the strength of the relationship is impressive. A research conducted by Roderick (1993) found out that 77 percent of youths who had repeated at least one grade dropped out of school

compared to only 25 percent of youths who had never failed a grade. Another study, cited in Roderick (1995), proved that one grade retention increases the risk of dropping out by 40 to 50 percent, and more than one by 90 percent. The likelihood that grade repeaters are to be dropouts is also very high in Ethiopian primary and secondary schools. Tilaye (1997), for example, found out that 87.1 percent of female dropouts and 33.8 percent of male dropouts had experienced the phenomenon of repeating, i.e. repeated a grade at least once.

Few attempts are also made to identify how much of the association between grade retention and early school leaving can be attributed to an independent impact of grade retention, to the impact of grade retention on later school performance, or to the simple fact that youths who perform poorly could be both more likely to dropout and to be retained. In this respect, Roderick (1993) found out that approximately one- third of the association between grade retention and school dropout could be explained by differences in the school performance of youths as measured by grades and attendance. The study by Grisson and Shepard (in Shepard, 1994) also revealed that repeating a grade contribute substantially to the risk of dropping out of school over and above the effects of socioeconomic status and prior achievement. This study proves that for students who were equally low in achievement and other "at-risk" background characteristics, retained students were 20 to 30 percent more likely to dropout. This finding is also true regardless of whether grade retention occurred early or late in a youth's school career (Roderick, 1993; Shepard, 1994).

Efforts are also made to see whether being overage for grade increased the chances of dropping out and whether the impact of being overage for grade could explain the higher dropout rates among retained youths. Based on his findings, Roderick (1993) suggest that being overage for grade may increase the likelihood of school dropout, and this effect may explain a large

proportion of the association between grade retention and early school leaving. He further suggest that youths who are overage for grade are at higher risk of dropping out throughout their school careers. Generally, using data from individual school systems, several studies have shown that students who are retained or who are overage for grade drop out at significantly higher rates, even when controlling for prior achievement or grades and attendance (Roderick, 1995).

It is based on this assumption that educators argue decreasing repetition rates in the schools may lead to a decrease in dropout rates. Thus, automatic promotion, by decreasing grade repetition rate, may help to reduce the case of dropouts in the schools.

2.2. The Implementation of Automatic Promotion

Researches so far conducted conclude that grade retention, as typically implemented, is an ineffective if not harmful practice. Both individual research studies and comprehensive reviews of research over the past few decades have proved the negative impact of retention. Grade retention has no benefits for either school achievement or personal adjustment. The effects of retention are more negative for academic achievement than for personal adjustment. Long-term effects are more strongly negative than short-term effects. The most serious effect of retention is its strong relation with later dropping out of school. In turn the social and economic costs to society of school dropouts are also sever.

As an alternative, automatic promotion has been instituted by many countries as a means to deal with repetition, adopting different modalities: it applies to the first two or three grades, or to two-year modules, or to the whole primary education cycle (Torres, 1995). In our case, it is applied in the first three grades of elementary school. While automatic promotion in the early grades allows

students and teachers more time to learn and teach the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy, prevents premature labeling of "learning disabilities," and frees up space for new students entering the system, studies and practice have begun to reveal the limits and even contradictory effects of automatic promotion when effected in isolation and in the absence of complementary and more systematic changes. This implies that automatic promotion by itself may diminish grade repetition but not necessarily ensure learning. That is why several countries have discontinued automatic promotion having determined an increase in the number of primary school leavers without comprehensive reading and writing skills (UNESCO, 1998).

There are countries that continue practicing automatic promotion in their elementary schools without any detrimental effect on students learning (e.g. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, etc.). In these countries automatic promotion is implemented accompanied by activities that help to ensure learning for all children in a given grade. Schools and teachers focus on quality teaching in an effort to insure academic success for all students. Education is provided in such a way that children acquire the skills they need to succeed in future schooling, the workplace, and their lives in general.

There are common activities undertaken by schools and teachers to effectively implement automatic promotion. These include the following:

First, pupils' assessment should be continuous with the aim of detecting and compensating learning difficulties rather than detecting pupils for promotion (Hussen, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1998; UNESCO, 1998). Second, following the identification of learning problems using continuous assessment, teachers need to develop corrective activities that provide an

alternative path to students to learn concepts that they missed in the original instruction (Guskey, 1997; Pratt, 1980). Third, schools together with teachers and parents should develop remedial programs that provide students with learning needs an extra time and alternative path to work on learning tasks and achieve the required objective (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Shepard, 1994). Fourth, teachers should change the belief that grade retention is an important remedial action for academic failure (Roderick, 1993).

2.2.1. Continuous Assessment

As a professional person, the teacher is charged with the responsibility of promoting the intellectual, social and emotional growth of his pupils. Such a task requires that he should plan the work and the activities of the classroom in the light of his knowledge of the progress and attainment of each of the pupils in his care. Such knowledge necessarily requires frequent assessment of learners on the part of the teacher to make decisions on how well students are progressing in their learning.

Many authors define assessment of learners as the process of gathering information about how learners are progressing in their learning. It gathers information about what learners know and demonstrate as a result of their learning processes. Assessment involves all the processes and tools teachers use to make decisions about their students' progresses. One can divide the assessment procedures teachers use in to two broad categories: informal assessment procedures and formal assessment procedures.

Informal assessments are procedures for gathering information about learning that a teacher frequently uses on the spur of the moment or casually during classroom activities. They are not

necessarily carefully planned, but they are meant to provide information that is critical for the teacher to know at that moment. Informal assessments may include a variety of techniques including questioning learners, observing learners' work, reviewing learners' homework, talking with a learner and listening to a learner during a recitation. Many informal assessments need not be created with the thoughtfulness and care with which formal assessments are created. Informal assessments often occur on the spur of the moment as a teacher is presenting a lesson. They are in all school phases and in all lessons to support and strengthen teaching and learning.

Formal assessments are procedures for gathering information about the learners that are created with special thoughtfulness and care and should be closely matched to the basic competencies in the syllabus. Formal assessments are conducted in situations that have been set up solely for that purpose. The procedures are administered in such a way that it is clear that the focus of the exercise is on assessing specific competencies of the learner in valid a way as is possible. Formal assessment may include a variety of techniques such as short tests, quizzes, oral examinations, performance assessment tasks, examinations, projects and portfolios.

Continuous assessment, therefore, refers to the process of gathering information about teaching and learning on a continuous basis. That is when both formal and informal assessments are done on a regular and continuous basis they are referred to as *continuous assessment* (MBEC, 1999). Continuous assessment is meant to be integrated with teaching in order to improve learning and to help shape and direct the teaching learning process. The assessment is continuous because 1) it occurs at various times as a part of instruction, (2) may occur following a lesson, (3) usually occurs following a topic, and (4) frequently occurs following a theme. Continuous assessment

allows a teacher to better use the "assessment-feedback-correction" learning cycle that is missing from the time-limited examination (Farrant, 1980; Nitko, 1996; ICDR; 1999).

2.2.1.1. The Need for continuous Assessment in Primary Schools

Continuous assessment is important because it provides regular information about teaching, learning and the achievement of learning objectives and competencies. Continuous assessment also allows a teacher to assess, in a classroom environment, performance based activities and behavioral changes in interests and attitudes that cannot or are difficult to assess in an examination.

A number of behavioral outcomes are measured using written tests. Formal assessment highly involves measuring outcomes related to knowledge and understanding only (Gronlund, 1985). Most of these tests and quizzes focus on assessing recall of facts rather than performance skills. In his review of the literature Daniel (2002) discussed that paper and pencil tests usually assess skills and learning objectives that can be measured in a short period of time. They are, therefore, limited in their nature and range.

One can then argue that most of the learning outcomes to be attained by school children may not be fully measured by paper and pencil tests. Here, children in the first cycle (grade 1-4) learn to develop skills like reading, writing, listening, drawing, arithmetic skills, social skills, work habits, and as well behavioral changes in personal-social development. These outcomes cannot be assessed fully with the commonly known traditional testing (Gronlund, 1985; Nitko, 1996). Applying continuous assessment in the elementary schools is, therefore, crucial.

2.2.1.2. Purpose of Continuous Assessment

According to Daniel (2002), the purpose of continuous assessment at school should focus on learners' overall performances and the teaching learning process.

Concerning learners, the major role of continuous assessment is to collect reliable information about

- the present status and needs of pupils,
- pupils initiation to participate in the learning process,
- pupils progress in their learning through time for better judgments about their performance,
- pupils learning difficulties for diagnosing problems to take remedial measures,
- subject matter contents to provide feedback and incentives to pupils,
- the pupils habits, interests and attitudes be developed.

As to the instruction process, continuous assessment helps to

- determine the extent to which the school is working towards achieving its set objectives,
- provide information from which teachers can find insights into their own effectiveness in teaching,
- find out the degree to which the methods of instruction and materials employed are up-to-date and effective, and
- give incentives in the learning process

Moreover, from classroom instruction point of view, continuous assessment should be carried out and directed to (ICDR, 1999).

- improve learning,
- motivate pupils to learn more as they discover their progress,
- identify learning difficulties that might hinder achievement
- differentiate conditions that give pupils opportunities to show progress towards objectives,
- help teachers determine the effectiveness of their teaching methods, techniques, and learning material, and
- acquaint parents or guardians with their children performance.

2.2.1.3. Major Behavioral Areas of Continuous Assessment

Generally, continuous assessment could be applied in three major behavioral areas in schools as follows (ICDR, 1994).

- Assessing achievements in various subjects using oral questions and different written tests,
- Assessing closely school related behavioral aspects (i.e, participation in the instruction process, extracurricular activities, fulfillment of assignments, discipline, punctuality and absenteeism) by using anecdotal records, rating scale, check list, interview, etc.,
- Assessing general behavioral aspects (i.e. character, interest, beliefs, feelings, attitude, etc.) by using observational techniques.

2.2.1.4. Tools (methods) of Assessment

There are different methods of assessment that teachers can use during school instruction.

For instance, depending on the nature of data required, assessment includes

- Tests and examinations to measure cognitive development of pupils,
- Observation and recording pupils progress in learning activities,
- Self assessment records made by pupils themselves,
- Personality assessment and sociometric techniques,
- Longitudinal studies of pupils' development or type of follow up studies.

In general, there are two major types of data collection methods about pupils learning, instructional process and classroom situation as a whole. These are paper and pencil test (techniques) and the use of observational techniques. Each method can be classified into sub-categories.

The paper and pencil tests (or techniques) focus on involving pupils to take tests, complete a written homework or assignment, produce a written report, draw a picture of something, finish a worksheet and etc. These methods are best suited to assess outcomes related to knowledge, understanding and thinking skills that belong to the set of cognitive domain.

The observational techniques, on the other hand, involve teachers in looking at or watching pupils' behavior and reactions during and after the process of instruction. Observation is relied on heavily, because it is the most practical way to gather information without interrupting

classroom activities. They are most preferably used to assess behavioral outcomes related to psychometric and affective domains.

The major observational techniques or instruments are outlined as follows:

- **Anecdotal records-** These are written descriptions of the observations the teacher made on something or about pupils (for each individual or the group). Mostly they are factual records about the individual behavior or reaction. Because it is time consuming to prepare and write, the information is rarely used by teachers.
- **Check list-** This is often used to search out very specific and selected aspects of pupils' behavior. A list of performance criteria is associated with particular performance or product and as a result the presence and absence of the specific character is indicated. In other words, Yes /No responses can be applied or used for the behavior to be checked.
- **Rating scale-** This is simply a set of characteristics to be judged, accompanied by a kind of scale. Thus, the observer uses the scale to indicate which of several descriptions best characterize the individual being judged. These types of scales can be numerical, graphic and descriptive.

In addition, interview is a good instrument to collect assessment data other than testing.

- **Interview-** It can include structured or unstructured types of questions that can help the reader to understand interests, opinions and attitudes, interpersonal relationships, typical behavior perception etc. of pupils. The interview can be conducted for the individual or for the group

2.2.1.5. Basic Requirements for Continuous Assessment

To conduct an effective and appropriate continuous assessment procedure, the following preconditions are required (Daniel, 2002):

- The teachers must be equipped with an adequate knowledge and capability about assessment techniques.
- Assessment must be a planned activity (it should be planned how and when the assessment will be made).
- The assessment should be based on the actual condition, time, place and social factors of the class, pupils' level of knowledge, understanding and the nature of instruction as well.
- Variety of items and assessment techniques should be selected and applied;
- The reliability, validity, objectivity, and the discriminating power of the assessment techniques must be considered and checked.
- Assessment should be well administered and its results must be recorded and documented.

2.2.2. Feedback and Correctives

Obviously, gaining precise information about students' learning is vitally important, but if their learning is really to be improved, the information must be paired with specific activities to remedy any learning difficulties. If this so, continuous assessment allows a teacher to better use the "assessment-feedback-corrective" learning cycle that is missing from the time limited examination. Continuous assessment provides teachers with an explicit description of each students learning progress. With continuous assessment results, teachers know which students

are doing well, which are having problems, and exactly what problems those students are having on a day-to-day basis. Continuous assessment thus provides the teacher with precise information that can be used to guide corrective activities that focus on students' individual learning difficulties. Therefore, teachers should device appropriate corrective measures to help underachieving students.

According to Guskey (1997), correctives serve a specific purpose in the teaching-learning process. They help students correct the learning errors and remedy the learning problems they experienced during the original instruction. They provide an alternative to those students who do not master the minimum requirements during the original instruction.

To be successful, the correctives must be different from the original instruction (Guskey, 1997, Pratt, 1980). Simply having students go back and repeat a process that has already proven unsuccessful is unlikely to yield better results the second time. Above all else, corrective activities must offer instructional alternatives to students. In other words, they must provide students with an alternative pathway to learning success.

For the corrective activities to provide this different pathway, they must possess three essential characteristics (Guskey, 1997).

1. They must present the concepts differently from their original presentation. That is, the content elements and skills must be explained in a different manner or from different perspective and include different examples.

2. Corrective activities must involve students in learning in ways that are different from their original involvement. This means that correctives must incorporate different learning styles or modalities. Variety and flexibility are the keys to using these ideas in corrective activities; that is, the full range of styles and intelligences must be considered. If students were originally taught through a visual demonstration, for example, then a more detailed auditory presentation or an individual opportunity to manipulate material tactually might be a useful corrective.

3. The corrective activity must provide students with a successful learning experience. This essential characteristic is just as important as the first two but often take for granted. Regardless of its format or involvement, if a corrective activity does not help students overcome learning difficulties and experience learning success, then it is not an effective activity and should be discarded for another alternative. Correctives must provide students with the means to be successful in their learning, for that success enables them to be better prepared, more confident, and more motivated for future learning tasks.

2.2.2.1. Types of Corrective Activities

There are a number of corrective activities that teachers use in their instruction. Some are applied immediately at the spur when learning difficulties become apparent. Planning of such correctives is not easy. While other groups of correctives can be planned before an instruction is undertaken. Teachers often prepare a number of corrective "packages" based on prediction or prior experience of the main areas of underachievement in a given instruction.

Corrective activities can range from extremely simple to highly complex, depending on the resources available and the grade level of the students involved (Guskey, 1997). The effectiveness of any particular corrective activity also varies with the grade level and to some extent, the subject area. For example, at the high school level a simple and effective corrective activity in some subject areas is to have students carefully reread particular pages in the textbook where a specific concept is discussed. However, the same corrective activity is not effective for second or third grade students because of their more limited reading skills.

The most common corrective activities used by teachers include the following: re-teaching, individual tutoring, peer tutoring, cooperative teams, using course text books, alternative text books and alternative materials (like movies, video tapes, videodisks, film strips, models, and so forth), providing students with workbooks and study guides, giving students experiments or problems they can work on.

Teachers can also help students with learning difficulties if they can form a close relationship with parents. Parent involvement in their children's learning is becoming an important area of concern in education.

2.2.3. School Programs

Schools that are practicing automatic promotion should device programs that support intensive learning. Darling-Hammond (1998) argues that the age-grade system we have used for over a century limits the time teachers have to work with students and eliminates cross age interactions among students. Carefully constructed multi-age and multi- grade classrooms have been shown to greatly help younger students without any penalty to older students, in fact often helping them

as well through the "learn it by teaching it" approach (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Banicky and Foss, 1999). Such classrooms would keep the same teacher for a number of years, allowing teachers' greater familiarity with students' needs, strengths and weaknesses.

There are also other intervention strategies that can be developed by schools to prevent school failure. These strategies particularly refer to helping students with learning difficulties. These include extended learning programs: offering additional instruction before and after school, on Saturdays, or for extended periods during the school day; classes on study skills, and corresponding program to help parents encourage study skills in the home; changes in teacher or classroom assignment; alternative instructional strategies, such as small-group instruction or flexible grouping for learning, consultation by school teams, special assistance and targeted services for students with learning difficulties. It also includes maximizing learning time by reducing distractions or interruptions.

2.2.4. Attitude of Teachers Towards Automatic promotion

Attitude has been a difficult concept to define adequately, primarily because it has been defined by so many, but also because of the world's differing lay uses and connotations (Simonson, et.al., 1996). Different authorities have defined attitude in different ways while still having some common denominator. Many scholars share the definition that attitude is an acquired inclination to react to an attitude object favorably or unfavorably. From this point of view, the teachers' attitude toward automatic promotion is understood as the teachers' response involving an acceptance-rejection, like-dislike and/or favor- disfavors etc.

Attitudes influence behavior. The theory of reasoned action (cited in Simonson, et.al.1996) suggests that the cause of behavior is a person's intention to engage in the behavior. Attitude influence behavior by their influence on intention, which are decisions to act in a particular way. Intention was explained to be the person's motivation to exert effort to carry out a behavior. People are assumed to behave as they intend to behave. Based on this, educators argue on the importance of attitude in directing action. If teachers, for example, have positive attitude towards automatic promotion, they tend to react favorably towards it and they are more likely to expend much effort for its effective implementation.

When educational policy is formulated, the assumption is that it will influence what happens in classrooms and schools. Whether this influence in fact takes place depends in part on the attitude of teachers towards the activities involved in the policy (Eisenhart, et.al., 1988). Eisenhart and his colleagues reviewed the literature on the role of teachers' attitudes in policy implementation. They found out that teacher beliefs are one basis for the decisions teachers make at the classroom level of the educational system. If teachers have negative attitude towards a given reform in any education system, they may behave purposely or unconsciously in ways that alter or undermine the programs proposed by policy makers. On the other hand, if teachers have a positive attitude towards a given educational reform they are more likely to take ownership of the change and to extend effort to its effective implementation in their classroom.

One can then argue that the attitude of teachers towards automatic promotion may determine its effective implementation in our schools. Automatic promotion entails a change in teachers' instructional practices at the classroom level. Teachers need to individualize their instruction. They should work hard to identify the learning needs and strengths of each student in the

classroom. These and others tasks implied by automatic promotion policy demand a strong commitment on the part the teachers in our schools. If teachers do not have a positive attitude towards automatic promotion they tend to be reluctant to give up practices that have been followed for many years. This will inevitably affect the full implementation of automatic promotion in our schools.

Researches so far conducted on the attitude of teachers towards automatic promotion have proved to be negative (Roderick, 1993; Smith and Shepard, 1987). Teachers believe that retention is more beneficial than automatic promotion to help underachieving students improve their academic performance. The reason behind this belief of teachers is the relative benefits that repeaters gain in the first retention year (Shepard, 1994; Roderick, 1993). Teachers do not see the negative impacts of retention on students' performance and self-esteem in later grades. This tendency of teachers to favor retention over automatic promotion negatively influence automatic promotion practices in many schools. It could be one of the reasons that in some countries (like Panama and Puertrico), where automatic promotion was practiced, too many pupils were leaving school lacking sufficient skill.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the automatic promotion practices in the lower primary schools. To realize this purpose a descriptive survey involving both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

3.1. Data Sources

The main data sources were head-teachers, teachers teaching in the grades 1-3, and education experts and supervisors at Woreda level.

3.2 Sampling Procedures

West Gojjam Zone comprises of eleven Woredas. To obtain a representative and manageable sample, the researcher selected four (36.4 percent) Woredas randomly. 21 primary schools were chosen from these four Woredas by quota sampling. The minimum number of schools selected in a Woreda is 4 (from Dembecha) while the maximum number is 7 (from Yilmana Densa).

151 teachers, all teachers teaching at grades 1-3 in each sample school were included using availability sampling to fill the questionnaire.

Obviously, there is one head-teacher in every school. Therefore, it was obvious to involve all the head teachers of the 21 schools in the sample.

Regarding supervisors and education experts, one supervisor and one education expert were selected from each Wereda in the sample by purposive sampling. That is, a total of 8 supervisors and education experts were included in the study.

10 schools were also selected for observation from the 21 schools by quota sampling. Hence, the findings of the survey are based on the information obtained from the sources depicted in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents

S. No.	Woreda	Schools		Head teachers		Teachers		Observed Schools		Supervisors/ Experts	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Yilmana Densa	7	33.3	7	33.3	48	31.8	3	30.0	2	25.0
2	Bahir Dar Zuria	5	23.8	5	23.8	34	22.5	3	30.0	2	25.0
3	Mecha	5	23.8	5	23.8	37	24.5	2	20.0	2	25.0
4	Dembecha	4	19.0	4	19.0	32	21.2	2	20.0	2	25.0
Total		21	100.0	21	100.0	151	100.0	10	100.0	8	100.0

3.3 Variables

Variables related to the practice of automatic promotion in the grades 1-3 of primary schools, which are related to the leading questions raised in the study. These variables are:

3.3.1 Awareness about automatic promotion and its implications

- This variable deals with teachers' knowledge about promotional policies and:
 - Students' achievements
 - Students' attitude towards school
 - Drop out rates in schools

- Educational wastage
- School efficiency and
- Universalization of primary education in Ethiopia.
- It deals with teachers' awareness about the fate of low-performing students.
- The variable also deals with teachers' knowledge about the implications of automatic promotion practices in the teaching-learning processes. This consists of facts like the need for continuous assessment, individual attention, parent involvement, alternative programs, etc. in implementing automatic promotion in a school.

3.3.2 Attitude

- This variable deals with teachers' beliefs, feelings and commitments in practicing automatic promotion in their school.

3.3.3 Continuous assessment

This deals with:

- Teachers' skills in writing and using different test tools
- Teachers' skills of commenting and keeping records of pupils performance
- Availability of assessment guides, and
- Teachers' training on continuous assessment

3.3.4 Corrective measures

This deals with teachers' reports on the frequency of applying the different remedial strategies to help students with learning difficulties.

3.3.5 School programs

This deals with programs arranged at school level to help low-performing students.

3.3.6 Repeaters

This deals with the existence of repeaters in the schools where automatic promotion is practiced.

3.4 Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect data:

3.4.1 Teachers' questionnaire

This instrument was designed to collect information about teachers' awareness and day-to-day performance in relation to the variables mentioned earlier. The teachers' questionnaire contained a total of 39 items, 34 of the items are close-ended, and the remaining 5 are open-ended items. The items focused on collecting information about:

- The personal details of the teachers (i.e., gender, qualification, teaching experience)
- Teachers' awareness about automatic promotion and its implications
- Teachers' attitude towards automatic promotion
- Teachers' utilization of continuous assessment
- Teachers' utilization of corrective measures
- The availability of school programs arranged to help low-performing students
- The existence of repeaters in the schools

3.4.2 Head-Teachers' questionnaire

The head-teachers are responsible for the full implementation of automatic promotion with the provision of quality instruction to each individual student in their school. In this respect, the head-teachers' questionnaire was prepared to gather data about:

- The application of continuous assessment in their schools
- The availability and application of different school programs to help low-performing students, and
- The existence of repeaters in their schools

A total of 25 items of which 18 close-ended items and 7 open-ended items were included in the questionnaire.

The items, which deal with continuous assessment in both questionnaires, are adapted from the questionnaire prepared by Daniel and Desalegn (2001). Both questionnaires were prepared and presented in Amharic language.

3.4.3 Interview

Interview guide was prepared to collect information about the overall implementation of automatic promotion in the Woredas. The respondents to the interview were experts and supervisors at each Woreda.

3.4.4 Checklist

Checklists were prepared to assess the practical aspects in implementing automatic promotion in the schools. The checklists contain items like type of assessment instruments teachers use, the availability of rating scales, observation checklists, anecdotal records, test-

blue prints, data on item analysis, comments and formal records of pupils' achievement. It also deals with the type corrective measures used by teachers and school programs available for underachievers.

3.5. Method of Data Analyses

The data collected through questionnaires and observation checklist were tallied and analyzed. The interview results were summarized in accordance with the interview questions prepared. In the analyses, simple presentation of concepts and statistical presentation that is percentage were used.

3.6. Pre-test of the Instruments

To insure the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was carried out in two primary schools from Yilmana Densa Woreda. The selection was arbitrary as the purpose at this stage was to confirm the applicability of the instruments and to know the existing state of potential respondents with respect to the problem under study. This step was also considered necessary for the researcher to verify or modify the data collecting instruments which had already been developed based on the basic research questions and the literature review.

It was also given to the research advisor for comments on the items in terms of the purpose of the study. Most of the items were found to be pertinent to the purpose of the study, except for some minor modifications.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is believed to be the main part of the study, which presents the analysis of the findings. The data collected through the questionnaires are tallied and analyzed using percentage. The information obtained through the checklists are tallied and directly presented for analysis. The data obtained through interview, on the other hand, is summarized and qualitatively presented in words.

Table 2. Number and percentage of returns on questionnaires

Respondents	Sent	Returned	Usable returns	
			N	%
School principals	21	20	20	100.0
Teachers	151	146	146	100.0
Total	172	166	166	100.0

As it is indicated in table 2 above, out of 151 questionnaires distributed to the teachers, 146(96.7 percent) properly completed copies, were returned and used for the analysis. Similarly, out of 21 questionnaires distributed to the head-teachers, only 1(4.8 percent) was not returned. The other 20 were properly completed and included in the final computation of the data.

4.1 Sample Characteristics

Table 3: Sample Head Teachers and Teachers by Gender

Head – Teachers				Teachers		
S. No	Gender	N	%	Gender	N	%
1	Male	20	76.5	Male	78	53.4
2	Female	-	23.5	Female	68	46.6
Total		20	100.0	Total	146	100.0

Table 3 indicates that all the head-teachers were males. On the other hand, 53.4 percent of the teachers teaching in the grades 1-3 in the selected schools were males, and the rest (46.6 percent) were females.

Table 4: Head Teachers' and Teachers' qualification

Qualification	Head Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
12 complete	-	-	5	3.4
TTI graduate	15	75	138	94.5
Collage Diploma	5	25	3	2.1
Other	-	-	-	-
Missing	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100.0	146	100.0

As it can be observed from Table 4, 75 percent of the head-teachers were TTI graduates while 25 percent of them have college diploma. The majority of the teachers who participated in the study (94.5 percent) are TTI graduates. Only 2.1 percent are diploma holders and 3.4 of them are 12

complete. In general terms, most of the teachers are qualified for the level according to the standard set in the New Education and Training Policy (for the first-cycle of primary education).

Table 5: Head Teachers and Teachers' Years of Experience in Teaching

Head Teachers			Teachers		
Year	N	%	Year	N	%
1-5	1	5	1-5	22	15.1
6-10	1	5	6-10	18	12.3
11-15	8	40	11-15	37	25.3
16-20	5	25	16-20	34	23.3
21-25	5	25	21-25	29	19.9
26-30	-	-	26-30	6	4.1
Total	20	100.0	Total	146	100.0

The minimum teaching experience observed is one year in both cases, but the maximum years of service was 25 years for the head-teachers and 30 years for the teachers respectively. More specifically, 13(65 percent) of the head-teachers have served between 11 and 20 years. Those with teaching experience ranging from 21 to 25 years add up to 5(25 percent). Only 2(10 percent) of the head-teachers have a teaching experience between 1 to 10 years.

Referring to teachers' experience, it could be understood that nearly half (48.6 percent) of them have served in the profession for 11-20 years. Also, 15.1 percent and 12.3 percent of the teachers included in the study have teaching experiences between 1-5 years and 6-10 years respectively. Moreover, 35(24 percent) of the teachers have served as a teacher in the elementary schools for more than two decades.

Table 6: Head Teachers' and Teachers' Work Experiences in Their Actual Position

Head Teachers			Teachers Experience in teaching self-contained class		
Year	N	%	Year	N	%
1-5	11	55	1-5	77	52.7
6-10	1	5	6-10	69	47.3
11-15	5	25	11-15	-	-
16-20	-	-	16-20	-	-
21-25	3	15	21-25	-	-
Missing	-	-	Missing	-	-
Total	20	100.0	Total	146	100.0

From table 6, one can see that more than half of the head-teachers (55 percent) have experiences in administering schools as head between 1-5 years. The majority of the remaining head-teachers (30 percent) have served between 6-15 years in their actual position. Exceptionally, 3(15 percent) of the head-teachers have served as head-teachers for more than two decades.

With regard to the experiences of teachers in teaching self-contained classes, almost half (52.7 percent) of them have served between one to five years. The remaining (47.3 percent) have also experiences between 6-10 years. Specifically, the minimum and maximum years of experience of teachers as a self-contained teacher are 1 and 8 years respectively.

Table 7: Number of Pupils Per Section

Number of Pupils	Frequency	%
50-60	6	4.1
61-70	22	15.1
71-80	23	15.8
81-90	14	9.6
91-100	20	13.7
101-125	57	39.0
Missing	4	2.7
Total	146	100.0

In analyzing the data in table 8, 39 percent of the teachers responded that the number of pupils they teach in a class ranges from 101-125. 23.3 percent of them stated that the class size they teach in between 81 and 100 pupils per section. Similarly, around 30.9 percent of the teachers indicated that the range of the class size is between 61 and 80 pupils per section.

4.2 Responses of Teachers and Head Teachers to the Relevant Questions

The following section presents the analysis of the responses of the head-teachers and teachers to the major relevant items about automatic promotion practices in the primary schools.

Table 8. Responses of Teachers to Facts Related to Automatic Promotion

S.No.	Items	Correct		Not correct		No answer		Missing		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Grade retention is better than automatic promotion to help underachieving students perform better in latter grades.	132	90.4	11	7.5	3	2.1	-	-	146	100
2	Grade repeaters may develop negative attitude towards school.	54	37	85	58.2	7	4.8	-	-	146	100
3	Grade retention increases the likelihood that a student will become a dropout.	83	56.8	58	40.6	4	2.7	1	0.7	146	100
4	Grade repetition and dropouts cause educational wastage.	126	86.3	15	10.3	1	0.7	4	2.7	146	100
5	The introduction of automatic promotion may help to reduce dropout rates.	52	35.6	94	64.4	-	-	-	-	146	100
6	The introduction of automatic promotion increases school efficiency.	18	12.3	128	87.7	-	-	-	-	146	100
7	Repetition and dropout rates are the two major problems that challenge the goal to universalize primary education in Ethiopia.	89	61.0	40	27.4	14	9.6	3	2.0	146	100

As one can observe from Table 8, most of the teachers (90.4 percent) said grade retention is better than automatic promotion to help underachieving students perform better in latter grades. More than half (58.2 percent) of the teachers also responded that the statement “grade repeaters

may develop negative attitude towards school” is not correct. But 37 percent of the teachers replied that the statement is correct.

On the other hand, 56.8 percent of the respondents confirmed that it is true that grade repetition increases the likelihood that a student will become a dropout. A considerable number of teachers (40.6 percent), however, did not know this fact.

Concerning the facts related to grade repetition, dropout and educational wastage, most of the teachers (86.3 percent) said it is correct that grade repetition cause educational wastage. Only 10.3 percent of the teachers replied it is not correct.

As the table also indicates, almost two-third of the teachers responded that the statement “the introduction of automatic promotion will help to reduce dropout rates” is not correct. It is only 35.6 percent said the statement is true.

The majority of the teachers (87.7 percent) replied “not correct” and the rest (12.3 percent) replied “correct” in response to the statement which says “the introduction of automatic promotion increases school efficiency”.

Also, 61 percent of the teachers know that repetition and dropouts are the two major problems that challenge the goal to universalize primary education in Ethiopia. But 27.4 percent of the teachers do not know this fact. And 9.6 percent of them responded by saying no answer.

From the above results one can see that a considerable number of teachers lack the knowledge about the facts behind the need for the implementation of automatic promotion in the schools. This is reflected in their support to grade retention to improve students' achievement in later grades which is opposite to what the researches so far conducted have proved. Moreover, 64-88 percent of them do not believe that the introduction of automatic promotion will help to reduce school dropouts as well as increase school efficiency. Also, 37 percent of the teachers do not know that grade repetition and school dropouts are the two major problems in the primary schools of Ethiopia.

Table 9. Responses of Teachers Concerning the Fate of Low-Performing Students

Item	Correct		Not Correct		No Answer		Missing		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
When it comes to dealing with low-performing students, it boils down to the choice between automatic promotion and retention.	65	44.5	46	31.5	34	23.3	1	0.7	146	100

Table 9 reveals that 44.5 percent of the teachers responded low-performing students should either automatically promoted or repeat the same grade. On the other hand, 31.5 percent of the teachers said it is not correct to choose between automatic promotion and retention in dealing with underachievers. Also, 34 (23.3 percent) of them replied that they did not have answer to the statement.

From these results one can conclude that the majority of the teachers lack the knowledge that neither grade repetition nor automatic promotion with out the necessary assistance will serve as an effective remedial strategy to help low-performing students.

Table 10. Responses of Teachers Concerning the Implications of Automatic Promotion

S.No	Items	Correct		Not Correct		No Answer		Missing		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Automatic promotion implies the need to follow up each student's learning progress.	131	89.7	15	10.3	-	-	-	-	146	100
2	Continuous assessment plays a great role in implementing automatic promotion.	134	91.8	12	8.2	-	-	-	-	146	100
3	Automatic promotion implies the need to plan for corrective measures to be taken to help students with learning difficulties.	137	93.8	9	6.2	-	-	-	-	146	100
4	Parent involvement is important in practicing automatic promotion.	140	95.9	6	4.1	-	-	-	-	146	100
5	In implementing automatic promotion, children with learning difficulties should be given extra time to catch up with others.	140	95.9	6	4.1	-	-	-	-	146	100
6	Automatic promotion demands little on the part of teachers.	17	11.6	129	88.4	-	-	-	-	146	100

As it is indicated in Table 10, the majority of the teachers included in the study said it is true that automatic promotion implies:

- the need to follow up each student's learning progress (by 89.7 percent)
- the use of continuous assessment (by 91.8 percent)

- the need to plan for corrective measures to be taken to help students with learning difficulties (by 93.8 percent)
- the need to involve parents (by 95.9 percent) and
- the need to give extra time to the children with learning difficulties to catch up with other (by 95.9 percent).

Table 11. Attitude of teachers towards automatic promotion

S.No.	Statements	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely disAgree		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	I get more satisfaction when all my students promote to the next grade.	9	6.2	9	6.2	22	15.1	59	40.4	47	32.1	146	100
2	I am afraid that automatic promotion will leave a considerable number of students functionally illiterate.	86	58.9	51	34.9	-	-	5	3.4	4	2.7	146	100
3	Automatic promotion means rewarding students regardless of their individual ability and effort.	50	34.2	53	36.3	11	7.5	20	13.7	12	8.2	146	100
4	Automatic promotion policy helps me treat all the students equally.	11	7.5	20	13.7	2	1.4	77	52.7	36	24.7	146	100
5	I would prefer to continue with automatic promotion of my students even if I had the choice not to practice it.	5	3.4	11	7.5	9	6.2	64	43.8	57	39	146	100

Table 11 summarizes the degree of agreement of teachers to statements which express feelings, beliefs or commitments related to automatic promotion. Accordingly, 106 (72.5 percent) of the respondents do not agree with the statement “I get more satisfaction when all my students promote to the next grade”. 22(15.1 percent) of them also fall on an undecided position with regard to this statement.

Most of the teachers (93.8 percent) who participated in the study afraid that automatic promotion will leave a considerable number of students functionally illiterate. Similarly, 103 (70.5 percent) of the teachers believe that automatic promotion means rewarding students regardless of their individual ability and effort. But, 32(21.9 percent) of the teachers oppose this idea. 11(7.5 percent) also failed to decide.

Moreover, the majority of the respondents (77.4 percent) do not believe that automatic promotion policy will help them treat all the students equally. In this regard, only 31 (21.1 percent) of them agree to the idea.

Concerning the commitment of teachers to continue practicing automatic promotion in their school, only 16(10.9 percent) of them have found to be committed. On the other hand, the majority (82.8 percent) of the respondents do agree to stop practicing automatic promotion if they had given the choice not to practice it.

In general terms, the above responses of teachers regarding their beliefs, feelings and commitments indicate the negative attitude of teachers towards automatic promotion.

Table 12. Frequency of Assessing Pupils' Learning Progress

Response	N	%
Yes, always	72	49.3
Yes, mostly	54	37.0
Yes, sometimes	11	7.5
Yes, once	2	1.4
When condition allows	6	4.1
Not at all	-	-
Missing	1	0.7
Total	20	100

Table 12 summarizes teachers' responses on assessing pupils' learning progress. Accordingly, 49.3 percent of the teachers said that they always assess pupils' learning progress. The remaining respondents responded that they assess pupils mostly (37.0 percent), sometimes (7.5 percent), once (1.4 percent) and when condition allows (4.1 percent).

In relation to this, teachers have also been probed on the type of assessment instrument they usually employ to assess pupils' learning progress. If they choose more than one option, they were asked to rank them as well. Their responses are presented in the Table 13.

Table 13. Types of Assessment Instruments used by Teachers

Responses	1 st Choice		2 nd Choice		3 rd Choice		4 th Choice		Missing		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Giving exercises	31	21.2	60	41.1	26	17.8	1	0.7	28	19.2	146	100
Administering short written tests	26	17.8	12	8.2	32	21.9	49	33.6	27	18.5	146	100
Using oral questions	61	41.8	34	23.3	25	17.1	4	2.7	22	15.1	146	100
Making use of observations	17	11.6	19	13.0	35	24.0	30	20.5	45	30.8	146	100

As can be seen in Table 13, (for assessing pupils' learning progress) 21.2, 41.1, and 17.8 percent of the teachers ranked 'giving exercises to pupils' as their first, second and third choice. Out of the total sampled teachers, 19.2 percent, however, failed to respond to it.

Administering short written tests was ranked as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th by 17.8, 8.2, 21.9 and 33.6 percent of respectively. Still 18.5 percent of the teachers did not select this assessment instrument.

Concerning using oral questions, 41.8, 23.3, and 17.1 percent of the teachers ranked it as their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice for assessing their pupils' learning progress. But 15.1 percent of the respondents failed to use oral questions as an instrument for their pupils' learning progress.

With regard to making observations, 11.6 percent of the teachers selected it as their 1st choice. 13.0 to 24.0 percent of respondents ranked it as their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice. Where as, 30.8 percent did not select this assessment technique.

More or less, these indicate that in assessing pupils' learning progress, most of the teachers favor oral questions, short written tests and exercises. It can also be observed from Table 14 that observational techniques are the least applied approach. Furthermore, the data in the missing column may indicate that some teachers lack adequate knowledge and experience for matching assessment instruments to purposes for which they use the instruments.

Table 14. Head Teachers' Responses on the Frequency of Teachers Assessment of Pupils' Learning Progress

Response	N	%
Yes, always	5	25.0
Yes, mostly	9	45.0
Yes, sometimes	1	5.0
When condition allows	5	25.0
Not at all	-	-
Total	20	100

From Table 14, it could be observed that 70 percent of the head-teachers replied that teachers always or mostly assess the learning progress of their pupils' in their class. A considerable number of the head-teachers (25 percent) said "teachers assess the learning progress of their students when condition allows". Only 1 head-teacher said that teachers sometimes assess the learning progress of the pupils.

Table 15. Frequency of Using Various Assessment Techniques in Class

Types of assessment Techniques	Frequency of using											
	Always		Mostly		Sometimes		When Possible		Never		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Giving class works	69	47.3	57	39.0	12	8.2	8	5.5	-	-	146	100
Giving home-take assignments	9	6.2	45	30.8	48	32.9	43	29.5	1	0.7	146	100
Administering written tests	63	43.2	61	41.8	14	9.6	8	5.5	-	-	146	100
Use of observational methods	35	24.0	40	27.4	35	24.0	30	20.6	6	4.1	146	100
Giving performance tests	9	6.2	31	21.2	74	50.7	32	21.9	-	-	146	100
Conducting oral examinations	92	63.0	23	15.8	14	9.6	15	10.3	2	1.4	146	100

As it can be observed in table 15, class works, written tests, and oral examinations are the major methods of assessment used always or mostly by the majority of the teachers. On the other hand, home-take assignments and performance tests were being used sometimes or when condition allows by 62.4 percent and 72.6 percent of the teachers respectively.

However, teachers' responses on the use of observational techniques is some what contradictory to that of their responses on performance tests, because observational techniques (anecdotal records, checklists and rating scales) are the instruments that are used to test performance skills. This may show, perhaps, teachers do not have any experience of using observational techniques to evaluate performance skills. Therefore, their response in this respect does not appear reliable or dependable.

Table 16. Response of Head Teachers' on Frequency of Using Various Assessment Techniques By Teachers

Types of assessment Techniques	Frequency of using the Various Assessment Techniques											
	Always		Mostly		Sometimes		When condition Allows		Never		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Class work	9	45	6	30	2	10	3	15	-	-	20	100
Home-work	7	35	12	60	1	5	-	-	-	-	20	100
Written tests	1	5	2	10	13	65	3	15	1	5	20	100
Observational techniques	2	10	3	15	7	35	6	30	2	10	20	100
Performance test	2	10	1	5	6	30	8	40	1	5	20	100
Oral tests	8	40	2	10	7	35	2	10	1	5	20	100

The summary in table 16 shows about head-teachers' opinion on the degree of using different assessment techniques by teachers in the teaching-learning process. According to their response, assessment instruments like class work (45 percent), oral tests(40 percent), home works (35 percent) are always used by teachers. Similarly, except oral tests, the other two are mostly used. To the majority of the teachers, however, written tests, observational techniques and performance tests are used sometimes or when condition allows.

Both the head-teachers and teachers confirmed that the teachers sometimes or when conditions allow uses performance tests. In addition, head-teachers proved that the majority of the teachers (75 percent) use observational techniques when conditions allow or not at all. During the observation of the schools, it was also proved that none of the teachers teaching in the grades 1-3 use any observational instruments like checklists, rating scales, etc. Generally, teachers may not use observational techniques, performance tests and oral tests unless and otherwise scales and

formats and checklists including the performance-oriented behaviors to be assessed are developed.

Besides, teachers and head-teachers reported and confirmed that continuous recorded scores (marks) are available only for the written tests in their schools. No recorded results on performance tests, oral tests and observational reports are available. Therefore, it is inconceivable to believe (accept) that teachers are using observational techniques or oral tests in their true sense to measure performance oriented tasks in the grades 1-3.

Table 17. Frequency of Scoring /Marking/ Pupils' Exercise Books Per Week.

Responses	Head-teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Ones	-	-	12	8.2
Twice	3	15	7	4.8
Three times	-	-	9	6.7
Four to five times	5	25	53	36.3
When conditions allow	12	60	65	44.5
Missing	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100	146	100

Table 17 presents the frequency of scoring (marking) of pupils' exercise books as indicated by head-teachers and teachers. From the majority of the respondents (85 percent of the head-teachers and 80.0 percent of the teachers), teachers mark students' exercise books four to five times in a week or when conditions allow.

More specifically, teachers were also asked to indicate which of the given assessment instrument is more appropriate or suitable to measure the specific behavioral objectives listed below. Their responses are presented as follows.

Table 18. Assessment Methods Used by the Teachers' for Measuring Different Learning Objectives.

S. No	List of Learning Objectives	Written Tests		Performance tests/Observations		I never assess		Missing	
1	Ability to Define terms	92	63.0	41	28.1	5	3.4	8	5.5
2	Ability to Classify different types of crops according to their character	2	1.4	110	75.3	24	16.4	10	6.8
3	Ability to memorize specific facts	63	43.2	74	50.7	2	1.4	7	4.8
4	Ability to make oral reading	26	17.8	106	72.6	6	4.1	8	5.5
5	Ability to make organized and fluent speech	40	27.4	90	61.4	6	4.1	10	6.8
6	Ability to identify geometric shapes in terms of their properties	42	28.8	90	61.4	8	5.5	6	4.1
7	Knowledge about plants and animals	63	43.2	75	51.4	-	-	8	5.5
8	Ability to remember what has been taught/learnt	126	86.3	16	11.0	2	1.4	2	1.4
9	Pupils' asking and answering skill	74	50.7	71	48.6	-	-	1	0.7
10	Ability to participate in group work	24	16.4	117	80.1	5	3.4	-	-
11	skill in showing physical exercise on the basis of musical rhythm	5	3.4	85	58.2	43	29.3	13	8.9
12	Ability to do exercises that build the different parts of the body	5	3.4	117	80.1	18	12.3	6	4.1
13	Skill in holding (handling) a pencil or a pen	39	26.7	98	67.1	6	4.1	3	2.1
14	Writing, listening, and drawing skills	69	47.3	67	45.9	6	4.1	4	2.7
15	Readiness to accept new ideas	50	34.2	77	52.7	11	7.5	8	5.5
16	Ability to analyze and interpret concepts	85	58.2	35	24.0	11	7.5	15	10.3
17	Skill to demonstrate experiments	70	47.9	71	48.6	3	2.1	2	1.4
18	Ability to analyze cause and effect relationships	64	43.8	47	32.2	19	13.0	16	11.0
19	Ability to synthesize and evaluate concepts	80	54.8	37	25.3	19	13.0	10	6.8
20	Ability to write and present short stories	71	48.6	21	14.4	42	28.8	12	8.2
21	Pupils' need, interest or attitude for different things	32	21.9	93	63.7	10	6.8	11	7.5
22	Pupils' participation in the teaching learning process	22	15.1	112	76.7	5	3.4	7	4.8
23	Skill in using ones initiation and creativity	19	13.0	102	69.9	13	8.9	12	8.2
24	Concern for the welfare of others, sensitivity to community issues, respect laws and regulations	26	17.8	114	78.1	3	2.1	3	2.1
25	Ability to comprehend the contents of the different subjects	96	65.8	40	27.4	6	4.1	4	2.7

From Table 18, it can be seen that for measuring objectives like “defining terms”, “remembering what has been learned”, “ability to analyze and interpret concepts”, “ability to synthesize and

evaluate concepts”, and “ability to comprehend the contents of the different subjects”, written tests were selected as appropriate measuring instrument by 63 percent, 86.3 percent, 58.2 percent, 54.8 percent and 65.8 percent of the teachers respectively. Similarly, almost the same proportion of teachers (43.2-43.8 percent) selected written tests as appropriate instrument to measure objectives like “ability to memorize specific facts”, “knowledge about plants and animals” and “ability to analyze cause and effect relationships”. All the above opinions of teachers and their understanding in this respect are acceptable. Nevertheless, a considerable number of teachers ranging between 21.9-50.7 percent responded by saying that written tests are suitable for assessing “ability to make organized and fluent speech”, “ability to identify geometric shapes”, “pupils’ asking and answering skill”, “skill in holding (handling) a pen or a pencil”, “writing, listening, and drawing skills”, “readiness to accept new ideas”, “skill to demonstrate experiments”, “ability to write and present short stories” and “pupils’ interest and attitude towards something”. The responses of these teachers are confusing and incorrect. These objectives could not be measured with written tests but with observational techniques.

On the other hand, it was indicated that performance tests are appropriate for assessing:

- Ability to classify different types of crops (by 75.3 percent of teachers)
- Ability to make oral reading (by 72.6 percent of teachers)
- Ability to make organized speech (by 61.4 percent of teachers)
- Ability to identify geometric shapes (by 61.4 percent of teachers)
- Ability to participate in group activity (by 80.1 percent of teachers)
- Skill in showing physical exercise on the basis of musical rhythm (by 58.2 percent)

- Ability to do exercises that build the different parts of the body (by 81.1 percent of teachers)
- Skill in holding or handling a pencil or a pen (by 67.1 percent of the teachers)
- Readiness to accept new ideas (by 52.7 percent of the teachers)
- Interest and attitude towards something (by 63.7 percent of teachers)
- Children's participation in the teaching-learning process (by 76.7 percent of teachers)
- Skill in using ones initiation and creativity (by 69.9 percent of teachers)
- And concern for the welfare of others (by 78.1 percent of teachers)

These responses of teachers are quite acceptable from the principles of assessment points of view. However, for others who suggested performance tests for evaluating the following objectives do not seem appropriate.

- Define terms (by 28.1 percent of teachers)
- Memorize specific facts (by 50.7 percent of teachers)
- Knowledge of plants and animals (51.4 percent of teachers)
- Ability to analyze and interpret concepts (by 24 percent of teachers)
- Ability to analyze cause and effect relationships (by 32.2 percent teachers)
- Ability to synthesize and evaluate concepts (by 25.3 percent of teachers)
- And ability to comprehend the contents of the different subjects by(27.4 percent of teachers)

In addition, some teachers openly defined the learning objectives which they have never assessed. Among these were:

- Classifying different types of crops (by 16.4 percent of teachers)
- Skill in showing physical exercise on the basis of musical rhythm (by 29.3 percent of teachers)
- Ability to do exercises that build up the different part of the body (by 12.3 percent of teachers)
- Readiness to accept new ideas (by 7.5 percent of teachers)
- Ability to analyze and interpret concepts (by 7.5 percent of teachers)
- Ability to analyze cause and effect relationships (by 13.0 percent of teachers)
- Ability to synthesize and evaluate concepts (by 13.0 percent of teachers)
- Ability to write and present short stories (by 20 percent of teachers)
- Interest and attitude towards something (by 6.8 percent of teachers)
- And skill in using ones initiation and creativity (by 8.9 percent of teachers)

As can be observed, more than two-third of the objectives are those which require performance testing.

In general terms, teachers responses on the selection of appropriate assessment method for the different learning or behavioral objectives were not satisfying and fully reliable.

Head-teachers have also been asked whether or not teachers assess the behavioral objectives in the self-contained classes.

Table 19. Responses of Head Teachers on Teachers' Assessment of Learning Objectives

S.No	List of learning Objectives	Yes, They do		No, they don't		Missing		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Pupils' oral reading ability	9	45	9	45.0	2	10.0	20	100
2	Pupils' Writing, listening and drawing ability	16	80.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	20	100
3	Pupils' systematic organization of ideas in their speaking skill	17	85.0	2	10.0	1	5.0	20	100
4	Pupils' asking and answering skill.	15	75.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	20	100
5	Pupils' demonstrating ability of experiments	4	20.0	16	80.0	-	-	20	100
6	Pupils' interest and attitude to different things	5	25.0	13	65.0	2	10.0	20	100
7	Pupils' ability of participation in group work	13	65.0	5		2	10.0	20	100
8	Ability of identifying geometric shapes according to their characteristics	8	40.0	11	55.0	1	5.0	20	100
9	Concern for the welfare of others, sensitivity to community issues, respect, laws & regulations	9	45.0	11	55.0	-	-	20	100
10	Ability to appreciate one's surrounding, feelings of satisfaction and enjoyment towards nature, music, art, literature, etc.	4	20.0	16	80.0	-	-	20	100
11	Curiosity for knowledge	7	35.0	13	65.0	-	-	20	100
12	Ability to use and demonstrate one's initiation and creativity	2	10.0	17	85.0	1	5.0	20	100
13	Pupils' participation in the teaching learning process	19	95.0	1	5.0	-	-	20	100
14	Pupils' ability to write and present short stories	3	15.0	16	40.0	1	5.0	20	100
15	Pupils' skill of handling a pencil or a pen properly	19	95.0	1	5.0	-	-	20	100

As shown in Table 19, between 65 and 95 percent of the head-teachers responded that teachers assess learning objectives indicated by serial numbers 2, 3, 4, 7, 13, and 15. Nevertheless, they are partly reserved in responding to the learning objectives identified by the numbers 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14.

The head-teachers have been also asked to mention the specific assessment techniques teachers have been using to measure each learning objective. Unfortunately, they were not able to indicate the instruments used by teachers. Hence, their responses could not be taken as reliable.

Table 20. Responses of Head Teachers and Teachers on the Preparation of Test Plan

Responses	Head Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes, always	12	60.0	77	52.7
Yes, sometimes	-	-	18	12.3
When ever possible	7	35.0	32	21.9
Not at all	1	5.0	19	13.0
Missing	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100	146	100

Table 20 indicates that about 52 percent of the teachers replied that they always prepare test plan. Similarly, 60 percent of the head-teachers responded that teachers always prepare test plan. On the other hand, 13 percent of the teachers stated that they have never prepared any test plan. Also, 34.2 percent of them said they prepare test plans sometimes or when conditions allow. 35 percent of the head-teachers said that teachers prepare test plan when condition allow.

Concerning their practices of test plan, teachers were also forwarded with additional question. They were asked to write in detail the important factors (or prerequisites) that should be considered in planning test. 39 percent of the teachers who said ‘yes’ for the above item left this item open. On the other hand, the most frequently pointed out factors by those who filled the item were the following.

- Types of test items to be included and their order of presentation,
- Contents to be covered by the test items,
- Difficulties of test items and their order of presentation, and
- Clarity of test items for the pupils.

Although these are some of the factors that are to be considered in planning a test, the most important thing in test planning is to match the objectives with the contents of instruction on the basis of the time allotted for the contents and the emphasis given for each objective. From the observations made in the 10 schools by the researcher, it was known that teachers practically do not prepare test plan. The teachers may consider one or more of the mentioned factors haphazardly as they write test items.

Table 21. Responses of Head Teachers on System Developed in School to Evaluate the Quality of Tests

Responses	N	%
Exam Committee	19	95.0
Education department	1	5.0
No clear procedure	-	-
Total	20	100

From Table 21, one can understand that 95 percent of the head-teachers responded that exam committee organized in the school evaluates the quality of tests. Only 1 head-teacher said it is through the respective departments that tests are evaluated.

The head-teachers were also asked to mention the criteria used by the exam committee in order to assess the validity and reliability of the tests. Most of them left open the questionnaire, but few of the head-teachers mentioned the following points as the criteria to assess the quality of the test items.

- Does the exam contain all exam types?
- Does the exam consider the ability level of pupils? (Assessing level of difficulty on the basis of the proportion of easy and difficult items)
- Are the items presented from simple to complex?
- Are the items clear?

Still these criteria are inadequate to construct exam items that are valid and reliable. Moreover, from the observation of ten of the schools where the data were collected, the researcher came to know that checklists containing the above items do not exist to systematically evaluate the test items prepared by the teachers. Practically, it was observed that head-teachers use stamps to endorse the administration of the test items.

Table 22. Responses of Head Teachers on Teachers' Involvement in Conducting Item Analysis

Responses	N	%
Yes, they do	15	75.0
No, they don't	5	25.0
Total	20	100

Table 22 indicates 15(75 percent) of the head-teachers replied that teachers conduct item analysis to improve the quality of test items. Only 5(25 percent) of them replied by saying that teachers do not conduct item analysis. However, from the observations of the 10 schools by the researcher and discussions made with the teachers, it is known that in reality teachers do not conduct item analysis.

Table 23. Head Teachers' Ratings on the Degree of Teachers' Performance

Responses	1st-		2nd-		3rd-		4th		Missing		Total	
	Choice		Choice		Choice		Choice					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Using observational techniques	-	-	5	25.0	5	25.0	5	25.0	5	25.0	20	100.0
Encouraging pupils to participate in group work	1	5.0	5	25.0	9	45.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	20	100.0
Giving and marking class and home take assignments	18	90.0	-	-	-	-	1	5.0	1	5.0	20	100.0
Giving independent work regularly for pupils	1	5.0	1	5.0	-	-	2	10.0	16	80.0	20	100.0
Using different assessment results for making decisions and taking corrective actions	1	5.0	2	10.0	-	-	10	50.0	7	35.0	20	100.0
Giving feedback to the efforts made by pupils	-	-	7	35.0	3	15.0	4	20.0	6	30.0	20	100.0

The data summarized in Table 23 shows the head-teachers evaluation of the efforts made by teachers to assess their pupils.

As can be seen from the Table, teachers’ effort to give and mark class and home-take assignments was rated as very good. Others like “using observational techniques”, “encouraging pupils to participate in group work”, and “giving feedback to the efforts made by pupils” were relatively rated as satisfactory. On the other hand, head-teachers relatively rated as low the performance of teachers on using different assessment results for making decisions and taking corrective actions, and on giving independent work regularly for pupils.

Table 24. Provision of Training or Workshop on Continuous Assessment for Teachers

Responses	Head Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	4	20.0	37	25.3
No	16	80.0	109	74.6
Missing	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100.0	146	100.0

As it is revealed in Table 24 most of the head-teachers (80 percent) said teachers do not take any training or workshop on continuous assessment. Similarly, 109 (74.6 percent) of teachers confirmed that they have not participated in any training or workshop on continuous assessment.

On the other hand, only 37 (25.3 percent) of the teachers responded that they have taken training or participated in workshops on continuous assessment. Also, 4 (20 percent) of the head-teachers said teachers have participated in workshops on continuous assessment.

Those teachers who have got training or participated in workshops were also asked for how long they have taken the training or workshop. According to the responses of the teachers, the duration ranges from 1 to 5 days.

Table 25. The purposes assessment results serve in schools

Purposes	1 st		2 nd		3 rd		4 th		5 th		Missing		Total	
	Choice		Choice		Choice		Choice		Choice					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
To decide students promotion to the next grade	48	32.9	9	6.2	11	7.5	18	12.3	34	23.2	26	17.8	146	100
To identify low and high achievers	69	47.3	46	31.5	9	6.2	7	4.8	-	-	15	10.3	146	100
To give remedial instruction	-	-	28	19.2	51	34.9	15	10.3	6	4.1	46	31.5	146	100
To re-teach what students missed	15	10.3	28	19.2	26	17.8	28	19.2	4	2.7	45	32.2	146	100
To motivate students	6	4.1	14	9.6	18	12.3	28	19.2	34	23.2	46	31.5	146	100

As to the purpose of assessment results in the schools, Table 25 indicates that teachers use assessment results primarily to identify low and high achievers (89.7 percent) and to decide pupils' promotion to the next grade (82.2 percent). With a considerable difference with the above two, "to give remedial instruction", "to re-teach what students have missed in the original

instruction” and “to motivate students” were mentioned as secondary purposes of assessment results by 67 to 69 percent of the teachers.

The data in the missing column may also show that teachers have given relatively lower emphasis to use assessment results to give remedial instruction and to motivate students.

Table 26. Availability and Use of Assessment Guide

Responses	N	%
Yes, available and use it properly	7	35.5
Yes, available but not used	-	-
Not available	1	5.0
Missing	12	60.0
Total	20	100.0

Table 26 shows that, 35 percent of the head-teachers explained that they have assessment guides on continuous assessment and teachers are using them properly. On the other hand, 60 percent of the heads reported that assessment guide is not available in their schools. Only 1 head-teacher responded that the guide is available but not properly used. From the observations made in the ten schools, it was known that assessment guides for continuous assessment are not available in the schools.

Table 27. Frequency of using Corrective Measures

Corrective Measures	Always		Mostly		Sometimes		When condition allows		Never		Missing		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Re-teaching	14	9.6	25	17.1	58	39.7	41	28.1	1	0.7	7	4.8	146	100
Individual tutoring	49	33.6	37	25.3	31	21.2	20	13.7	2	1.4	7	4.8	146	100
Peer tutoring	48	32.9	29	19.9	20	13.7	15	10.3	19	13.0	15	10.3	146	100
Cooperative teams	45	30.8	57	39.0	20	13.7	17	11.6	-	-	7	4.8	146	100
Course textbooks	101	69.2	41	28.1	2	1.4	-	-	-	-	2	1.4	146	100
Alternative materials (like audio tapes, video tapes, movies, models, film strips, etc.)	28	19.2	31	21.2	55	37.7	25	17.1	4	2.7	3	2.1	146	100
Workbooks and study guides	28	19.2	22	15.7	20	13.7	34	23.3	29	19.9	13	8.9	146	100
An experiment or problem they can work on	58	39.7	48	32.9	23	15.8	11	7.5	1	0.7	5	3.4	146	100

Table 27 summarizes the responses of teachers about the frequency of using different remedial measures to help underachieving students in their class. Accordingly, 67.8 percent of the teachers replied that they re-teach students with learning problems sometimes or when conditions allow. 26.7 percent of the teachers, on the other hand, said they mostly or always use re-teaching as corrective measure.

Individual tutoring was reported to be used as a remedial measure always or mostly by 58.9 percent of the teachers. But 34.9 percent of the teachers replied that they apply individual tutoring to help students with learning problems sometimes or when conditions allow.

Concerning the utilization of peer tutoring as a remedial strategy, almost half (52.8 percent) of the teachers said that they always or mostly use it, where as 24 percent of the teachers said they use it sometimes or when conditions allow.

Regarding cooperative teams, 69.8 percent of the teachers reported that they use it mostly or sometimes as a remedial strategy.

Course textbooks seem to be the most favored corrective measure among the teachers. It was selected by 97.2 percent of them to be used always or mostly in helping low-performing students.

More than half (54.8 percent) of the respondents said that they use alternative materials (like audio tapes, video tapes, movies, models, etc.) to remedy learning problems of their pupils sometimes or when conditions allow. 40.4 percent of them also said they use it always or mostly.

The frequency indicators ‘always’, ‘mostly’, ‘sometimes’, and ‘when condition allows’ were selected by 13 to 24 percent of the teachers in response to the extent to which they use workbooks and study guides as remedial methods to students with learning problems.

Finally, giving experiments or problems students can work on was reported to be used always or mostly by 72.6 percent of the teachers.

In general terms, peer tutoring, and workbooks and study guides seem to be used less frequently than the other corrective measures by the teachers.

However, what is found during the observation of the 10 schools was different from what the teachers have reported above. Teachers in these schools sometimes use re-teaching of low-performing students as a group (or what they call ‘tutorial’) as a sole corrective measure. Even materials like workbooks, study guides, audiotapes, videotapes, models, or movies, are not found in the schools. It is also less probable to devise appropriate and effective corrective measures to help low-performing students with the teachers’ poor utilization of the different assessment strategies in identifying the learning needs of each student in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, teachers’ responses in this respect are not reliable.

Table 28. Head-Teachers View on the Teachers’ frequency of Using Corrective measures

Responses	N	%
Yes, always	-	-
Yes, mostly	3	15.0
Sometimes	14	70.0
Never	3	15.0
Missing	-	-
Total	20	100.0

As can be observed from Table 28, only 3(15 percent) of the head-teachers said that teachers in their schools (particularly first-cycle teachers) mostly take corrective measures to help low-performing students in their class. On the other hand, the majority (70 percent) of the head-teachers reported that grades 1-3 teachers in their schools sometimes apply remedial strategies to help students with learning difficulties. Also, 3 (15 percent) of the heads replied that teachers never use corrective strategies to remedy the learning problems of low-performing students.

Head-teachers were also probed to mention the specific remedial strategies teachers are using in helping low achievers. Almost all the heads stated that teachers try to help underachievers by giving tutorials in the opposite shift or in the weekend. This in other words means, teachers re-teach group of students, who are supposed to be low-achievers, what they think was difficult to them in their previous lesson.

Therefore, one can conclude that teachers' hardly take corrective measures to help low-performing students individually.

Table 29. Responses on the Frequency of Consulting Parents of Low-Achievers

Responses	Head-Teachers		Teachers	
Yes, Always	-	-	-	-
Yes, Mostly	4	20.0	13	8.9
Yes, Sometimes	12	60.0	106	72.6
Rarely	1	5.0	20	13.7
Never	3	15.0	7	4.5
Missing	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100.0	146	100.0

According to Table 29, 20 percent of the head-teachers reported that teachers in the lower grades always consult parents of low-performing students. But, the majority (60 percent) of the heads replied that teachers sometimes hold talks with parents of students with learning difficulties. Also, 20 percent of the heads responded that teachers in their schools rarely or never consult low-performing students' parents.

With regard to the response of teachers to the frequency of consulting parents of low-achievers, only 8.9 percent of them replied that they always consult. More than two-third (72.6 percent) of the teachers, on the other hand, said that they sometimes consult parents about their children’s learning problems. Moreover, 18.5 percent of the teachers confirmed that they rarely or never discuss with parents of low-performing students.

Teachers were also provided with a question that asked them to select or write (if it is different) the reason(s) why they sometimes or never consult parents of students with learning difficulties. Their responses are in the following table.

Table 30. Reasons for not consulting Parents of Low-Achievers (Teachers’ View)

Responses	N	%
It is no use to consult parents	-	-
I have no time to consult parents	2	1.5
Parents do not come when they are called	117	90.0
Missing	11	8.5
Total	130	100.0

Table 30 indicates that the majority (90 percent) of the teachers mentioned ‘the unavailability of parents when they are called for consultation’ as the main reason for not meeting parents frequently.

Similar in content but open-ended question was also forwarded to the head-teachers. Their response was more or less similar to that of the teachers.

Table 31. Availability of Alternative Programs

Responses	Head-Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	11	55	89	61.0
No	9	45	57	39.0
Total	20	100	146	100

As to the existence of alternative programs arranged by schools to help low-performing students, Table 31 shows that 55 percent of the head-teachers and 61.0 percent of the teachers said that the programs are available. On the other hand, 45 percent of the head-teachers and 39 percent of the teachers replied that it is not available.

Following this item, both the heads and the teachers were also asked to list down the available programs one by one. In one way or the other, the respondents specify a single program. That is, the schools arrange time (opposite shift or weekend) for tutorial programs up on the request of individual teachers.

Table 32. The presence of repeaters in the schools

Responses	Head-Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	18	90	135	92.5
No	2	10	11	7.5
Total	20	100	146	100

As revealed by Table 32, both the head-teachers (90 percent) and the teachers (92.5 percent) confirmed that there are repeaters among students in the grades 1-3 at the end of each year. Few of the respondents (10 percent of the heads and 7.5 percent of the teachers), however, said that there is no grade repetition in the lower primary grades of their schools. The researcher also proved the existence of repeaters in the 10 schools that were observed.

An open-ended question was also provided to both the head-teachers and the teachers to probe for the criteria that are used in deciding the promotion of students at the end of the year. The respondents explained that they do not have any clear set criteria but most of the repeaters have the following characteristics.

- They are absent for long period of time during the academic year and
- They score below average (usually below 50) in the tests that are given throughout the year.

Through the discussions held with the heads and the teachers in the 10 schools during observation, the researcher understood the strong relationships of the above two characteristics of grade repeaters. This is to mean, those students who become absent from school repeatedly fail to take the short written tests that are administered usually in one or two weeks interval. This makes them incomplete or score below average (or below 50). The case of repeaters with regular class attendance is also very rare. Then one can conclude that implicitly the main criterion used by schools to make students repeat or promote is class attendance.

Table 33. Participation in Training or Workshop about Automatic Promotion

Responses	Head-Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	4	20	38	26.0
No	16	80	108	74.0
Total	20	100	146	100

In analyzing the data in table 33, the majority of the respondents (80 percent of the head-teachers and 74 percent of the teachers do not take any training or participate in a workshop. 20 percent of the head-teachers and 26 percent of the teachers said they have taken training or participated in a workshop.

Those who have taken training or participated in a workshop were also asked whether the training was adequate or not. All the respondents replied that it was inadequate. The data is presented in the following table.

Table 34. Adequacy of the Training

Responses	Head-Teachers		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	-	-	-	-
No	4	100	38	100
Total	4	100	38	100

4.3. Results obtained through the checklist

In order to crosscheck what has been reported by teachers and head-teachers through questionnaires, observation checklist was designed to examine the actual practice of continuous assessment in the schools, teachers' utilization of the different corrective measures and the availability of school programs to help underachieving students. Observation of different documents used by the teachers as well as face-to-face discussions with teachers and head-teachers were made. The data obtained through the checklist are summarized in Table 35.

Table 35. Checklist for Assessing the Practice of Automatic Promotion in Some Selected Primary Schools

No.	Items	Yes	No
1	Do teachers use for assessing students	-	10
	• Rating scale?	-	10
	• Observational checklist?	-	10
	• Written tests?	10	-
	• Exercises/ class works?	-	10
	• Exercises/ home works?	-	10
	• Project work?	-	10
2	Do teachers		
	• Write test plan?	-	10
	• Conduct item analyses?	-	10
3	Do teachers comment on		
	• Students' exercise books?	10	-
	• Test papers?	6	4
	• Projects?	1	9
4	Do teachers obtained/ participated on		
	• Formal training?	-	10
	• Workshops?	3	7
	• Seminars?	3	7
5	Do teachers keep formal records of students		
	• Written tests?	10	-
	• Anecdotal records?	-	10
	• Classroom observation?	-	10
	• Assignment/ homework/ class work?	2	8
	• Project works?	2	8
6	Do teachers use standards for judging the ability to:		
	• Read	-	10
	• Write	-	10
	• Speak	-	10
	• Perform basic mathematical problems	-	10
7	Do teachers apply corrective measures like:		
	• Re-teaching	10	-
	• Individual tutoring	-	10
	• Peer tutoring	-	10
	• Cooperative teams	-	10
	• Course textbook	-	10
	• Alternative materials (like audiotapes, models, etc.)	-	10
	• Workbooks and study guides	-	10
	• An experiment or problem they can work on	-	10
8	Do teachers consult parents?	2	8
9	Do school arrange programs like:		
	• Before or after school programs	3	7
	• Saturday/ Sunday programs	2	8
	• Summer	-	10
	• Guidance and counseling	-	10
	• Home assistance programs	-	10
10	Do the following documents available		
	• Continuous assessment guide	-	10
	• Student promotion guide	-	10

In the 10 schools where observation were made, documents such as rating scales, checklists, test planning, item analyses were not found. Written documents that show teachers' effort of designing test specifications, construction of test items from different domains of learning objectives, appraisal of test items on the basis of item analysis data, etc. were not found.

Teachers' comments were found on students' exercise books, partly on test papers but almost nil on project work. The comments include the following: 'good', 'very good', 'excellent', 'try to improve', etc. None of the comments identify the weaknesses and strengths of students and recommend possible strategies to avoid the weaknesses.

As to their participation in any formal training, workshops, seminars, most of the teachers reported that they had no any opportunity of formal training on continuous assessment. But a few of them have participated in workshops and seminars; however, the topics of discussion were not about testing and measurement.

With regard to formal records of students' performance, teachers usually keep records of written tests only. However, no documented records were available on classrooms observations, class works, home-take assignments, or project works. The final (summative evaluation) of pupils is based on 80-90 percent on written tests and 10-20 points on the neatness of pupils' exercise books and attendance. As to the standards for judging pupils ability to read, write, speak and perform basic mathematical problems, teachers did not have any evidence that show their work in this respect.

Teachers in the observed schools use tutoring low-performing students as a group in the opposite shift or in the weekend as a major corrective measure. However, either teachers do not know other remedial measures or they are reluctant to use them. Teachers also use the same method during tutorial as they did in the original instruction.

Teachers usually consult parents of students who are absent from school for long periods of time. Only few teachers discuss with parents of students with learning difficulties regularly.

Concerning the availability of school programs arranged to help students with learning difficulties, few schools arranged before or after school programs or Saturday/Sunday programs in case individual teachers want to give tutorials.

In all the ten schools there were no continuous assessment and student promotion guides.

4.4. Information Obtained Through the Interview

Interviews were also conducted to collect additional information on the overall implementation of automatic promotion in the first-cycle primary schools of West Gojjam Zone. This section of the study is, therefore concerned with the outcomes of the interview and presented as follows. The interviews were held with the Wereda education experts and supervisors.

1. Regarding the promotion policy of students in the first-cycle of primary schools in their Woreda, most of the interviewees mentioned a policy at regional level which states that at least 75 percent of the students registered in one class should be promoted to the next grade level at the end of the year. But they have not tried to impose this policy directly to the

schools. Instead, at the end of the year, students' promotion to the next grade is decided based on the students' marks obtained through "continuous assessment" and the teachers view about the readiness of the child to join the next grade level. In this practice, they said, more than 80 percent of the students promote to the next grade level. In speaking about continuous assessment, most of the respondents mentioned that teachers give more tests in each major subject. This may indicate that even the experts and supervisors at the Woreda level lack understanding about the concept and practice of continuous assessment.

2. Concerning the acceptance of the practice by teachers, head-teachers and parents, the respondents agree that there is a strong opposition of the practice among the teachers and the head-teachers. These bodies complain that in order to implement this policy, the necessary requirements are not fulfilled. These requirements include:

- The class size must be reduced so that the teacher can manage it
- Sufficient text books must be provided to the schools and
- Training that is directly related to the practice should be given.

Few parents also oppose the promotion of their children to the next grade level believing that their children are not ready.

3. The experts and the supervisors were also asked the type of support they give to the schools in practicing this promotion policy. They said that they provide workshops to the teachers and directors on topics like self-contained classroom management, continuous assessment, managing large class size, etc. They also try to recruit more teachers and try to distribute

more textbooks. But, they said these provisions are not sufficient. This is mainly because of the acute shortage of finance.

4. The interviewees were also asked about the repetition rates in the grades 1 to 3 primary schools since they started the promotion policy. According to the respondents, there are changes in repetition rates since the practice has started. Actually, it is decreasing. More than 90 percent of the children who attend classes regularly promote to the next grade level. For the interviewees, this is so because teachers continuously evaluate their students and help them improve their weaknesses and make them achieve the minimum requirements to their age-level.

Concerning the repeaters, the respondents confirmed that they are those who miss several classes in the academic year. When they explain it further, they said that those children who are absent from school for more than 10 days in the academic year are more likely to repeat the grade for another extra year. This is because during their absence from school they miss the discussions hold in those days and they miss the tests given by the teachers. These make them become incomplete and score unsatisfactory results at the end of the year.

Regarding dropouts, the respondents said that there are no significant changes. Still a considerable number of students in grades 1 to 3 leave school at one time in the academic year. For this, they mentioned different reasons but none of them mentioned it is because they repeat grades.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

As it is mentioned in the introduction part, the study was intended to assess automatic promotion practices with particular reference to West Gojjam Zone in Amhara Region. To this effect, the descriptive survey approach was employed as a method of the study. Twenty-one First-Cycle Primary Schools were selected as source of information from four Woredas of the Zone. Questionnaire, interview and observation checklist were the data collection instruments used to secure information from Woreda education experts and supervisors, school principals and teachers. The collected data were, then analyzed based on the specified research questions of the study.

Therefore, on the basis of the analysis made on the data obtained through these instruments, the major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Regarding the knowledge of teachers about issues related to promotion policies, as opposed to the research findings, most of the teachers identify that grade retention is better than automatic promotion to help underachieving students perform better in latter grades. A considerable number of teachers do not also know the negative impact of grade retention on students' attitude towards school and dropout rates in schools. Moreover, 64 to 88 percent of them do not believe that the introduction of automatic promotion will help to reduce school dropouts and consequently increase school efficiency. Also, 37 percent of the teachers do not

know the fact that grade repetition and dropouts are the two major problems in the primary schools of Ethiopia.

2. More than two-third (67.8 percent) of the teachers failed to know the existence of alternative programs other than retention and automatic promotion in dealing with low-performing students. Only 31.5 percent of the teachers said that it is not correct to choose between the above two in dealing with low-performing students.
3. Concerning teachers' awareness about the requirements in practicing automatic promotion, most of them (more than 88 percent) responded positively. They know that automatic promotion demands lots of efforts on their part. More specifically, they believe that automatic promotion implies the need to follow-up each student's learning progress, the need to use continuous assessment, the need to plan for corrective measures to be taken to help students with learning difficulties, the need to involve parents, and the need to give extra time to the children with learning difficulties to catch up with others.
4. Most of the teachers failed to get satisfaction in automatic promotion practices. Instead, they are afraid that automatic promotion will leave a considerable number of students functionally illiterate. They believe that automatic promotion means rewarding students regardless of their individual ability and effort. They do not also agree with the opinion that the practice will help teachers to treat their students equally. Consequently, 82.8 percent of the teachers disagree to the statement that they would prefer to continue with automatic promotion even they had the choice not to practice it. From the interview held with educational experts and

supervisors, it was also reported that there is strong opposition of automatic promotion practices among teachers in the primary schools.

5. Concerning continuous assessment

A. About teachers skills in writing and using different tools

It was reported that in grades 1-3 of primary schools, the majority of the teachers prepare test plan before they write items (60 percent) and conduct item analysis (75 percent). In reality, however, it was observed that teachers neither prepare test plans nor conduct item analysis.

With regard to the type of assessment instruments used by teachers, it is found that giving exercises, using oral questions and administering short written tests were the most frequently used to assess the learning progress of pupils. But performance tests and observational techniques are the least used techniques. Both head-teachers and teachers said that teachers use class works, home-take assignments, written tests and oral tests. But they keep only the records of marks on written tests.

Head-teachers also reported that the use of observational techniques and performance tests by the teachers of grades 1-3 are very limited (Table 16). A considerable number of teachers (30-40 percent) are reported to use observational techniques and performance tests if conditions allow them. The head-teachers also relatively rated as low the performance of teachers on using different assessment results for making decisions and taking corrective actions, and on giving independent work regularly for pupils.

During the observation of the schools, records for oral tests and performance tests were not found. None of the teachers in these schools use checklists and rating scales to assess students' learning progress. The final (summative) evaluation of pupils is based on 80-90 points on written tests and 10-20 points on attendance and the neatness of pupils' exercise books.

In their response, teachers tend to use the different assessment techniques randomly to assess the different domains of educational outcomes. For instance, some teachers responded that they use performance tests or observational techniques for measuring behavioral objectives such as defining terms (28.1 percent), memorizing specific facts (50.7 percent), knowledge of plants and animals (51.4 percent), ability to analyze and interpret concepts (24.0 percent), ability to analyze cause and effect relationships (32.2 percent), ability to synthesize and evaluate concepts (25.3 percent) and ability to comprehend the contents of the different subjects (27.4 percent). Similarly, a considerable number of teachers (21-51 percent) selected written tests to measure learning outcomes like the ability to make organized and fluent speech, ability to identify geometric shapes, pupils' asking and answering skill, skills in holding (handling) a pencil or a pen, writing, listening and drawing skills, readiness to accept new ideas, skill to demonstrate experiments, ability to write and present short stories and pupils' interest and attitudes.

Head-teachers also responded that some teachers do not measure behavioral objectives that need to be measured in the first-cycle of primary schools.

B. Teachers' skill in providing feedback to pupils' performance

It was observed that teachers also give feedback on the exercise books, and test papers of pupils for class works, home-take assignments and tests done by the pupils. Teachers usually write such comments as “excellent”, “very good”, “good”, “brave”, “not bad”, “improve” and the like. They do not indicate why they have done excellent or what they need to improve and the like.

C. Availability of Assessment Guides

The data in this study showed that assessment guides on continuous assessment of pupils in grade 1-3 are not available, the number of pupils per section in grades 1-3 range from 60-125.

d. Teachers' training in continuous assessment or participation in workshops

The data from this study (Table 24) showed that the majority of the teachers in grades 1-3 (74.6 percent) do not have any training in continuous assessment or even not attended any workshop on continuous assessment. Even those teachers who reported that they have attended workshops on continuous assessment said that they attended it for 1-5 days with other topics.

6. Concerning corrective measures

- a. Individual tutoring, peer tutoring, cooperative teams, course text books and giving experiments or problems students can work on were selected as the major remedial measures to be used always or mostly in helping low-performing students by 58.9,

52.8, 69.8, 97.2 and 72.6 percent of the teachers. On the other hand, re-teaching using alternative materials like audio tapes, video tapes, models, etc. to help underachieving students were reported to be used sometimes or when conditions allow by 87.8 and 54.8 percent of the teachers.

However, from the responses of the head-teachers (70 percent) and the observations made in the 10 schools, teachers sometimes take corrective measures in order to remedy the learning difficulties of their students. Moreover, the head-teachers and the observation proved that re-teaching (what they call giving tutorials to low-achievers as group) is the only remedial strategy that teachers sometimes use to help students with learning difficulties. In the tutorial sessions teachers use the same methodology and content presentation as they did in the original instruction.

- b. Teachers reported that they sometimes or rarely (by 91.1 percent) hold discussions with parents of low-performing students. This is also confirmed by the head-teachers (80 percent). The reason mentioned by both of the respondents for not consulting parents frequently is that parents are not voluntary to come to school and discuss about the learning problems of their children.

7. School programs

- a. 55 percent of the head-teachers and 61 percent of the teachers replied that there are school programs arranged to help low-performing students. But, in one way or the other, these respondents mentioned arranging of time (in opposite shift or at the

weekend) by the school for tutorial programs up on the request of individual teachers as the sole school program available in their school.

8. The case of repeaters in the schools

- a. According to the results found by the instruments, there are repeaters in the grades 1-3 of primary schools at the end of the year. In these schools repeaters are characterized by their absence from school for at least 10 days in the academic year and their score being below average (usually below 50). It is also observed that most grade repeaters are those who are absent from school for more than 10 days. Whereas, the case of repeaters among students, who regularly attend classes, is very rare.

- b. The majority of the head-teachers (80 percent) and teachers (74 percent) never attended training or participated in a workshop that deals with automatic promotion and its implications. Even those respondents who participated in workshops responded that the workshops were inadequate.

5.2. Conclusions

1. From the forgoing discussions and findings, one can see that teachers lack the knowledge about the negative impacts of grade repetition. Even they prefer it as an effective remedial strategy to help low-performing students in later grades. This belief may come from teachers' observation of the relative improvements in achievement of grade repeaters in the

repeating year. But these teachers do not follow the impact of grade retention on these students' achievement and self-esteem in later grades.

It is also found that the knowledge of teachers about the impact of grade repetition on students' attitude towards school, on school dropout rates, on school efficiency and on the universalization of primary education in Ethiopia, is inadequate. These lack of awareness about the issues surrounding grade repetition and automatic promotion may lead the teachers oppose the introduction of automatic promotion or any other alternative approach in alleviating the problem of grade repetition and its negative consequences. These lack of awareness may be because teachers do not have the access to research findings on the issue.

2. In dealing with low-performing students both grade retention and automatic promotion are ineffective strategies unless the students are given individual attention and alternative pathways to achieve the necessary objectives assigned to their age-level. That is, teachers need to give day-to-day assistance based on their individual needs both inside and outside the classroom. However, it is found that the majority of the teachers in the selected schools prefer to choose between grade retention and automatic promotion in dealing with low-performing students rather than helping these pupils based on their individual needs. This position of the teachers is very dangerous. This is because making the child repeats the same grade for another extra year may make him develop negative attitude towards school and consequently increase the likelihood that he/she will become a dropout. This also causes educational wastage. Automatic promotion of these children to the next grade without any additional help, on the other hand, may leave them inadequately equipped with the necessary knowledge assigned for their age.

3. It is found that teachers are aware that automatic promotion practices demands lots of efforts on their part. They know that the practice needs to attend the needs of each student, to use continuous assessment in their instruction, to take corrective measures to remedy the learning difficulties of each student and to consult parents of low-performing students. That means teachers know almost all the implications of automatic promotion in their teaching practice. This knowledge may contribute positively to the implementation of automatic promotion in the schools.

4. Teachers' attitudes are one basis for the decisions teachers make at the classroom level of the education system. If teachers have negative attitude towards a given reform in any education system, they may behave purposely or unconsciously in ways that alter or undermine the programs proposed by policy makers. On the other hand, if teachers have a positive attitude towards a given educational reform they are more likely to take ownership of the change and to extend effort to its effective implementation in their classroom. In this study, however, teachers are found to have negative attitude towards automatic promotion practices in their schools. This may imply that even if teachers have the knowledge of all the implications of automatic promotion policy in their teaching practices at the classroom level, they may be reluctant to give up practices that have been followed for many years. This may inevitably affect the implementation of automatic promotion in our schools negatively.

5. Pupils in grades 1-3 like to develop skills like reading, writing, listening, drawing, arithmetic skills, social skills, work habits, and as well as behavioral changes in personal-

social development. In this regard, performance tests and observational techniques play crucial roles. However, these instruments are the least used by the teachers teaching in the grade 1-3. Teachers also use class works, home-take assignments, written tests and oral tests to assess their students' learning progresses. But they only keep the records of marks on written tests. That means, the results from the other assessment techniques are not used by the teachers for making decisions about the pupils' learning. Teachers only score for the correctness of the pupils' exercise books. The teachers also do not have formats, checklists or rating scales that can be used to record oral or performance test results or to make observations. Teachers rely heavily on written tests (80-90 percent of the total mark for evaluating pupils) to assess pupils' performances and achievement of the educational objectives in grades 1-3. This means that teachers are not using the different assessment instruments in their true senses.

6. Test plans and item analysis are important tools in the preparation of tests. They help teachers develop a test, which is reliable and valid. But teachers in the selected schools neither prepare test plans nor conduct item analysis in order to develop good quality tests. This implies that the probability that teachers develop tests that are not reliable and valid is very high.
7. Written tests are best suited to the assessment of cognitively learning outcomes. Psychomotor and affective domains, on the other hand, are best assessed by the use of performance tests or observational techniques. In the study, however, it is found that a considerable number of teachers mismatch the type of assessment instruments with the corresponding educational outcomes. This may be a good indication of teachers' lack of

- knowledge in matching the appropriate types of test items with behavioral objectives. It may also be due to the absence of planning the construction of test items.
8. Obviously, gaining precise information about students' learning progress is vitally important, but if their learning is to be improved, students need to be provided with feedback about their performances. In this respect, teachers in the selected schools give feedback on the exercise books and test papers of pupils for class works, home-take assignments and test done by the pupils. But these feedbacks given by the teachers are not so detailed that they do not indicate why students have done excellent or what they need to improve and the like. In this respect, therefore, the comments that teachers are giving contribute little as a feedback to help pupils to learn or improve in their learning.
 9. As it has been explained earlier in this study the final (summative) evaluation of pupils rely heavily on written tests. The probability of the tests being reliable and valid is very low. And the feedback given by teachers is found to be poor. These results clearly indicate the inadequacy of the system in the schools to represent the concepts and practices of continuous assessment and its inadequacy to indicate mastery of educational profiles of pupils of grades 1-3.
 10. The implementation of continuous assessment in grades 1-4 requires, among others, the availability of assessment guides in the hands of each teacher, and manageable number of pupils in each section. But, as it is found in this study, assessment guides on continuous assessment are not available and the number of pupils per-section ranges from 60-125. It is then less probable to implement continuous assessment in a class containing more than 50

pupils and where there are no guides for assessing pupils' educational achievements. In addition, teachers' lack of training on continuous assessment could also contribute for the poor practice of continuous assessment in the primary schools.

- 11.** For automatic promotion be effectively implemented, teachers need to correct the learning problems of low-performing students by applying different strategies. Unfortunately, the teachers in the selected schools use only re-teaching (or tutoring low-performing students as a group). Even in this strategy, they use the same method and content presentation as in the original instruction. This may be a good indication that teachers lack the knowledge and skill about the different types of corrective measures. It may also be due to the large number of students in their class, due to the lack of appropriate instructional materials or poor assessment strategies. In any way, teachers are poor in taking the appropriate measures so that low-performing students catch up to their peers and promote to the next grade.

- 12.** Efforts to arrange programs that can be used to help low-performing students at school level were found to be almost nil. This could leave, those students who need extra help to achieve the minimum requirements in the given grade before promoting to the next grade, unattended. Practicing automatic promotion in this condition could result in the low achievement of a considerable number of students at the end of the first cycle.

- 13.** Obviously, there are repeaters and dropouts in the grades 1-3. All the respondents replied that students' promotion to the next grade level is decided based on continuous assessment and whether or not students do not miss a considerable number of periods in the academic year. But, grade repeaters are mainly characterized by their long absence from school in the

academic year. The case of repeaters, who have attended almost all classes in the academic year, is very few. This implies that, implicitly, the main criterion used by schools to make decisions on students' promotion to the next grade is attendance. This type of practice accompanied by poor continuous assessment practices and poor supportive strategies of teachers and schools may leave a considerable number of students, who will automatically promote and complete the first-cycle, functionally illiterate. It is also a lose on the part of the repeaters, and the schools when students are made to repeat the same grade for one or more year(s) using only attendance as a main criterion. It will also leave the students at risk of dropping out of school.

In general terms, all the results of the study indicate that schools lack the main essence of automatic promotion and its implications. And one can conclude that automatic promotion is ill practiced in the first-cycle primary schools of West Gojjam Zone.

5.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the evidences from this study, the following recommendations are forwarded in order to improve the implementation of automatic promotion in grades 1-3 in West Gojjam Zone primary schools.

1. Any educational reform can be made meaningful if teachers are made to understand why reforms have to be made in the education system and how these will be effected. However, the awareness of teachers in the grades 1-3 about the reasons behind the introduction of automatic promotion in our schools and about the different alternative strategies in dealing

with low-performing students is found to be inadequate. Therefore, teachers should get the opportunity to learn about automatic promotion and the different strategies in helping underachievers. Such opportunities can be organized in the form of in-service courses, seminars, conferences, workshops and field trips. The provision of different research findings on the issue for the schools will also help in this respect.

2. The effective implementation of automatic promotion in the schools requires, among others, the commitment of teachers. In this regard, encouraging teachers to conduct action research on the impacts of retention and the different alternative strategies on students' achievement, on dropout rates, on students' attitude towards school, etc., will help to win their commitments.
3. As it is found in the study, teachers' utilization of the different assessment instruments to assess the progress of students is poor. Thus, for effective implementation of continuous assessment in the grades 1-3, adequate training should be given for teachers on how to prepare and use the different assessment techniques such as written tests, performance tests and observational techniques (i.e., anecdotal records, checklists, rating scales, interviews, etc.).
4. Although it was reported that teachers provide class work, home take assignments, oral exercises, and written tests to assess pupils' overall achievement, it was found that teachers keep records of written tests only. Hence, for assessing and making genuine decision about

the true picture of pupils' achievement from different angles, it is of great importance to keep records not only of written tests but as well of the different assessment instruments used in classes.

5. Eventhough, teachers use written tests, the validity and reliability of these tests, are doubtful, because they have never developed test plans and test specifications. Thus, it is advisable on the part of the teachers to prepare test plan and test blue print for constructing test items that are valid and reliable.

6. The use of feedback and corrective measures usually depends on the number of pupils per section, teachers' willingness and devotion, and knowledge of the impact of feedback and corrective measures on students' achievement. Without a sound feedback and the application of appropriate corrective measures pupils cannot have knowledge of their educational strengths and weaknesses and consequently cannot be helped to improve their weaknesses. Thus, the number of pupils per section should be reduced to a maximum of 50 so that teachers can manage to provide effective and sound feedback for pupils and apply the appropriate corrective measures. In addition, how to provide effective feedback and how to use appropriate corrective measures should be components of training on automatic promotion for teachers of grades 1-3.

7. The implementation of automatic promotion requires educational resources such as handbook of assessment guides for teachers, sufficient number of text books for pupils in each subject

area, well developed checklists and observational techniques, alternative materials (i.e., movies, videotapes, audiotapes, videodisks, film-strips, models, etc.), workbooks and study guides, and promotion guides. The provision of these facilities should be made to schools in order to fully implement automatic promotion in the grades 1-3.

8. In the study, the cooperation of schools and parents in helping low-performing pupils is found to be loose. This condition should be improved. In this regard, schools can form home assistance programs. These programs provide parents with structured, specific information about ways to help their child academically with homework, sound study habits, or sound work habits.
9. The self-contained classroom set-up established in the first-cycle is one positive aspect in the schools in implementing automatic promotion because it helps the teacher identify the needs, strengths and weaknesses of each pupil and help the pupils accordingly. Thus, this classroom set-up should be further strengthened. In addition, schools should arrange regular before or after school, weekend and/or summer programs, and classes for study skill to help low-performing students. Counseling service should also be given for pupils with learning difficulties.
10. Retaining a child in a grade is a serious decision. Most of the times, its disadvantages far outweigh any of the advantages a child might receive if held back a grade. Thus, when schools contemplate retention for a child, they should seriously consider all available

information (educational, medical and psychological) to help them evaluate keeping the child in a prior grade. All the concerned parties-teachers, parents, the student and the school-should also be involved in making decisions of students' promotion.

11. The implementation of automatic promotion in schools heavily rests on teachers. Teachers' motivation in the form of training, workshops and seminars may contribute to the effective implementation of automatic promotion. In general, for the implementation of automatic promotion systematically and objectively in the grades 1-3, it is relevant to upgrade teachers' skill of using continuous assessment procedures and the different corrective strategies to identify and help low-performing students through designing **training workshops** of different kinds.

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APPENDICES

Interview guide for Woreda Education Office Directors and Supervisors

1. How do students in the first-cycle promote from one grade to the next in your woreda?
2. Since when you started this promotional policy? Why?
3. How teachers, directors, parents and students receive it?
4. Is it being implemented as it is intended?
5. What special support do you give to schools in implementing automatic promotion?
6. Are there changes in repetition and dropout rates since the promotion policy is implemented?
7. Do teachers and directors take training about the implementation of the promotion policy?

Addis Ababa University
School of graduate Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Questionnaire for teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about automatic promotion in the first-cycle primary schools of West Gojjam zone. Based on the findings, possible ways for the implementation of automatic promotion will be suggested. It is, therefore, hoped that your responses would be very rigorous and sincere. Be sure that your responses will be used only for academic purposes. Consequently, you will not be responsible for the research outcomes, and all the responses will be kept confidential. Thus you are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire carefully honestly for your responses are the only way to achieve reliable research results.

Please read the instructions as well as the questions carefully and give objective and complete answers.

I am very much grateful to you for taking your time and filling out the questionnaire.

Part One -- Background Information

TNSTRUCTION: Please indicate your answer by putting a check mark " " or by writing where it is necessary in the space provided.

- 1.1. a. Name of your school _____
b. Location of your school: Woreda _____; Kebele _____
- 1.2. Sex: a. male _____ b. female _____
- 1.3. Total years of service: _____
- 1.4. Total years of service as a self-contained teacher: _____
- 1.5. Your qualification:
 - a. 12th grade or below _____
 - b. TTI graduate _____
 - c. If any other please indicate _____
- 1.6. The size of the class you teach _____.

Part Two--concerning automatic promotion and its implications

INSTRUCTION: Questions related to automatic promotion and its implications are listed below. Please read each item carefully and give your response by circling the letter of your choice.

- 2.1. Grade retention is better than automatic promotion to help underachieving students perform better in later grades.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.2. Grade repeaters may develop negative attitude towards school.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.3. Grade repetition increases the likelihood that a student will become a dropout.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.4. Grade repetition and dropouts cause educational wastage.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.5. The introduction of automatic promotion may help to reduce dropout rates.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.6. The introduction of automatic promotion increases school efficiency.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.7. Repetition and dropout rates are the two major problems that challenge the goal to universalize primary education in Ethiopia.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.8. When it comes to dealing with low-performing students, it boils down to choice between automatic promotion and retention.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.9. Automatic promotion implies the need to follow up each students learning progress.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.10. Continuous assessment plays a great role in implementing automatic promotion.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.11. Automatic promotion implies to pan for corrective measures to be taken to help students with learning difficulties.
A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer
- 2.12. Parent involvement is important in practicing automatic promotion.

A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer

2.13. In implementing automatic, children with learning difficulties should be given extra time to catch up with others.

A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer

2.14. Automatic promotion demands little on the part of teachers.

A. Correct B. Incorrect C. No answer

Part Three--Attitudes towards automatic promotion

In this part you will find a series of five statements on the topic of automatic promotion. There are five possible answers for each statement that go from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree'. You should choose the answer that most closely corresponds to your general opinion.

3.1. I get more satisfaction when all my students promote to the next grade at the end of the year.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
completely agree	agree	undecided	disagree	completely disagree

3.2. I am afraid that automatic promotion will leave a considerable number of students functionally illiterate.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
completely agree	agree	undecided	disagree	completely disagree

3.3. Automatic promotion means rewarding students regardless of their individual ability and effort.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
completely agree	agree	undecided	disagree	completely disagree

3.4. Automatic promotion policy enables me treat all the students equally.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
completely agree	agree	undecided	disagree	completely disagree

3.5. I would prefer to continue with automatic promotion of my students even I had the choice not to practice.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
completely agree	agree	undecided	disagree	completely disagree

Part Four--concerning continuous assessment

4.1. How frequently do you assess pupils' learning progress?

- A. Always B. Mostly C. Sometimes D. Once
 E. When condition allows F. Not at all

4.2. If your response for question 4.1. is "a", "b", "c" or "d", what type of assessment instrument you employ? If your response is more than one, please put in rank order.

- A. Giving exercises
 B. Administering short written tests
 C. Using oral questions
 D. Making use of observations
 E. Others specify _____

4.3. How frequently do you use the following assessment techniques to assess the learning progress of pupils in your classroom?

Types of assessment Techniques	Frequency of using				
	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	When Possible	Never
Giving class works					
Giving home-take assignments					
Administering written tests					
Use of observational methods					
Giving performance tests					
Conducting oral examinations					

4.4. To which of the assessment techniques mentioned at question 3.9 do you have records?

4.5. How frequently you mark pupils' exercise books in a week?

A. Once B. Twice C. Three times D. Four to five times

E. When condition allows

F. Different response, specify_____

4.6. What assessment methods do you use to measure the following learning objectives? Put " " on your choice.

S. No	List of Learning Objectives	Written Tests		Performance tests		I never assess	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Ability to Define terms						
2	Ability to Classify different types of crops according to their character						
3	Ability to memorize specific facts						
4	Ability to make oral reading						
5	Ability to make organized and fluent speech						
6	Ability to identify geometric shapes in terms of their properties						
7	Knowledge about plants and animals						
8	Ability to remembering what has been taught/learnt						
9	Pupils' asking and answering skill						
10	Ability to participate in group work						
11	skill in showing physical exercise on the basis of musical rhythm						
12	Ability to do exercises that build the different parts of the body						
13	Skill in holding (handling) a pencil or a pen						
14	Writing, listening, and drawing skills						
15	Readiness to accept new ideas						
16	Ability of analyze and interpret concepts						
17	Skill to demonstrate experiments						
18	Ability to analyze cause and effect relationships						
19	Ability to synthesize and evaluating concepts						
20	Ability to write and present short stories						
21	Pupils' need, interest or attitude for different things						
22	Pupils' participation in the teaching learning process						
23	Skill in using ones initiation and creativity						
24	Concern for the welfare of others, sensitivity to community issues, respect laws and regulations						
25	Ability to comprehend the contents of the different subjects						

4.7. Do you prepare test plan?

A. Yes, always B. Yes, sometimes C. Whenever possible D. Not at all

E. Different opinion _____

- 4.8. If your answer for question 4.7. is "yes", specify the important factors (or prerequisites) that should be considered in planning a test. _____
_____.
- 4.9. What purposes do assessment results serve in your classroom? If your responses are more than one, put in rank order.
- A. To decide students' promotion to the next grade
 - B. To identify low and high achievers
 - C. For remedial instruction
 - E. To re-teach what the majority of the students missed in the original instruction
 - D. To motivate students
 - E. If any other, specify _____
_____.
- 4.10. Have you attended any training or workshop on continuous assessment?
- A. Yes, I do
 - B. No, I do not
- 4.11. If your answer for question 4.10 is 'yes', for how long you attended the training or workshop? _____

Part Five--Concerning Corrective Measures

5.1. How frequently do you use the following corrective activities in dealing with students with learning difficulties? Please, circle one opinion in each row.

No.	Corrective Activities	Always	Often	Rarely	When possible	Never
1	Re-teaching	5	4	3	2	1
2	Individual Tutoring	5	4	3	2	1
3	Peer tutoring	5	4	3	2	1
4	Cooperative teams	5	4	3	2	1
5	Course textbooks	5	4	3	2	1
6	Alternative materials (like audiotapes, film strips, models, etc	5	4	3	2	1
7	Workbooks and study guides	5	4	3	2	1
8	An experiment or problem they can work on	5	4	3	2	1
9	Others specify _____ _____ _____.	5	4	3	2	1

5.2. Do you consult parents of students with learning difficulties about their children's learning progress?

- A. Yes, I always do B. Yes, I sometimes do C. Yes, I seldom do D. No, I don't

5.3. If your response for question no.5.2 is C or D, what do you think the reasons are?

- A. It is no use to consult parents
 B. I have no time to consult parents
 C. Parents do not come when they are called
 D. Others, specify_____.

6.1. Does the school arrange programs to help students with learning difficulties out of the regular classroom?

- A. Yes, it does B. No, it doesn't

6.2. If your response for question no.6.1 is "yes", please specify the programs.

6.3. Are there students who repeat grade after automatic promotion is implemented?

- A. Yes, there are B. No, there aren't

6.4. If your response for question no.6.3 is "yes", what are the criteria to make them repeat the grade?

6.5. Have you ever attended a training or workshop on the promotion policy?

- A. Yes B. No

6.6. If your response for question no.6.5 is "yes", was it adequate?

- A. Yes B. No

Addis Ababa University
School of graduate Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Questionnaire for directors

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about automatic promotion in the first-cycle primary schools of West Gojjam zone. Based on the findings, possible ways for the implementation of automatic promotion will be suggested. It is, therefore, hoped that your responses would be very rigorous and sincere. Be sure that your responses will be used only for academic purposes. Consequently, you will not be responsible for the research outcomes, and all the responses will be kept confidential. Thus you are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire carefully honestly for your responses are the only way to achieve reliable research results.

Please read the instructions as well as the questions carefully and give objective and complete answers.

I am very much grateful to you for taking your time and filling out the questionnaire.

Part One -- Background Information

INSTRUCTION: Please indicate your answer by putting a check mark " " or by writing where it is necessary in the space provided.

- 1.1. a. Name of your school _____
b. Location of your school: Woreda _____; Kebele _____
- 1.2. Sex: a. male _____ b. female _____
- 1.1. Total years of service as a teacher in the elementary school _____
- 1.4. Your qualification:
- a. TTI graduate _____
 - b. College diploma _____
 - c. First degree _____
 - d. If any other please indicate _____
- 1.5. Years of service as a director _____

Part Two--Concerning Continuous Assessment

Instruction: Questions related to continuous assessment are listed below. Please read each item carefully and give your response by circling the letter of your choice or filling the blank spaces.

2.1. Do teachers assess students' progress in their learning ?

- A. Yes, always B. Yes, mostly C. Yes, sometimes D. when condition allows
E. Not at all

2.2. How frequently do teachers use the following assessment techniques to measure students learning?

No	Types of assessment techniques	Frequency of using			
		Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never
1	Class work				
2	Home-work				
3	Written tests				
4	Observational Techniques				
5	Performance test				
6	Oral tests				

2.3. To which of the assessment techniques mentioned in question no.4 are recorded scores available?_____

_____.

2.4. How many times do teachers mark pupils' exercise books per week?

- A. Once B. Twice C. Trice D. 4-5 times E. when condition allows
E. Different response, specify_____.

2.5. Do teachers assess the following learning objectives? Please, use the sign " " on your response.

S.No	List of learning Objectives	Yes, They do	No, They don't
1	Pupils' oral reading ability		
2	Pupils' Writing, listening and drawing ability		
3	Pupils' systematic organization of ideas in their speaking skill		
4	Pupils' asking and answering skill.		
5	Pupils' demonstrating ability of experiment		
6	Pupils' interest and attitude to different things		
7	Pupils' ability of participation in group work		
8	Ability of identifying geometric shapes according to their characteristics		
9	Concern for the welfare of others, sensitivity to community issues, respect, laws & regulations		
10	Ability to appreciate one's surrounding, Feelings of satisfaction and enjoyment towards, nature, music, art, literature, etc.		
11	Curiosity for knowledge		
12	Ability to use and demonstrate one's initiation and creativity		
13	Pupils' participation in the teaching learning process		
14	Pupils' ability to write and present short stories		
15	Pupils' skill of handling a pencil or a pen properly		

2.6. What assessment techniques do teachers use to measure each learning objective listed in question no.2.5?

2.7. Do teachers prepare test plans?

A. Yes, always B. Yes, sometimes C. whenever possible D. Not at all

2.8. What system do you have in your school to evaluate the quality of tests?

A. exam committee B. Education department C. No clear procedure

2.9. If your response for question no.2.8 is "exam committee", what criteria are used to assess the reliability and validity of tests by the committee?

2.10. Do teachers conduct item analysis?

- A. yes, they do B. No, they do not

2.11. If you say "no" for the question no.2.10, write reason.

2.12. Do teachers perform the following tasks? Please rank if your response is more than one.

- A. Using observational techniques.
B. Encouraging pupils to participate in group work.
C. Giving and marking class and home take assignments.
D. Giving independent work regularly for pupils.
E. Using different assessment results for making decisions and taking corrective actions.
F. Giving feedback to the efforts made by pupils.

2.13. Do teachers take training or attend workshops on continuous assessment?

- A. Yes B. No

2.14. If your response for question no.2.13 is "yes", was it adequate?

- A. Yes B. No

2.15. Is continuous assessment guide available?

- A. Yes, available and used properly.
B. Yes, available but not used.
C. No, it is not available

2.16. Do teachers take corrective measures to help those students with learning difficulties?

- A. Yes, always B. Yes mostly C. Sometimes D. Not at all

2.17. If your response for question no.2.16 is "yes", what specific corrective activities are used by teachers?

2.18. Do teachers consult parents of students with learning difficulties?

- A. Yes, always B. Yes, sometimes C. Rarely C. Not at all

2.19. If your response for the question no.2.18 is "c" or "d", what do you think is the reason?

2.20. Do you have school programs to help those students with learning difficulties out of the regular classroom?

- A. Yes B. No

2.21. If your response for question no.2.20 is "yes", please specify the programs.

2.22. Are there students who repeat grades after automatic promotion is implemented?

A. Yes B. No

2.23. If your response for the question no.2.22 is "yes", what are the criteria used by the school to make these students repeat?

2.24. Have you ever attended a training or workshop on automatic promotion?

A. Yes B. No

2.25. If your response for question no.2.24 is "yes", was it adequate?

A. Yes B. No

