

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF QUALITY ISSUES IN EDUCATION
IN NEKEMTE

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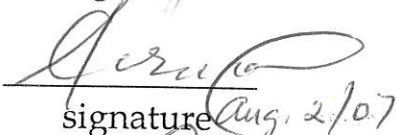

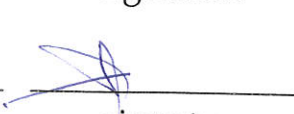
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Abbreviations

- ADB-Asian Development Bank
- CEDEFOP- European Center for the Development of Vocational Education and Training
- EFA -Education for All
- ESDP- Education Sector Development Programme
- FGD- Focus Group Discussion
- HIV/ AIDS -Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- IBE-International Bureau of Education
- IEG- Independent Evaluation Group
- MCEETYA- Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (Australia)
- MoE- Ministry of Education
- NCTAF- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future
- UNATCOM-Uganda National Commission
- UNESCO -United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund
- UPE -Universal Primary Education

Abstract

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the phenomenon of quality issues in education in primary school from the teachers' perspectives by using qualitative case study methodology. Teachers teaching in government primary schools of Nekemte town were the participants of the study. Data were generated via interview and focus group discussions from nineteen purposefully selected "information-rich" cases ranging in diversity. In all, 19 teachers were interviewed and three focus group discussions were held. The data secured through these techniques were categorized and thematically analyzed. The findings of the study indicated that the participants' perceived quality of education in terms of input and output/outcomes. The analysis revealed that the primary schools were suffering from very poor conditions of learning. Regarding current status of quality, the study also found that the quality of education in primary schools was not promising. Finally, the finding indicated that forming of various committees, continuous assessment, regular meeting, sharing of experience among teachers, preparation of question-answer forum for the students are the identified strategy employed by the teachers to improve quality of education. The need for breaking teachers' problem, provision of fund, strengthening parent-school relationship, resolving student disciplinary problems and efficient distribution of textbooks timely and in adequate amount are, thus, found to be the dimensions identified as points that need interventions.

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem and Its Background

It is widely agreed that education is the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the present and future. It is considered as a compulsory prerequisite for sustainable development in any country, developed or developing. Progress increasingly depends upon the product of the educated mind, research, invention, innovation and adaptation (UNESCO, 1997). It is also stated in Ethiopian Education and Training Policy, (1994) as a very important factor to human development. In line with this argument Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) assert that education is a corner stone of social and economic development.

Psacharopoulos (1985) stated that education is widely regarded as the route to economic prosperity, the key to scientific and technological advancement, the means to combat unemployment, the foundation of social equity, and the spread of political socialization and cultural vitality.

Education serves society in a variety of ways. The goal of education is to make people wiser, more knowledgeable, better informed, ethically responsible, identify harmful practice and replace them by useful ones, strengthen individuals and societies problem solving capacity, realize their full potential and participate meaningfully in society and capable of continuing to learn. According to UNESCO, (1997);

Education serves the society by providing a critical reflection on the world especially its failing and injustice and by promoting a greater consciousness awareness, exploring new visions and concepts and inventing new techniques and tools. It is also a means for disseminating knowledge and developing skills for bringing about

desired changes in behaviors, values and life styles and for promoting public support for the continuing and fundamental changes that will be required if humanity is to alter its course.

It is also the most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development by emphasizing a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to develop the knowledge and skills as well as changes in values, behavior, and lifestyles and empower everyone, young and old, to make decisions and act in culturally appropriate and locally relevant ways to redress the problems that threaten our common future. Having such abilities and qualities would help to cope with the world's problems.

Today, with a great understanding of the function that education has to the society and to the nation as whole, the world is striving to deliver primary education to every child. This goal has been on the international agenda since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed in 1948 that elementary education was to be made freely and compulsory available for all children in all nations. This movement was renewed by the recent Jomtien and Dakar framework for action Education for All (EFA) conferences and declarations. These declarations emphasized that to achieve EFA by 2015 would require in addition to increased participation in education all nations "to improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all." Accordingly, all nations, developed or developing, prioritize the delivery of universal Primary education. While they do so, they also realize the importance of quality of education.

The advocates of universal primary education (UPE) contended that mass education will result in an increased supply of educated human power, accelerated economic growth, more social justice, reduced regional disparities, and improved social welfare (Chimombo, 2005). However, it is strongly believed

that achievement of UPE depends on the quality of education (UNESCO, 2004). Improving quality of education is the best way to improve access to education. Adding to this argument World Bank (1997) cited in Mirza, (2003) confirm that the best way to improve access is to improve quality which would make coming to school or staying in school a more attractive option from the perspective of parents as well as children.

Good quality education will also enables people to read, write, reason, communicate and make informed and healthy choices. As the proverb goes, 'Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him how to fish and he will eat for life'. People who have received an education can not only fulfill their potential but also contribute to their local communities. Quality education has critical importance and is very demanding in the 21st century where countries are confronted with new economic, social, and cultural challenges in which knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes will play a central role.

The EFA global monitoring report of 2006, by stressing the importance of quality noted that a child denied the right to a quality primary education is deprived not only as a child: he/she is also handicapped for life – unable to cope with situations requiring reading, writing and arithmetic – unless given access to educational opportunities latter in life as a youth or adult.

Generally speaking education of the high quality has paramount importance to the individual, society, countries and the world as whole. It has a great significance for the economic social and cultural development. It equips an individuals with the required tools needed to deal with different tasks they perform in their lives and prepares them for the future by enhancing their capacity. Quality of education is also a key to creating, applying and spreading knowledge in this very changing world.

As primary education is a solid foundation where the skills of the majority of the labour force and the knowledge of high intellectuals are built upon, the goal of achieving quality education should be kept high in the course of universalizing it. However, according to UNESCO (2005) in many countries that are striving to guarantee all the children the right to education the focus on access often overshadows attention to quality. Adding to this as Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) state, primary education in many developing countries are ineffective and jeopardizes national efforts to build a base of human capital for development. They further emphasize that all countries of the developing world must improve the education and training of their labour force to be able to move forward. This is to mean that advanced education and training must reset on the solid foundation of good primary education because the quality of Primary education plays a greater role in determining the quality of all higher levels of education.

In the opening speech of the conference on quality primary education in Ethiopia held in Adama Ras Hotel from Nov. 9-11, 2001 Marry Lewllen describes that primary education in Ethiopia faces two broad sets of challenge: increasing access to education and improving the quality of education. Yalokwu (2001) quoting MOE (1994), Brown (1998), Grisay and Mahlek (1991), Girmay (2001) highlight the problem of poor quality of primary education in Ethiopia. These quality problems are paucity of well trained teacher, low level of teacher participation in educational planning, lack of career development for teachers, low level of professionalization of teaching practice. These problems determine how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates in to a range of personal, social and developmental benefits.

Although quality education is the foundation for all our future which empowers us to overcome challenges of social, cultural, economic and technological change, there is a little agreement as what quality education itself means and indicators

to be used to measure it. Quality is an elusive concept having many definitions as there are categories of stakeholders. This is mainly due to the fact that quality in education is complex and multifaceted concept embedded in political, cultural and economic context (Fredrksson, 2004, Mirza, 2003). Csizmadia, (2006) states that quality has no single, absolute, agreed or universally accepted definition though there exists a range of overlapping interpretations of it. Its definition is open to changing context, new understanding of the educational challenges (UNICEF, 2000). The difficulty of defining quality thus makes it impossible to obtain universal agreement on the concept rather the definition is a matter of negotiation between the different parties involved and depend on the circumstances.

Generally speaking, it seems very hard to give a definition of quality as most experts would agree on and actually I do not need to add another definition of quality as defining quality is not the purpose of this study rather to understand the quality issues in primary education from the teachers' perspectives.

Teachers are considered to be very prominent component and the most natural insiders' of the educational system. Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) assert that teachers are central to the delivery as well as quality of education. They can make a difference in student achievement and growth. They can also shape the learning environment and experiences in their class rooms. They are engaged in children's learning with appropriate knowledge and skills. They also provide a safe environment for the students to courageously meet the challenge of learning to boldly meet risks as they grow up and become capable problem solver.

Taking into consideration the role that teachers play in teaching and facilitating the learning process, this study aims at investigating teachers' perceptions of quality issues in education in primary education. The intention of this study is to

understand quality issues in education from teachers' perspectives. To pursue this objective the study intended to deal with teachers' perception of quality issues in education with the following guiding questions, which shape methodological decisions, guide the study, and establish boundaries necessary for maintaining the investigative focus. As such, what follows are three questions which were used to guide this research study:

- How do teachers in primary education understand quality in education?
- How do teachers in primary education perceive barriers in delivering quality education?
- How do teachers in primary education evaluate and promote quality education in primary school?

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and describe how teachers perceive quality issues in education in primary schools. To this end, the study aimed; at analyzing how teachers understand quality of education, to identify the perceived barriers to quality of education, and to assess how the teachers evaluate and promote quality of education in primary schools.

1.3 Significance of the Study

As stated earlier, quality education has a paramount importance in this technologically, economically, socially and politically changing and challenging world. It unlock human potential and helps an individuals to better understand the world in which they live, to address the complexity and interconnectedness of problems such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, urban decay, population growth, gender inequality, health, conflict and the violation of human rights that threaten our future and also seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. With this

understanding countries are striving to deliver quality education for all their citizens. However, serious doubt is being raised about whether the delivery of quality education has been achieved. So, this study will hopefully help in understanding the issue of quality education from one of the major stakeholders (teachers). The study hopefully:

- Provides valuable feedbacks regarding quality of education from the teachers' point of view.
- The study might be used as stepping-stone for different bodies to facilitate the proper functioning of quality primary education.
- Researchers might also use the research results as springboard for further investigations that could lead to the improvement of various programs in the primary schools.

1.4 Limitations

Issues of generalizability. Case studies are not intended to generalize to a broader population. This case study was the study based on Nekemte and cannot be generalized to any other context. However, the case is described in sufficient detail that readers will be able to connect or transfer key findings and insights to their own context as appropriate.

1.5 Delimitations - Boundaries

This case study delimits itself to the investigation of teachers' perception of quality issues in education. The study is also delimited to government primary schools in Nekemte for the sake of in-depth analysis.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter is an overview of the study. In this chapter, I elaborated on the introduction of the study and the nature of the problem. As well, the significance of the study, and research

questions were proposed. I also discussed in this chapter the limitations and delimitations of the study.

In chapter two, a review of the related and relevant literature on quality of education is provided. Chapter three explains the methodological framework upon which this study was conducted. The qualitative research approach and rationale for choosing qualitative methodology is explained in this chapter in detail. Moreover, a detailed protocol addressing sampling procedures participant selection, data collection and data analysis techniques as well as issues related to the validity of the study and ethical issues were discussed.

Chapter four was dedicated to presenting qualitative data analysis and results. The findings of the collected data were transcribed in an effort to learn about participants perceptions experiences as they related to the central topic. This was done carefully to identify the themes that emerged during the interviewees and FGDs. Chapter five, the final chapter included in this thesis, was dedicated to summary, conclusion and implication of the study.

Chapter two

2. Review of Related Literature

In consideration of the research questions that guided this study, a review of related literature and selected studies are presented in this chapter. The literature review examines theoretical perspectives concerning quality of education.

2.1 Primary Education: An Overview

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declared primary education as the basic human right of all people which implies education for everybody since everybody must have that right. In addition to this, basic primary education underpins the success of a society. With this regard, IEG, (2006) stated the following:

Primary education is a powerful lever for poverty alleviation and social and economic growth. Its results can be empowering, enabling graduates to take charge of their lives and make more informed choices, contribute to the building of a democratic polity, increase earning potential and social mobility, improve personal and family health and nutrition (particularly for females), and enable women to control their fertility.

Thus, Primary education is a building block for economic growth and development, for reducing poverty, improving health enhancing productivity. It was at the back of these rationales that countries, governments, international development agencies and the world as whole expressed their intentions for Universal Primary Education.

To ensure their full participation in knowledge-driven development, developing nations especially countries like Ethiopia, need to build their human capital and

adapt their entire education system to the new challenges of the knowledge based economy. Towards this goal Basic primary Education is a necessary first step in this process. As Derebssa, (2001) stated primary education provides a fundamental basis for all further schooling, training or self-education. It also provides the basis for developing the capacity to cope with readily evolving and changing society in an information age. Its universal and quality are central to the human resource capacity of any society.

Primary education is seen as the first step in laying the foundation for future educational opportunities and life long skills. It enables people to participate in the social, economic, and political activities of their fullest potential. It is also seen as a basic human right that frees human beings from state of ignorance and helps to reduce the negative effect of poverty, related to health and nutrition. According to Bruns, Mingat, and Rakotomalala, (2003), Primary education develops the capacity to learn, to read and use math, to acquire information, and to think critically about that information. Primary education is also the gateway to all higher levels of education that train the scientists, teachers, doctors, and other highly skilled professionals that every country, no matter how small or poor, requires.

The positive effects of primary education in developing countries, both from private and social point of are apparent. Economists indicate that the social rate of return of primary education is greater than that of secondary or tertiary level education. In other words primary education is the level at which a large percentage of the society benefited.

Accordingly, in Ethiopia basic education is viewed in the constitution as aright, in the policy document as an essential necessity and in Education Sector Development Program as a priority. It is apparent that the benefits of education

can be gained if all children can have access to education and are able to complete a primary education with adequate quality.

2.2 Quality of Education

Both the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) recognize quality as the most important condition for achieving Education for All. The Dakar Framework asserts that quality is at the heart of education. Goal 2 of Dakar Framework commits nations to providing primary education of good quality and no one should be denied the opportunity to complete good quality primary education. Goal 6 of Dakar Framework includes commitments to improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills' and hence the issue of quality in education has become a global concern.

Although every one would agree on the importance of quality education there is no agreement on the definition of quality: what quality means, what it constitutes and the indicators to measure it. It is well known fact that there are many different ways to perceive quality as there are categories of stakeholders. Various definitions have been suggested but it was not possible to come to consensus. Therefore, it is considered as a multidimensional, relative and context related concept.

The debate and the views of what constitutes education quality are as old as education itself. It is a debate influenced by values, norms, and subjective judgment. Most public debates on the quality of education include concerns about a student's level of achievement, the relevance of learning to the world of employment or the social, cultural and political worlds occupied by the student. Frequently, concerns about the conditions of learning, such as supply of teachers

or facilities also included (Johnson, Hayter & Broadfoot, 2000). In light of this background researchers have suggested that the concept of educational quality is complex, elusive, and multidimensional and gives way to a wide array of concept. Hence, different definitions of quality have been used depending on the circumstances.

The global campaign for education (2002) conceptualize quality education system as one that succeeds in meeting its own goals; one that is relevant to the needs of children, communities and society; and one that fosters the ability of children to acquire knowledge and critical learning skills. It entails the extent to which the result of education provided meet the standards predetermined in the system educational objective and the relevance of the acquired knowledge, skills and values to the human and environmental condition and needs.

Some researchers/educators rely on easily measurable outcomes such as competitive examinations and standardized tests (Hopkins, 1987) while others oppose this idea and argue that the notion of quality should not be limited to student results alone. As Grisay and Mahlck, (1991) noted examinations only measures cognitive achievement and do not assess other personal qualities such as skills, attitude, character, and ethics. The issue of quality should also take into account the determinant factors which influence these, such as the provision of teachers, buildings, equipment, curriculum and so on (ibid). Again, the same writers perceive quality of education as it is made up of three interrelated dimensions: the quality of human and material resources available for teaching (inputs), the quality of teaching practices (process) and the quality of results (outputs and outcomes).

The 2005 EFA Monitoring Report points out that "agreement about the objectives and aims of education will frame any discussion of quality and that such agreement embodies moral, political, and epistemological issues that are

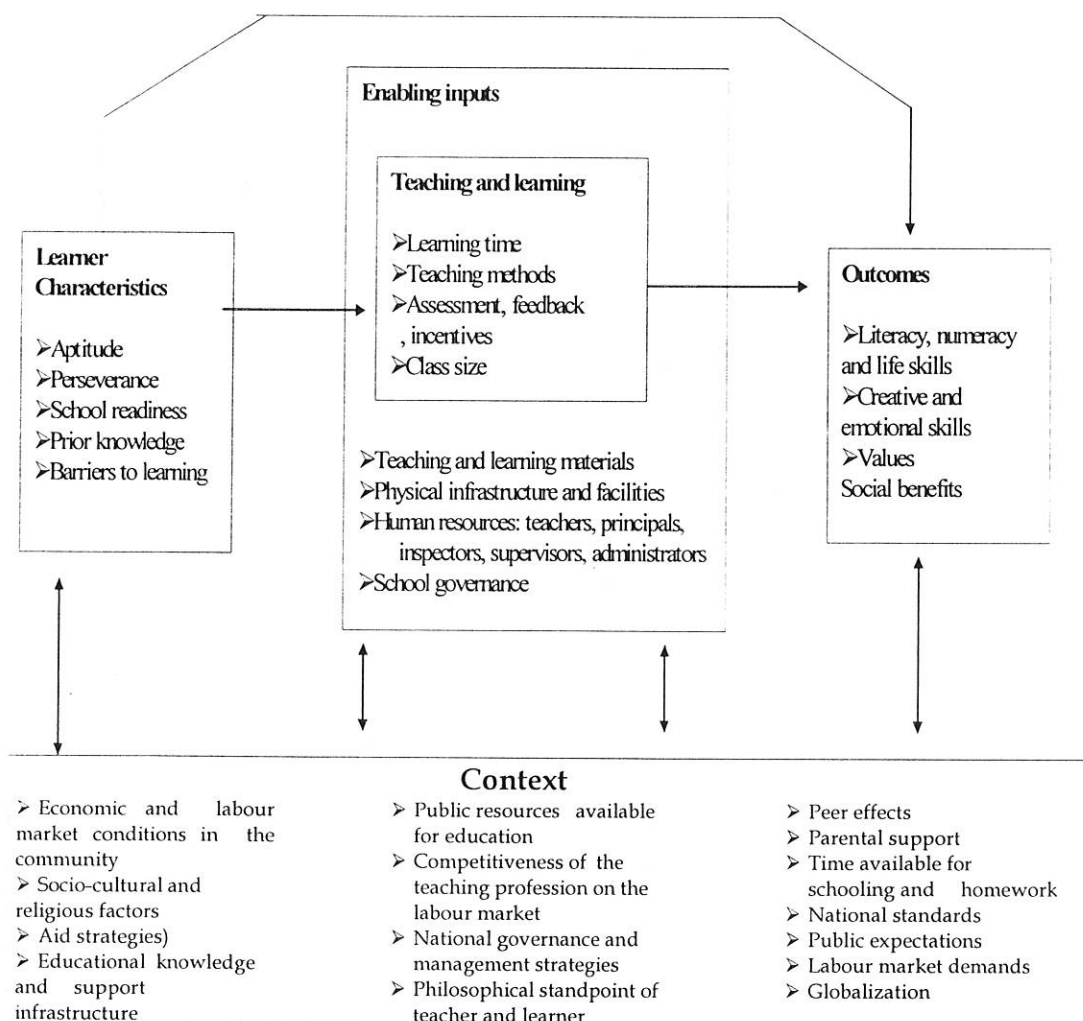
frequently invisible or ignored” (UNESCO 2004, p. 37). The report further emphasizes that different notions of quality are associated with different educational traditions and approaches:

1. The humanist approach, one of the precursors of constructivism, focuses on learners constructing their own meanings and integrating theory and practice as a basis for social action. Quality within this tradition is interpreted as the extent to which learners translate learning into social action.
2. The behaviorist approach, heading in another direction, assumes that students must be led and their behavior can be shaped, predicted and controlled to specific ends through reward and response, with quality measured in precise, incremental learning terms
3. Critical approaches, on the other hand, focus on inequality in access to and outcomes of education and on education’s role in legitimizing and reproducing existing social structures. Quality education within this tradition is seen as prompting social change, encouraging critical analysis of social power relations, and ensuring that learners participate actively in the design of their learning experience.
4. Indigenous approaches to quality reject mainstream education imported from the centers of power, assure relevance to local content, and include the knowledge of the whole community (UNESCO 2004, pp. 32-35).

In light of these different approaches the EFA Monitoring Report provides a useful map for efforts to understand, monitor and improve quality that identifies five dimensions associated with quality by reviewing the main elements of education systems and how they interact. The framework provides a means for organizing and understanding the different variables contributing to education quality, encompassing access, teaching and learning processes, and outcomes influenced by the context and inputs available:

- 3
- a) **Learner characteristics** affect quality and include aptitude, school readiness, and perseverance. Because of their difference in Socio-economic background learners do not come to the classroom equally. Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities can benefited from learning opportunities.
 - b) **Context**, which significantly affects quality, includes socioeconomic and cultural conditions, labor market factors, public resources for education, the philosophical perspectives of teacher and learner, parental support, and time available for schooling and homework.
 - c) **Enabling inputs** are critical to quality and include teaching and learning materials, physical infrastructure, human resources, especially teachers, but also principals, supervisors, and school governance.
 - d) **Teaching and learning** approaches are central to quality. It is also the key arena for human development and change. They include learning time, teaching methods, assessment, feedback, incentives, class size and classroom organization strategies.
 - e) **Outcomes**, which signal overall quality, include literacy, numeracy, and life skills - creative and emotional skills, values, and social benefits (UNESCO 2004, pp. 35-37).

Figure 2.1: A framework for understanding education quality adopted from UNESCO (2004) PP. 11.



This Framework allows for an understanding of education quality as a complex system embedded in political, cultural and economic contexts which are interdependent and influencing each other. As quality of education is highly susceptible to time, change and new innovation it is not possible to give a unique definition of quality that fits all circumstances. The literature discussed in this section clearly indicated that, it is difficult to underscore/ gave a universal definition of quality that applies to all context, all institution or organization.

However, understanding the context in which education operates and various factors influencing education will enable to make education a crucial tool for solving various problems and to meet the demand of the 21st century.

2.3 Gender and Quality of Education

Education is often perceived as one of the principal tools to counter gender inequality which is still a problem in many countries. The world has become aware of the fact that quality education is not possible if it takes account of only a small number of people. Quality education is an undeniable human right and no form of education which excludes any category or serves different groups in a society in significantly different ways deserves to be qualified as being of "quality" (UNESCO-IBE, 2004).

A quality education is fully inclusive and accessible to all people on an equitable basis. However, in most countries, it is the girls and women who suffer most from discrimination and obstacles, both in the families and within local communities and society in general (UNESCO-IBE, 2004). Girls are faced with many obstacles which prevent them from continuing their education although it varies from one region to another and between countries in different regions. Most of the time girls are obliged to work to support their families (fetch water, looking after home etc) which inturn increases gender gap and keep them out of school.

In this regard the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Goals confirm to the commitment of the international community to eliminate gender disparities and inequalities in education - by 2005 and 2015 respectively. Governments, countries or nations have taken international obligations in creating an enabling environment that will improve access, retention and completion of girls in education. According to UNESCO, (2003)

Full gender quality in education would imply that girls and boys are offered the same chances to go to school and that they enjoy teaching methods and curricula free of stereotypes, and academic orientation and counseling unaffected by gender bias. Most fundamentally it implies equality of outcomes in terms of length of schooling, learning achievement and academic qualifications, and more broadly, equal job opportunities and earnings for similar qualifications and experience.

Quality education is important in the challenge of closing the gender gap in basic education. Girls in particular face discrimination and challenging conditions that keep them out of school and keeping them from learning effectively. Hence, quality education is important to getting girls in to school and keeping them there.

2.4 Quality Education and the Role of Teachers

Education is at the heart of human progress. Economic and social prosperity in the 21st century depend on the ability of nations to educate their societies. Education of the highest quality is the foundation for all our futures. It empowers us to rise to the challenges of social, cultural, economic and technological change that we face daily. Hence, teachers have contributed a lot for the achievement of this aim of education as they are center to the delivery of education.

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 1997 the impact of teacher was greater than any other single factors, including class size, parent education, and income and language background. UNESCO, (2003) describes teachers as purveyors of knowledge and values and as community leaders responsible for the future of young and everything in our

power should be done to support them and to learn from them. Teachers are considered to be a very prominent component of the educational system.

What teachers do matters more for student learning than any other single factor (Bruns B., Mingat A., and Rakotomalala R., 2003). The kind of pedagogy needed to help students to think critically, create, and solve complex problems as well as to master ambitious subject matter content is much more demanding. To meet this objective schools need to be changed to enable learners acquire the sophisticated skills they need to participate in a knowledge-based society. In this regard Teachers play a significant role to achieve these goals for all children and to the success of any ongoing educational reform (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1998).

Since teachers have a powerful impact on the learning experiences of school student's quality teaching will be facilitated by the availability of appropriately skilled teachers (MCEETYA, 2003). High quality school level educational experiences will foster better transitions to work and further education for school students, giving better outcomes for individuals and from an employer perspective, a more skilled and productive workforce (ibid). Teachers of the highest quality will lead to Education of the highest quality (Muhammad, 2006).

Perrenoud,1999 as cited in UNESCO-IBE (2003) identify ten new competences for teaching 1) organizing student learning opportunities; 2) managing student learning progression;3) dealing with student heterogeneity; 4) developing student commitment to working and learning; 5) working in teams; 6) participating in school curriculum and organization development; 7) promoting parent and community commitment to school; 8) using new technologies in their daily practice; 9) tackling professional duties and ethical dilemmas; and 10) managing their own professional development. From what Perrenoud describe

one can understand that teachers have many roles and responsibilities to bear. Therefore, teachers play a significant role in preparing childrens to join knowledge based economy and in keeping the quality of education in their schools.

According to UNESCO-IBE (2003) teachers can guide learners in an ever-expanding universe of knowledge, helping them to learn how to access information and communicate effectively. They also promote the development of social competencies and a learning environment that encourages children and young people to learn to live together and to become active and responsible citizens. As teachers have many roles and responsibilities in an education system that aims to offer a quality education it seems that quality education is unattainable without teacher.

In order to support teachers in their efforts to improve the quality of education according to Fredriksson (2004) governments and relevant education authorities must:

- provide education and professional development of high quality to the teachers;
- provide teachers and schools with the resources necessary to offer quality education;
- see that teachers have a salary comparable with other professions requiring the same level of qualifications and responsibility; and
- ensure that teachers receive the moral recognition appropriate to their level of qualifications and responsibilities.

Teachers have a vital role in imparting knowledge and skills to the learners which enable them to enter the knowledge based economy. Thus, In order to improve the education of teachers worldwide, education authorities,

governments and intergovernmental organizations must ensure that teachers receive the proper initial and in-service professional education at university level to prepare them for their work as teachers. Proper trainings enable teachers to solve the problems which they have to face in the uncertain and difficult context of the 21st century.

2.5 Why Quality Is Important In Education

Attention to the concept of quality education has come to the front and become a global agenda as learners, parents and communities, educators, leaders and nations acknowledge that what is learned and how learning occurs are as important as access to education. It is also recognized in the two most recent United Nations conference declarations focusing on education, namely, The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), as a most important condition for achieving Education for All.

Education is universally acknowledged as an essential element in the process of national development. The fundamental purpose of education is to empower people with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to improve their quality of life, enhance their productivity and their capacity to learn new skills, and enable them to participate more fully in the development process. It is also a means to facilitate and direct social change, to transmit social and cultural values, to promote peace and stability, to obtain socialization by attending school, to prepare children for meaningful and productive life, to achieve a wide range of economic and social development goals, to enhance each individual's potential and the full development of a learner's personality (ADB, 2002, UNICEF, 2000).

It also equips the child with the set of values and attitudes essential for functioning effectively in the evolving societies of the developing world and

contributes to autonomous and critical learning so that all individuals regardless of age can select and take advantage of the continuing education opportunity needed to make transitions from one stage of life to another. The education will perform this role more effectively if and only if it is of high quality is indisputable. The economic and social benefits of education depend above all on the quality of education that is offered (UNESCO-IBE, 2003).

An enormous gap found between the numbers who are graduating from schools and those among them who have managed to master a minimum set of cognitive skills in many parts of the world reveals that focusing on quantitative goals will not guarantee Education for All. Poor quality education leads students to drop out early, to repeat grades, to a waste of time and money and a waste of human potential (GCE, 2002). The American Institutes for Research, 2002 also contended that without a quality focus, national systems lose the capacity to attract and hold students and enrollments decline as dropouts increase. Therefore, the quality of education is needed to achieve the 2015 goal of universal completion of primary school.

In socially, culturally, economically and technologically changing and challenging world, there has been widespread agreement that the quality education and training will play a key role in order to meet these changes adequately and the challenges pro-actively by building the capacity of the humankind to face the challenges of the 21st century. It also play a great role in addressing human rights, democracy, tolerance and other values, prevention of disease, population control, environment issue , health, the use of traditional languages and cultural diversity. Quality education is one which successfully shapes citizens according to the societal consensus, or how the society should be (Teklehaimanot, 2001). Quality education and training are thus regarded as being

indispensable in transforming societies into dynamic learning societies, in assisting the process of integration for, economic prosperity and social cohesion.

According to Yalokwu (2001) the of quality education should help the student to

- Understand himself as a member of society
- Understand and appreciate persons of other cultures and ethnic groups
- Master skills I n the use of words and numbers
- develop a positive attitude toward school and the learning process
- acquire habits and attitudes associated with responsible citizenship
- develop good health habits and maintain physical and emotional wellbeing
- provide opportunities and encouragement to be creative
- prepare for productive work and open opportunities for him or her to work
- appreciate developments and achievements in the sciences, arts and humanities
- prepare for the challenge of a fast-changing world of science and technology

Generally speaking for education to play the aforementioned roles it needs to meet minimum quality standard. Otherwise expanding access seems meaningless. So due attention should be given for the quality of education in line with the expansion/access.

2.6 Improving Quality in Education

There have been many declarations and conferences held around the world associated with the development and improvement of the quality of education. For example the Jomtein Conference on Education (1990) focused on access to quality education for all and reaffirmed in the Dakar Forum in 2000 when over

150 countries committed themselves to the achievement of six goals now popularly known as Education for All (EFA) Goals. One of the six goals is specifically focused on quality of education. This goal aims at improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all. However, the improvement in the quality of education seems a complex problem. This is, first of all, related to the very concept of "quality", which does not mean the same thing in all regions of the world or, often, within the countries themselves or within the individual.

The issue of quality has become critical in many countries that are expanding enrolments rapidly to achieve Education for All by 2015. In countries with constrained resources, the effort to increase access to basic education has often led to declining quality of education. Assessment of the quality of learning in most African countries indicates that only a small percentage of children are acquiring the knowledge and skills they are expected to acquire (UNATCOM, 2004, Heneveld, 1994, UNESCO, 2004, UNESCO, 2005).

Lack of proper physical infrastructure facility, inadequacy of teachers, teacher truancy, poor administration, dilapidated or half completed buildings, overcrowded classrooms, few or no learning materials, low quality of teachers and gross disinterest in the activities of the school, absence of interest among students, poverty, social backwardness, household work, are among many reasons cited in research literature for the poor quality of primary education (UNESC, 2003, UNESCO, 2004, Heneveld, 1994, yalokwue, 2001).

According to Jerome, 1997 the problem of today's education system that suffer from poor quality is that students are leaving or graduating from school /colleges unprepared to meet the demand of the society. Students who are not

prepared to become responsible, productive citizens become a burden to the society. These all problems listed above put the quality of education in danger and gradually but, certainly resulted in failing of the generation and country. Thus, becoming aware of the consequence of poor quality of education the global world urges the need to improve quality education.

Educational quality has become the central pivot for many education systems and there is a perceived need to improve the quality of education world-wide to equip young people with a solid educational background. Multilateral and bilateral agency officials, international non-governmental organization representatives, national ministry personnel, educational researchers, regional and local school administrators, teachers, and other community members are working to improving educational quality so that all children have the right to a quality education and are capable of learning to the highest standards. However, in actual practice, there has always been a trade-off between quality and quantity, in favor of the latter.

Quality can not improve by itself. It requires reforms in teacher training; approaches to teaching (pedagogy), improvements in the facilities and infrastructure in schools; teachers' motivation; and a change in the style of teaching to make it attractive to the students. Jerome (1997) states that educational quality will improve when administrators, teachers, staff and school board members develop new attitudes that focus on leadership, teamwork cooperation, accountability and recognition.

Uganda National Commission for UNESCO - UNATCOM (2004) state that:

Quality in education is determined by quality of inputs and processes which in turn result in quality outcomes. Inputs refer to the human, material and financial resources that go into a school such as teachers, classrooms, instructional materials etc. Processes refers to activities that go in a school such

as teaching, attendance of children and teachers, staff development etc and outcomes refer to the results or consequences of education such as high standards of pupil achievement, pupils' ability to read and write (literacy) etc. Therefore, quality inputs and processes are important in provision of Quality Education because they enhance quality outcomes.

In attempt to improve the quality of education many developing countries use the examination results as a proxy for the quality of education (Aggrawal, 2000). However, such a method is fraught with great problems, as the examination system is limited in scope and coverage as far as learning is concerned. Thus, acquiring both cognitive and non-cognitive competencies are necessary for a child's overall development. Quality is about student learning outcomes and the schooling environment. It is about the qualifications of teachers and the teaching and learning processes. It is about the effective and efficient delivery of inputs and the monitoring and evaluation of system performance.

Quality of education is whether pupils are learning effectively, improving their knowledge, skills and abilities; widening their experience and growing socially and morally or not. Ability to work with others, readiness to accept responsibility and to work for public good are highly praised characteristics among school leavers. But assessment tools do not test for such skills (Grisay and Mahlck, 1991, Aggrawal, 2000).

Yalokwu, 2001 suggest the strategy to improve quality education in primary school in the following way:

Design of quality goals- appropriate action should be taken to design quality goals that should be learner-oriented and help the students to achieve cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills for meaningful function in a society.

Relevant Educational Policy and Curriculum Programmes: education policies should be workable and facilitate teaching and learning and the programme

should be relevant to the needs of the learners and the surrounding communities.

Provide Counsellors: as a matter of policy government should make provision for professionally trained counsellors to be posted at all schools.

Improve Teacher Training: this can be achieved by increasing the intake capacity of the teacher training college, amalgamating small teacher training centers in to larger ones, upgrading unqualified teachers through correspondence courses, raising the quality of the program for teacher educators, and organizing in-service courses on management and pedagogical support for principals.

Strengthen the support service: the support services can be strengthened by reinforcing the inspection/supervision and advisory services for teachers. It is also important to encourage educational research, testing and examination, curriculum development and review developing better methods for assessing pupil performance and designing remedial measures.

Quality Planning of Education: It is both strategic and tactical and made of relevant data based on the needs of the students and the school community.

Improved Teaching Methods: teachers should adopt modern teaching methods which involve practical work, use of visual Aids and classroom demonstrations using familiar teaching aids. If the lessons are practical and involve students participation, the student will understand better and perform better in examinations.

Community Based Management: the management of primary schools will perform better if they enlist the support of key school community members who are enlightened enough to make useful inputs in to the curriculum reviews and provide feedback to school authorities on how students are benefiting or not benefiting from school activities.

Primary Education Funding: since government- financing sources appear over-stretched, the assistance of viable private sector organization. It might be

necessary to earmark around 2% of company profits for financing primary education.

Improvisation: no primary education can perform well without adequate teaching aids and other facilities for learning. It is hereby advocated that teachers should look inwards into the school community and improvise relevant aids to make teaching interesting and effective.

Scholarship for Girls: government should provide scholarship facilities to encourage the education of girls at primary schools.

Encourage the Establishment of Nursery Schools: there is ample evidence that children who underwent good nursery education tend to do well in primary school. To reduce the dropout rate in schools, it is necessary to encourage the establishment of nursery schools by different bodies.

Improve the Condition of Service of Teachers: government should find a way of improving the pay structure of teachers so as to motivate them extrinsically to perform better. If the conditions of service are improved, the primary education system attracts more dedicated teachers.

Selection of Dedicated Individuals as School Heads: to ensure teacher and student discipline, hard work and adherence to school standards, only individuals who are seen to be dedicated to work should be appointed as school heads.

Performance Management: primary education managers have the freedom to improve the processes to achieve the objectives and targets set. The actual level of performance against target is measured and reported accordingly.

Uganda National Commission for UNESCO - UNATCOM, 2004:56 on the other hand suggests the following solution to improve Quality Education:-

Sensitizing Parents: Parents need to be sensitized on the need to provide Quality Education. This is the duty of community leaders of all descriptions. They must

take advantage of all solid gatherings like Local Community meetings, speech days, religious functions, weddings etc to speak about quality education.

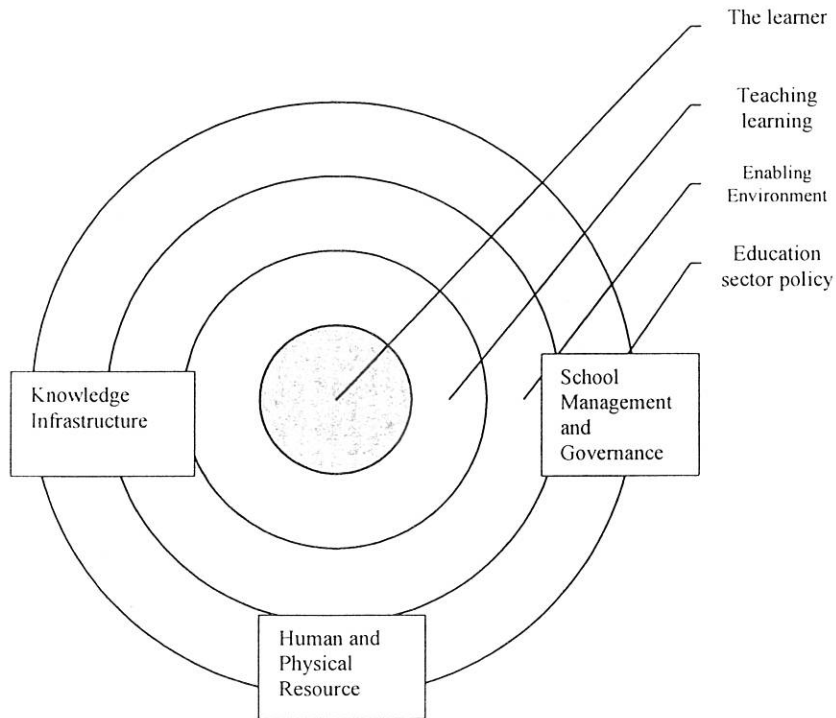
Mobilizing Materials- Parents can be mobilized to provide locally available materials for teaching and for construction of school structures. It is the duty of the community leaders to mobilize for other materials that are not available in the community. This can be done by soliciting for materials from donors.

Formation of Parents Teachers' Associations (PTA's)-Encouraging the formation of PTA's will help to improve parents-teachers' relationship. Through these associations, parents will interact with teachers and get to know what goes on at school and at home that affects the child's learning.

Construction of Schools within easy reach of Children-The community can build schools within reasonable walking distances for children. Where schools are far from children's homes, the community can build schools within reasonable walking distances for children. Community leaders should encourage private individuals to construct schools by availing land. Politicians can also be encouraged to solicit for government support in the construction of schools.

Provision of Conducive Home Environment Parents need to be educated on the effects of the home environment on the child's learning. They should be encouraged to provide a healthy environment to the children at home. This can be done by organizing sanitation and hygiene competitions and health visits. They should also be encouraged to provide time and place for homework and revision.

Figure 2.2 Frame work for,improving quality of education adopted from UNESCO, 2005 p.23



The above diagram provides a policy framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning by taking into account the various levels of and key actors in the education process.

Learners-are at the heart of the teaching and learning process. This may seem obvious but it is not always the reality. HIV/AIDS, disability, conflict and child labour practices put millions of children at an extreme disadvantage. These situations should call for inclusive policies that respond to diverse needs and circumstances.

Improving teaching and learning-The teaching and learning process brings the curriculum to life. It determines what happens in the classroom and the quality of learning outcomes. Good practice requires attention to six key policy issues with direct impact on teaching and learning. It also requires attention to the

resources that indirectly enable the process. These six key policy issues are: setting of appropriate aim, Subject balance, Good use of time, Pedagogic approaches for better learning, Language policy and Learning from assessment.

Enabling resources for better teaching and learning- these are National textbook policies, Safe and welcoming learning environments

Teachers- Teachers, critical to any reforms to improve quality, represent the most significant investment in the public sector budget. How to improve recruitment, training and conditions of service with limited means is a foremost policy issue. These are rethinking training, Earnings in decline and attracting teachers.

Better schools-The notion of improving a school in its totality, as distinct from strengthening individual inputs or processes, has gained ground worldwide.

Supporting schools, informing policy-Access to knowledge about what works in improving education quality can make a significant difference. The actors and institutions involved in generating and sharing such knowledge make up the national knowledge infrastructure. Investment in networks and innovations designed to develop and share knowledge on education can yield significant returns, by enabling schools to learn from each other and make better use of limited resources. Moreover, it establishes a culture of quality improvement based on relevant knowledge and evidence.

The politics of reform-Any policy change or reform entails costs, but before these can be addressed there must be a national consensus on quality. Once this primary political requirement is met, priorities can be framed within a broad approach. Successful education reforms have been achieved in very diverse political contexts and in societies with greatly varying degrees of wealth. Among the issues having a direct impact on whether reforms designed to improve quality will make a difference, three deserve particular attention: forming partnerships with teachers and other stakeholders, strengthening accountability and combating corruption.

In sum based on the literature discussed in this section quality of education can be achieved when all teachers are properly trained, supported and paid; when every classroom has enough textbooks, desks and learning materials; when the environment is safe and welcoming; and when schools are held accountable to communities. Above all, it can be achieved when governments and civil society build a strong political commitment to the ideal of good public education for everyone, and take specific steps to improve school conditions and to acquaint their people with sound educational background in this very changing world.

2.7 Ethiopian Context

When the current Government came into power, the Ethiopian Education System was suffering from multifaceted problems. The main problems were related to the issues of relevance, quality, equity and access. In the light of these educational problems, the current Ethiopian Government design an appropriate education and training policy that gives insight for the overall educational development and reflect the international declarations on educational issues (Martin, Oksanen and Takala, 1999). Responding to the challenges of the education system of the late 1980s and early 1990s and based on the declarations of the constitution, the government designed the Education and Training Policy of 1994, which intends to systematically and gradually alleviate these educational problems. To this effort various programs, strategies and project and methods have been devised.

Ethiopia as a part of its education sector strategy set the year 2015 as a target for achieving the goal of good quality universal primary education. Ethiopia renewed this commitment in the world education forum in April 2000 in Dakar. Therefore, the ESDP have made EFA one major component and addressed the EFA goals and strategies set in the Dakar Framework for Action. The main thrust of ESDP is to improve educational quality and expand access to education with

special emphasis on primary education in rural and underserved areas, as well as the promotion of education for girls.

Although the Ethiopian government has taken quite a number of measures particularly aimed at improving quality of Education by realizing the importance of quality education, attempts to expand access of education challenges the effort to ensure quality of education. Wanna (2001) states that despite the progress made so far, in many countries, including Ethiopia education faces numerous problems that constrain its quality, effectiveness, relevance to the society as well as to the individual. Moreover, the provision of basic quality education to all citizens has become a serious challenge to most developing nations, especially for countries like Ethiopia. Wanna further explained that the issue of quality is more chronic at primary level, which is the foundation for further education, be it academic or vocational/technical training.

Yalokwu, 2001 describe the main problems facing quality education in Ethiopia in the following way: Shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate teaching and student-support facilities, low efficiency of the programme, low enrolment of girls, inadequate counseling, inadequate verbal proficiency, low teacher motivation and commitment, improper placement of staff, lack of managerial competence, curriculum that is not sufficiently customer-focused , unbalanced goals, inadequate funding, inadequate system of selecting students, lack of staff accountability and commitment.

Basically, a decline in quality is expected in a situation where popular pressure and questions of international prestige make government to emphasize on the expansion of school places but, not on the quality of education provide (Derbssa, 2001). In order to tackle the aforementioned educational problem Ethiopia has a long way to go despite the progress made so far. As it is a solid foundation for all other learning for primary schools to be effective and be able to provide the necessary base for further education and training, serious attention must be given to the levels.

Chapter III

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Design

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how teachers perceive quality issues in education in primary school via interviews and FGD. The goal is to recognize and assess emergent themes and patterns so as to provide a rich and contextualized understanding of issues of quality in education from the insiders' perspective. This chapter describes briefly the ontological and epistemological basis for choosing the qualitative case study approach for the study and interview and focus group discussion as my data collecting methods.

Generally speaking the world is full of methodologies, with no single accepted research method applicable to all research problems; the selection of an approach and methods usually depends on the perception of the researcher about the whatness and existence of social reality and suitability for a particular context. In line with this Bryman (1984) describes that the problem under investigation properly dictates the method of investigation. Each approach has its relative strengths and weaknesses. Hamersley (1992) cited in Lloyd-Jones (2003) concludes that no single approach is necessarily ideal and that selection inevitably involves loss as well as gain. Knowing that I can never know in the same way as I know my own thoughts and feelings, what another persons' experience is really like, I want to get as close to that knowing as possible. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I choose to use the qualitative approach, which is holistic, contextual and understanding and focusing on design and procedures to gain real, rich and deep data to have a wide understanding of the entire situation. Although each of the approach have their relative strength and weakness (Dawson, 2002) for the purpose of this study I find that quantitative approach cannot tell me what I want to know and unable to derive meaning

from the realities of personal experience and how person feels about the experience (Marshall & Rossman, 1980). I adopt the qualitative approach because my concern is to understand about the issue under investigation, seeking understanding or insight of actor's perspectives rather than statistical analysis.

Ontological assumptions within the interpretivist paradigm suggest qualitative researchers believe reality is subjective and therefore constructed around a core belief that there are many truths. These researchers have argued that the aim of research practice should be to focus upon understanding the meaning that events have for the individuals being studied. The aim of most forms of qualitative research is to understand how the world is socially constructed by its participants, and what meanings those constructions have for the participants

The characteristics of qualitative research include the following statements: truths and understanding emerge from an insider's perspective; the researcher is the instrument; research is field-based or occurs in the natural setting; research is inductive in nature; and findings depend upon rich description and writing to describe the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, action and records while quantitative approach rely on the use of mathematical terms or mechanical process. Adding to this Amare (2004) citing Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state the word qualitative as an emphasis on the quality of entities and on process and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount intensity or frequency.

Marshall and Rossman (1980) state the arguments supporting Qualitative Inquiry by saying that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs; thus one must study that behavior in situations. The physical setting

e.g., schedules, space, pay, and rewards and the internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables. Research must be conducted in the setting where all the contextual variables are operating. Marshall and Rossman (1980) further argue that past researchers have not been able to derive meaning from experimental research and one cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that the traditional image between the researcher and the participant was rejected in qualitative approach. In the process of research the relationship between the researchers and the participants are respectful, inseparable (interactive) negotiation, joint control and reciprocal learning.

Thus, all the above literatures describe qualitative inquiry to aim at getting a better understanding through first hand experience, truthful reporting and quotations of actual conversation. It also aims to understand how participants derive meaning from their surroundings and how their meaning influences their behavior. It is a more flexible design adjusted to the setting and lets the meaning emerge from the participants.

According to Merriam, (1998) there are five types of qualitative research commonly found in education: the basic/generic qualitative study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory and case study. Although they differ from each other they share the essential characteristics of qualitative research; *the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as a primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of field work, an inductive orientation to analysis and findings that are richly descriptive* (ibid). From these different forms of qualitative research in this study case study was employed.

Schwandt (2001) cited in Allen, (2006) defines case study as “a strategy for doing social inquiry...the case is at center stage, not variables”. Creswell (1998) defines case study as “an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context”. Merriam also asserts that (1998) “By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study focuses on holistic description and explanation”.

According to Merriam (1998), case study methodology has three primary characteristics which are *particularistic*, *descriptive* and *heuristic*. Case studies are *particularistic* because they focus upon a single case, phenomenon, suggest of affairs or occurrence. Investigating a case may provide important information or transferable data regarding the phenomenon studied. Second, Merriam suggests that *descriptive* means that the end product of a case study is a rich, “thick” description of the phenomenon under study. *Thick description* is a term from anthropology and means “the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated”. Finally, case studies are *heuristic* and extend the reader’s understanding of the case. Through the research, the author may extend theory, add insight, or name phenomena that were previously unnamed.

Based on the above assumption, primary school teachers teaching in Nekemte were considered as a case for this study. The case is examined to get an insight about the perception of teachers about quality of education in primary schools. In this study the case has secondary interest since my interest is to understand something more general than the case. This type of case fits the instrumental case study category of Stake, (1995) which helps to provide a general understanding of a phenomenon using a particular case. The case here plays a supportive role

facilitating our understanding of something else different from the case (Stake, 1995).

Hence, the design of this study is qualitative case study which is adopted to allow in-depth analysis of the teacher perception of the issues under study. This approach enables, encourages and promotes each participant to reflect their views in their own words. The views they express, their hopes and concerns are important aspect of the inquiry and provide for a richer data set and a way of ensuring that they tell their own understanding rather than fitting their experience in a preconceived questionnaire.

3.2 Research Site

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) believed that a person's own biography is an influence in defining the study. Meaning that events or situations about which a person has interest and concern would be suitable criteria for a case study. Whatever the study, it should be important to the researcher because "Without a touch of passion you may not have enough to sustain the effort to follow the work to the end". Merriam (1998) also asserts that a case can also be selected because of personal interest. I have that passion for this study and thus, I chose to do a qualitative case study of teachers' perception of quality issues in education in primary school of Nekemte, which is located at about 380km to the west of the capital city, Addis Ababa. Nekemte is the administrative center for east Wollega zone of Oromia region. Nekemte's official working language is Afanoromo. The land surrounding Nekemte is one of the countries most agricultural productive. Its economy depends on the export of rural cash crops such as coffee. Qualitative case study demands the involvement of researcher actively (Merriam, 1988) in the course of research. Therefore, having better knowledge of the site helps to have better access to different information to get rich and deep data to understand the issue under study well

3.3 Gaining Access to the Site and Participants

Before I could begin the process of recruiting teachers (research participants), it must be noted that I had to apply to the Nekemte education bureau for permission to conduct a study within the schools. I was notified by the education bureau officer that I had been granted permission to conduct my study in the schools located in Nekemte. The other requirement that I had to fulfill in order to start collecting data was to obtain the permission of the principal of each School. Finally, I secured the permission of each principal and entered in the data collection process.

3.4 Sample Selection

Sample selection occurred on two levels - the case and the individual sample within the case. Both were guided by certain criteria. Case selection (schools) was determined purposively by the geographical distribution /location of the schools. One from Peripheral and the other two found in the center at larger distance from each other.

Regarding the sample within the case, Merriam (1998) asserts that "since generalization, in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research. Thus non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research". Researchers should locate a group of participants rich in knowledge and experience - this is "purposive" or "purposeful" sampling. Therefore, I located individuals within the school based on the following attributes:

- *Commitment of time* - agreed to participate in the study
- *Academic background* - data collection was limited to few individuals within the School. Hence, Natural Science, Social Science, Aesthetics and Physical Education, Language and Ethics and Basic Science academic categories were used for the selection

- *Experience* – teachers having relatively better experience were selected to get the right, rich and deep information
- *Gender* - mixed sex and
- *Principals' recommendation.*

Hence, of the total ten (10) primary schools found in Nekemte three (3) primary schools were selected for the study. As a result from selected three (3) primary schools, nineteen (19) teachers were involved in the study (see appendix C).

3.5 Data Collection

In any qualitative study, the primary data collection instrument is the researcher; yet, it is also standard procedures to use multiple methods of data collection (for triangulation) to increase the trustworthiness of the data. For this reason, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion were used as method of data generating instrument.

3.5.1 Interview

Semi-structured interview which is the most common type of interview in qualitative social research (Dawson, 2002) was used to collect data because this process allows the researcher to gain insights into others' perspectives about the phenomenon under study; it is particularly useful for ascertaining respondents' thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and retrospective accounts of events (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996, cited in Phillips, 2004). Merriam (1998) further explained that "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them".

Given the nature of this study, how participants define, interpret and perceive the quality issues in education is the primary objective. Therefore, interview protocol was prepared to gain a better understanding of primary school teachers' perception of quality issues in education (see appendix A). The interviews were

done privately to allow the participants the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences and the interview process was accompanied by tape record to prevent loss of information. The interview was held in Afan Oromo medium, which was a mother tongue for the participant, to enable the participant communicate easily and express their views in detail so that a rich, thick contextualized data was gained. In each of the three primary schools the numbers of the participants were 6 except in one primary school where 7 participants were involved.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Wamahiu and Karagu (1995) cited in Leul, (2006) suggest that FGD is very useful to understand issues with consensus and variation among members of the discussion, to obtain group attitudes and perception by initiating the participants for active discussion. It is also an effective method in providing the range of perspectives that exist within the community or subgroup (Mack et al, 2005).

With regard to the focus group discussion Flick (2002) state that the use of FGD led to the production of opinions expressed and exchanged in everyday life and tool for reconstructing individual opinions more appropriately. Flick (2002) further argues that it is also a correction of view that are not correct, not socially shared or extreme are available as a means of validating statements and views. As the interaction of participants occurred in FGD rich data was gathered from conversations that occurred spontaneously in addition to the researcher's questions (Friedman, 2005). Having the advantage of FGD and the objective of the study in mind, FGD was also used as a major data collecting instrument.

For the same reason as the interview the FGDs were held in Afan Oromo medium. Three FGDs with selected teachers were held, one for each school. The number of participants for these three FGDs was four for each FGD. FGD require

a number of people to come together in order to discuss a certain issue for the purpose of research. In this study, I found difficult to get more than four participants in each FGDs for various reason; teachers were over loaded (have many teaching loads) with work so it is difficult to get them at the same time, some teachers did not want to participate in group.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Merriem, (1988) qualitative data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning and between description and interpretation. She further explained that analysis of collected data is ongoing in qualitative research and begins with data collection simultaneously.

Since the objective of this study is to understand teachers perception of quality issues in education, the data analysis strategy employed for this study is thematic analysis which is according to Gough and Madill (2007) focuses on the coding of qualitative data, producing clusters of text with similar meaning, often searching for the central themes capturing the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. The data that I collected was transcribed verbatim from individual interviews and focus group discussion.

In my data analysis I used the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview and FGD transcripts that I accumulated by reading the transcripts as well as listening to the taped sessions. Through repeated readings, I was able to find themes and patterns. Specifically, I searched for certain words, phrases or patterns that repeated themselves as I studied the transcripts. I then began to develop my own theme to put the data into categories to help me analyze and sort the data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) "analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units and searching for

patterns or themes to discover what is important to tell others". Accordingly I identified four major themes: Quality in the Eye of Teachers, Barriers to Quality, current status of Quality as utilized by the schools and teachers effort to improve quality. My analysis of the data, my findings, themes and patterns are discussed in Chapter Four.

3.7 Validity

Edwards (2006) states that the issue of validity has reemerged as a concept called trustworthiness for qualitative researchers. Janesick (2000) cited in Edwards, (2006) offers the following discussion in replacing validity with a more qualitative referent:

"Validity in the quantitative arena has a set of technical micro-definitions... Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible? In addition, qualitative researchers do not claim that there is only one way of interpreting an event. There is no one 'correct' interpretation."

As a qualitative researcher I attempted to make use of as many of these processes as possible to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. The first of these techniques is peer debriefing or peer examination. Throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing of this research I met weekly or bi-weekly with two colleagues. These two individuals read my work and gave me significant feedback and input regarding my research objectives, interpretations, assumptions, and writing content. As I attempted to understand the meaning perspectives of the research participants, my two colleagues were a consistent source for critiquing my assertions. Peer examination allowed me to get an outsider perspective on my research, codes, and interpretation which can "promote trustworthiness" (Meriem, 1998).

Another technique employed for creating trustworthiness in this study is triangulation. This strategy according to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) helps to understand the phenomena under study from various point of view and way of knowing. Thus, the use of alternate methodological approaches (interview and FGD) enabled me to understand the issue under study from different means of data generation.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

In any research undertaking, researchers are expected to employ high standards of academic rigor and to behave with honesty and integrity. It has been assumed that because qualitative research does not involve physical manipulation as that of the experimental method, it poses less risk to participants. However, there are areas of ethical and moral concerns that must be addressed in any qualitative research proposal namely: assessing harms and benefits (the well-being of research participants), informed consent (ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in the study), privacy and confidentiality (protecting participants' identities and the data) and cultural sensitivity (Papps, 2005, Mack etal, 2005, Dawson, 2002). Thus, based on these basic principles, I proposed a set of ethical and moral principles and procedures for my research and informed the participants before each in-depth interview and FGDs (see appendix A and B).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on analyzing the data collected and presenting the results. As is the case in many qualitative research studies, data for my study consisted of individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to answer the basic research questions. The research questions as stated earlier were: (1) How do teachers in primary education understand quality in education? (2) How do teachers in primary education perceive barriers in delivering quality education? (3) How do teachers in primary education evaluate and promote quality education in primary school?

Initially the responses to interview with teachers teaching in primary schools to each interview and discussions at FGDs were examined. The central themes mentioned by the informants concerning my research question were identified. Then, the identified themes were categorized and thematically analyzed. Here my purpose was to capture a broad understanding of the issue of quality in primary education from participants' perspectives. Hence, the following four major themes emerged from the analysis that represents the participants' experiences. *Quality in the Eye of Teachers, Barriers to quality, current Status of quality as utilized by the schools and Teachers' Efforts to improve quality.*

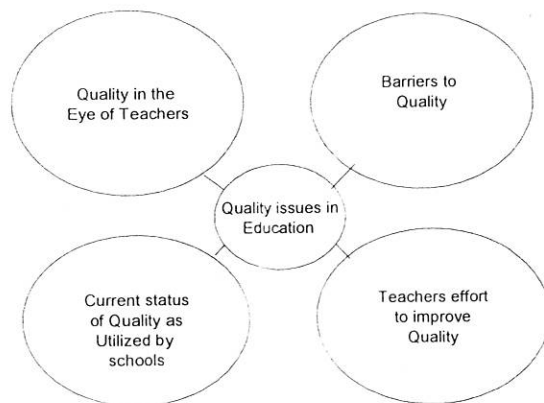


Figure 4.1 Themes

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) “data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, observation notes and other field notes that the research accumulated”. My analysis involved working with this data, organizing it, and breaking it into manageable units to search for themes to find out what was important to report. I searched for certain words, phrases or patterns that repeated themselves. Then I began to develop categories to help analyze and sort the data. The following themes represent my findings.

Table 4.1 Themes and Sub-Themes

	Themes	Sub-Themes
1	Quality in the Eye of Teachers	1.1 Quality described in terms of outcomes
		1.2 Quality described in relation to teacher qualification
		1.3 Quality described in terms of the availability of resources and teaching-learning materials
		1.4 Quality described in terms of extent of stakeholders involvement in the planning and deliveries of education
		1.5 Quality described in terms of extent of stakeholders involvement in the planning and deliveries of education
		1.6 Quality described in terms of effective leadership
		1.7 Quality as a way to the future
2.	Barriers to quality	2.1 Teacher related barriers
		2.2 Student related barriers
		2.3 Equipment, facilities and teaching- learning material related barriers
		2.4 Teaching-learning process related barriers.
3	Current status of Quality as Utilized by schools	3.1 Teachers Criteria to evaluate quality
		3.2 Current status of quality: Teachers Evaluation
4	Teachers' effort to improve quality	4.1 Founding different committee
		4.2 Continuous assessment
		4.3 Experience sharing among teachers
		4.4 Preparing question-answer forum for students
		4.5 Regular meeting with parents

4.1. Theme-1 Quality in the Eye of Teachers

Teachers were asked to describe and explain quality in educational context. This was done to find out teachers own explanation of the quality. After listening to the teachers' responses in the course of data collection for the study, I tried to learn how the teachers define the quality of education from their perspectives. The table below shows a summary of the definition and explanation of quality as given by the teachers.

Table 4.2 Quality in the Eye of teachers

	views	Informants (I)
1	quality described in terms of outcomes	I ₁ , I ₂ , I ₄ , I ₆ , I ₉ , I ₁₀ , I ₁₁ , FGD ₁ , FGD ₂
2	quality described in relation to teacher qualification	I ₁ , I ₂ , I ₃ , I ₄ , I ₅ , I ₆ , I ₇ I ₁₀ , I ₁₃ , I ₁₄ , I ₁₅ , I ₁₇ , FGD ₁ , FGD ₂ , FGD ₃
3	quality described in terms of the availability of resources and teaching-learning materials	I ₁ , I ₂ , I ₃ , I ₄ , I ₅ , I ₆ , I ₈ I ₁₀ , I ₁₁ , I ₁₂ , I ₁₅ , I ₁₆ FGD ₁ , FGD ₂ , FGD ₃
4	quality described in terms of extent of stakeholders involvement in the planning and deliveries of education	I ₃ , I ₉ , I ₁₁ , I ₁₈ , I ₁₉ , FGD ₁
5	quality described in terms of effective leadership	I ₄ , I ₅ , I ₈ , FGD ₂ ,
6	quality as a way to the future	All

As indicated in the above table a varied pattern existed in how the pertinent professionals (teachers) define the quality of education in educational context. Different participants hold different views. Some of the teachers included in this study emphasize the output/ outcomes (student achievement, behavioral change) in defining quality of education while the others emphasize Input factors like teachers, teaching-learning materials.

4.1.1. Quality described in terms of outcomes

Through analysis of the data I found outcomes of education emerged among the description given to the quality of education. According to these participants quality of education is an education which develops students' capacity, change their behavior and equip them with required tools to act positively. In one of such explanation for instance, informant, I₁ view quality of education as:

...understanding plus action... when the students' grasps' and analyzes what he/she learns and translates it in to practice the education he /she has got throughout his/ her life... is an education which has brought a change in the students behavior and enabled him/her to in turn change his/her surrounding /environment in which he/she lives...

INT #1 Feb, 23 2007 Morning

Another informant, I₉ in the same vein further explained quality education as an education which has the capacity to bring a change in the mind of the students, in the life of the students, in the understanding of the students and behavior of the students. These participants emphasizing outputs / outcomes in describing quality of education believe that what they taught could be clearly manifested/ observed in the students. For education to be labeled qualified, as they perceive it, it should cultivate students' mind, brought up behavioral change on the students and shape them to be a productive citizens.

4.1.2. Quality described in relation to teacher qualification

As the response of the teachers included in the study show, the other description given about the quality of education was in relation to the teacher qualification. For instance, participants from group two FGD by giving more emphasis to the teacher explained quality of education as it is highly influenced by the teacher. By explaining their past experience they argue that teacher is a key to quality of education as they are central to the deliver of education. According to the

participants teachers can make a difference even in a situation where there are no sufficient classrooms, libraries and other required teaching-learning materials if the conditions are suitable for them and get the required training and incentives. Here is an example of excerpt reported during the FGD by the participant:

...if the teachers are well qualified, well paid, motivated, respected and got the opportunity to update his/her knowledge, get prepared pedagogically and content wise....they can make a difference in the students achievement, in their classrooms... initiated to do things with their own effort, they can develop a feeling of ownership, they can work along with national policy to bring the desired development...

FGD #1 May, 21 2007 Morning

In the description above, it is evident that these participants give due attention to the teachers rather than other factor influencing the quality of education. According to these respondents the issues of teachers are critical for the quality of education. This finding affirms what the NCTAF, (1997) states as the impact of teachers were greater than any other single factors in education system.

4.1.3. Quality described in terms of the availability of resources and teaching-learning materials

Regarding the subject at hand other participants describe quality of education in terms of availability of resource and teaching-learning materials. They explained that it is the availability of resources and other instructional materials that lead to quality of education. For instance, one of the participants, I₁₀ explained what quality education meant to him as:

...an education system having all the resources needed to accomplish its objective... well equipped schools with facilities and teaching-learning materials from which students learn, curriculum which is relevant to the age of the learner and his/her environment ...

INT # 10 March, 16 2007 Afternoon

The above response shows that the respondents view quality of education in terms of the availability of teaching-learning materials and resources. According to these respondents the availability of the aforesaid things could be a key to quality.

4.1.4. Quality described interms of extent of stakeholders involvement in the planning and deliveries of education

In the course of conducting heated discussion and interview with the participant I realized that the participants view quality of education as a system having many stakeholders (teachers, students, community and government) playing their roles for the existence of quality. The participants describe quality of education as a team-work among teachers, students, community and government. They also noticed that quality of education is not the responsibility of a single body. The following excerpt is from what have been raised by FGD participants:

... teachers having qualification, competence, knowledge and proper training to run teaching-learning activity effectively; students having interest to learn, well supported and nourished, good psychological makeup, well motivated; communities which will be supportive, positive attitude to education, well informed; Government genuinely supporting the education system: creating CPD opportunities for the teachers, equipping the schools with facilities and teaching-learning materials, provision of adequate budget for the school system...quality of education includes the integration of these...

FGD #1 May, 21 2007 Morning

According to the aforementioned response indicates, teachers consider quality of education as a team work among teachers, students, communities and government; each of them playing a significant role. Quality of education is a responsibility of many stake holders although the degree of their influence may vary. In fact, for the schools to exist and work towards the achievement of its mission and objectives, there must be partnership with the different stake

holders in implementing the school programmes. If the learners are not willing and make no effort to learn, the communities are not supportive and the teachers are not committed to their job we cannot talk about quality of education.

4.1.4. Quality described interms of effective leadership

The other description given to the quality of education was relating quality to effective leadership. In one of such explanation one female teacher from group two FGD indicated that good governance is a key to quality as other factors and should be included in the quality of education. She offered the following account:

...good governance in the school administration, smooth relationship between the teachers and administrators is a key to quality of education. It create conducive or enabling environment for the teachers so that they can work in harmony with the administrators and others, motivated them (teachers) to work, to teach, make them to develop a feeling of belongingness and initiated them (teachers) to make unreserved effort, make them to do things on his/her own interest...

FGD #2 May, 28 2007 Morning

According to the description above effective leadership is a crucial importance to the quality of education. For these participants good leaders enable teachers to teach well. Essentially, it is believed that effective leaders provide a clear vision and sense of direction for their school. They focus the attention of their staff on what is important and do not let them diverted to unimportant activities.

In sum the aforesaid views by teachers on the subject have been by and large surfaced around the issue of students' achievement and behavioral change, teachers, availability of resource and teaching-learning materials, although the respondents had framed their comments in varied ways. There was a variation in the content of the response from participant to participant. It can be inferred that the teachers conceptualize quality of education in a narrowed way.

4.1.5. Quality of education as a way to future

From interview and FGD held with teachers I came to realize that teachers strongly underscore the importance of quality in education in general and in primary education in particular. They argue that having quality primary education determine the quality of other learnings and the future of the country.

Offering a positive and mature account of his experience one of my informants, I₁ explained that education of the high quality will enable the students to acquaint them in the technologically changing world. He (I₁) further explained that:

...if you want to build a house you first laid down strong base/foundation then you proceed to the wall, roof etc. If the base of the house you constructed is not strong the house will fall down with in few years. The same is true for primary education, which is the base for all other higher learning's (secondary and tertiary). If we have no quality primary education we could not have quality secondary and tertiary education. So, quality of education at primary education is crucial to have strong generation playing significant role in the national development. Primary education should be strengthened, supported to keep its quality to have a bright future...

INT #1 Feb, 23 2007 Morning

Still informant, I₁₅ strongly remarked that not having quality education in primary education would make the students to lose the desire to learn as the content become harder and harder with an increase in education level which will finally result in dropout and loss of human capital. He (I₁₅) further stated that well trained, skilled and motivated teacher should be assigned for the primary education to keep its quality and to be beneficial from the level.

All members of the FGD strongly remarked that quality of education in primary school plays a significant role for the society and the country at large by preparing the young generation for next higher learning's and the world of work. This view is substantiated in the following excerpt by one of my informants in group one FGD:

...quality education is a base for every sector whether it is government or nongovernmental. Quality education would bring quality work in the future career of the learner. It enables the learner to give quality serves for the society, the country in their future career which inturn results in the overall development of the country where as if the students lack quality of education they become disabled and cannot bear the responsibility in their future career. In addition to the inefficiently they may produce, the qualities of service they give to the society will also be not satisfactory...

FGD #1 May, 21 2007 Morning

In discussing the impact of absence of quality education, another informant in group one FGD explained that lack of quality education would make the students to become hopeless, immature and ineffective in any kind of work he/she participated. He remarked that:

...lack of quality education would result in lack of competency-locally, nationally and globally. It has also a great impact on the students, society in which they live, on the progress of the country. [To explain in detail] it is similar with cultivation of tree. If the tree has grown properly from the very beginning (starting from the germination) it serves in many ways and gives a better result. To get a better result from primary education and to make the students productive citizens we should cultivate the students with reasonable quality of education starting from primary education...

FGD #1 May, 21 2007 Morning

Besides, teachers explained that having good quality of education enable the students to perform any kind of activity that the education she/he has earn allowed him. They further explained that quality education enable the students: to accomplish their future career successfully, to broaden students' understanding, to go with science and technology and to participate in the national development by building their capacity. It can be concluded that teachers have a clear understanding about the importance of the quality of education for the student, the society and the country as whole.

4.2. Theme-2 Barriers to Quality

To identify teachers' perception of barriers to quality of education heated discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview was conducted with the teachers. The analysis in this section, therefore, attempts to show teachers perception of barriers in delivering quality education. In this attempt for the sake of understanding, the issue can be categorized in to four sub-themes: teacher related barriers, student related barriers, equipment, facilities and teaching-learning material related barriers, and process related barriers.

Table 4.3 Summary of barriers to quality of education

	sub-themes	issues	Informants (I)
1	Teacher related barriers	<i>poor criteria of selecting teacher-candidates for training</i>	I(3,4,9,10,11,16,18) ,FGD ₂ and FGD ₃
		<i>poor training of teachers</i>	I(1,3,7,9,11,12,16,19) FGD ₁ &FGD ₃
		<i>low salary of teachers</i>	All
		<i>limited continuous professional development opportunities</i>	All
		<i>poor teachers performance evaluation system</i>	All
2	Student related barriers	<i>lack of student interest</i>	I1, FGD1
		<i>disciplinary problem of students</i>	All
		<i>students absenteeism</i>	I(1,3,6,9,14,16) all FGD
		<i>under aged children</i>	I(1,3,5,6,9,10,18) all FGD
		<i>unsupportive environment</i>	all FGD
		<i>lack of text books</i>	I1
		<i>economic problem</i>	All
		<i>parents lack of education</i>	All
3	Equipment, facilities and teaching- learning material related barriers	<i>lack of strong pedagogic center</i>	All
		<i>overcrowded classrooms</i>	All
		<i>lack of equipment and facilities</i>	All
		<i>lack of support from the government</i>	All
4	Teaching-learning proce. s related barriers.	<i>implementation of self-contained approach</i>	All
		<i>issues of free promotion</i>	All but I4,I19

4.2.1 Teacher Related Barriers

In articulating their conceptualization of how teachers perceive barriers to quality, teachers thoroughly discussed the issue during FGD and Interview. Almost all informants in the interview and FGD group emphasize teachers' related barriers as a threat to quality. The participants discussed teacher related barriers by classifying in to three phases: pre-training, in-training and post-training.

4.2.1.1 Pre-training phase

In pre-training phase the participants pointed out the process of recruiting the candidate-teachers' for training as barrier to quality. Their arguments are based on the criteria set for selection of teachers. For instance, one of the informants, I₃ explained that teachers should be recruited with care before joining the training institute or college. In addition, He (I₃) refuses the traditional way of selecting the candidates to be a teacher which he thinks has a great problem and polluted or corrupted the profession. The main thing that I₃ criticized the usual way of selecting the teacher for training is that during selection the chance is given to members of the ruling political party, EPRDF/OPDO rather than basing it self on their academic merits. Maintaining this view one FGD participant explained that:

...qualified teachers produce qualified learners. The quality of teachers begins from their selection for training (pre-service training). The criteria set to choose the candidate to be a teacher for pre-service training must be planned with care. It must be free from political interference. One great problem observed with this is that the candidates to be a teacher will be selected based on affiliation to the regime's political party instead of the candidates academic background. Even to your surprise only those individuals having a letter of recommendation from respective woreda administration are allowed to compute for the training [warra waraqaa deggersaa bulchiinsa irraa argatan qofatu dorgoma] in most cases. It should be free from such kind of unwanted interference if we want to achieve quality of education...

FGD #2 May, 28 2007 Morning

Another FGD group likewise offered an account:

...despite the availability of the potential candidates who can meet the criteria, the opportunity has been given to members of the leading political party during the selection of the candidates which inturn fill the profession with inefficient professionals and harm the quality of education...

FGD #3 June, 4 2007 Morning

The above mentioned quotations entirely seem to have indicated that the respondents are unanimous felt discomfort with the way teachers are selected for training. The informants strongly recommend that those individuals having a capacity to be a teacher must be selected for training instead of using other criteria which directly affect the quality of education.

4.2.1.2 In-training phase

Ideas I have assembled sustaining discussion with my informants signify that the way the teachers have been trained in the institution/colleges are infamous.

Informant, I₉ offered an account:

...at present time the teachers training institutes/colleges are considered as highly profitable investment area so colleges/institutes are opened in every corner with poor resource, poor teaching-learning materials in improper places so any one can earn certificate easily without getting proper training which inturn have a negative impact on quality of education...

INT #9 March 16, 2007 Afternoon

On this same issue, another informant, from group three FGD held the opinion that "colleges are producing a dozen of inefficient, incompetent and poor quality teachers not having the required knowledge and skill to teach. These findings seems to be similar to what is mentioned by Jerome, (1997) with todays education system students are graduating from college unprepared to meet the demand of the society.

To this may be added a substantive explanation by an informant from group one FGD:

...I have the opportunity to observe, evaluate the final year student-teacher from different teachers colleges when they came to practice in our school. I was really ashamed and feel a sense of hopelessness. They do not know how to teach even the subject matter. In particular this is worsening in private institution where the students score an average GPA range from 3.8 to 4.0 with out having the required knowledge...

FGD #1 May, 21, 2007 Morning

Further more, teachers explained that the private colleges do not worry about what the students learn, how the students learn rather they think of the profit they gained by collecting the money from the students. The participants strongly remarked that these training colleges should be closely supervised by the concerned body before corrupting the profession and the education beyond repair.

Indeed no one is born to be a good teacher. Good teaching is the result of education, training and experience. However, the finding of the study indicated that the training of teachers were insufficient. Hence, educational authorities government needs to ensure that teachers have an adequate training which enable them to work as a teacher.

4.2.1.3 Post-training phase

In discussing about the post-training phase all the informant from the FGD and in-depth interview would strongly agree that the salary of the teacher is a key issue that must be raised with quality of education. The in-depth interview held with the teacher revealed that they are not pleased with the salary paid for the teachers. One of the participants, I₈ offered an account:

...when we compare the salary of teachers with other workers working in different sectors they [teachers] are not well paid. We are leaving in the same Environment; we consume raw materials from the same market, the same shop with other workers. We are unable to compete with them. we are leading a difficulty life, unable to afford our living expense. So we do not worry about the teaching-learning activities. We

are de-motivated. Our attention is not on what the students learn and how they learn rather we are worrying about our life...

INT #8 March, 14, 2007 Afternoon

The teachers' explanations, universally suggested that the vast majority teachers have been consuming up their monthly salary before the month ends. They indicated that their salary disappeared from their pocket before the end of the month without covering the expense of the basic costs (food, house rent etc). Owing to this fact, teachers don't worry about what and how the students learn instead they are worrying about their life as they explained it.

Correspondingly, the FGD participants explained that low salary of teachers change the attitude of teachers toward this profession and made to lose interest.

The excerpt of FGD participant clearly shows this:

...if we compare a salaried teacher and other person working in different government sector having the same level of qualification and equal experience, we see a big difference. This makes the teacher to hate the profession and lose interest to undergo his work effectively and efficiently and enforce the teacher to see the teaching profession as a bridge occupation or step stone [...akka നന്നല്ലായിട്ട്...] ... with this problem how can teacher would be interested and initiated to keep quality of education?... in reality teaches are not motivated to teach. They are not happy by being in this profession. This is an area which deserves a great attention...

FGD #1 May, 21, 2007 Morning

It is also remarked that peoples develop negative attitude toward the profession and no one wants to join the profession if other option available. They thought that they do not get the benefit they deserve from the profession and dissatisfied with the profession. The response indicated that most teachers look for other options (to be employed in other sectors out of the education sector). They expressed their fear that if this continues the profession would be threatened with lack of qualified professionals. It seems logical to improve the status of all teachers by ensuring that teachers have a salary comparable with other

professions requiring the same level of qualifications and responsibility and that it is possible for teachers to live with dignity on the salary from their work and not to be forced to look for other job.

In connection to barriers associated with post-training phase the teachers explained that the present continuous professional development opportunities were very limited and can not able to improve the capacity of all teachers to teach the new curriculum. Inline with this argument one of the informants, I₇ offered her account:

...the quota is very limited in comparison with the available number of teacher. For example I have 21 years of teaching experience but, I haven't got the opportunity to update or upgrade my qualification...

INT #7 March, 13, 2007 Afternoon

The teacher also explained that this lack of continuous professional development would result in shortage of qualified teacher in second cycle primary school. As Fredriksson, (2004) mentioned the professional development of teachers is a key guarantee of quality education and must be linked to all phases of teacher education and educational research. Adding to this argument European Commission, (2002) stated that acquiring and continuously updating and upgrading a high level of knowledge, skills and competencies is considered a prerequisite for the personal development of all citizens and for participation in all aspects of society from active citizenship through to labour market integration. Although continuous professional development play a significant role in keeping the quality of education teachers' response shows that there is a very limited opportunity in this regard. The finding of the study suggested that there is only a limited opportunity for the teachers to update/upgrade is knowledge. However, Human knowledge is expanding, facts are changing and there is a risk that the teacher will be stuck in old tracks repeating the same kind of instruction year after year. This is not satisfying situation for the students or

for the teachers. To this end, continuous professional development opportunities seem mandatory.

Teachers also believe that their performance evaluation system has a problem. Along this line one FGD group give an excerpt:

...teachers are evaluated against the plan and strategic plan management (spm) they prepare not based on their teaching performance because of this they don't worry about what the students learn. Although not implemented or not practical, if the teacher prepare a good SPM he/she is perceived as a good teacher so teachers waste most of their time in preparing this plan rather than in actual teaching learning activity...

FGD #3 June, 4, 2007 Morning

As clearly indicated in the description above, the respondent believe that teachers performance evaluation system harm quality of education by making the teachers to work more on the planning which may or may not be practicable in the actual classroom condition. The response show that being preparing a good SPM is a reflection of good teacher, so teachers give little attention to the actual teaching-learning process.

4.2.2 Barriers Associated With the Students

4.2.2.1. Lack of student motivation

In the FGD held with the teachers, it is learnt that students lack interest to learn. The participants of FGDs explained that students are not willing to learn, to know, they do not want to challenge themselves to understand something. The willingness and effort by the learner has contributed a lot for the success of education system but, they described that the students felt to do so. They further remarked that this lack of interest is associated with the lack of job opportunity and expansion of video house/ movies house. The following two excerpts could be good indicators in this regard:

...students have sisters/ brother or neighbor having a certificate or diploma but unemployed [... hojii dhabiinsa...] and consider that learning has not this much important and discouraged to learn....

...lack of student interest to learn is associated with the spread of video house or movies houses [...baballina mana viidiyoo fi filmii...]. Most of the time students spent their time in watching video, games so they don't give much attention to the education. They don't work their homework, they don't read, they don't come to the school continuously. As the content of the subject become harder and harder they lost interest and finally they lost the desire to learn...

FGD #1 May, 21, 2007 Morning

One may ask how teachers may discover the aforementioned reasons really caused students to lose interest the teachers claimed that they have got from project work (action research) conducted in their school and by interviewing students

The in-depth interview held with participants revealed that students' absenteeism is another factor that affects quality of education. It is said that student absenteeism interferes with the completion of the text books, so it affects students' performance. They also indicated that student who miss the class regularly perform poorly.

With this regard one of the informants, I₁₆ offered an account:

...continuous student absenteeism from the class made us to face difficulty to help them, to arrange tutorial class for them, to follow their progress, and give them [students] feedback...

INT #16 April, 6, 2007 Morning

Another informant, I₁₄ explained that: " *Students who regularly miss the lesson perform poorly and this affects the Quality of Education because without attending the class they don't perform well*"

4.2.2.2. Students misbehavior

Teachers with whom I spoke during the interview portion of data collection reported that student disciplinary problem is headache to them. Moreover, the participants explained that they are not allowed to take any measures on the students although they commit any disturbance or disciplinary problem in the school. The participant reasoned that due to the pressure of Education for All (EFA) goal, the schools don't want to miss the students by taking any measures. So the students can do any thing they like. From this explanation it seems that more attention is given to the quantity of students rather than quality though quality is stated as one of the six EFA goals. In one of such interview, a female teacher attempted to explain her observation as:

...although not all, students don't come to school. They skip class. They don't follow the teacher in the classroom instead they talk to each other and disturb the class. If you send such students out of the class, he/she become happy and said you beg me to come back [...booda na kadhitta miti...] and go to wondering (duuriyyaa'uu deemu). Because they know that the school doesn't want to miss them to achieve EFA goals. They withdraw from the classroom at any time. They are not ordered by the rules and regulation of the school. They skip (ulluuquu) through the fence of the school. They are out of control of the teacher. Every day there is a trouble. Actually I don't deny that there are a few students who are disciplined...

INT #4 March, 5, 2007 Morning

She further explained that student disciplinary problem is a de-motivating and discouraging factor for teachers not to accomplish their task effectively. This explanation gives the impression that learners should behave well instead of becoming other burden to the teacher. From the response of the participants I understood that student discipline problems have reached rampant stage. A lack of respect for the teachers and others is undermining the ability of the schools to provide students with quality of education.

4.2.2.3. Underage children

In a heated discussion with teachers about barriers associated with the student the FGD participants' consider age of the child as a barrier to quality. Although the government policy states that children below 7 years should not be registered in school, the participants explained that some parents insist on registering them and some teachers accept them. Owing to this fact some students are immature when joining formal school and face difficulty in adjusting themselves to the school environment.

One of the discussant offered an account:

...many of the children are under age because of this they don't know the advantage and disadvantage of education. They face difficulty in coping up with the school Environment; they don't give much attention to their education...

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

It is evident from the above description that underage learners face difficulty in coping up with what is taught and find difficulties in adjusting themselves in to the standard and behavior of those older than them.

4.2.2.4 Lack of parental awareness and support to their childrens education

In the course of my discussions with the FGD group the discussants argue that "because of illiteracy parents don't follow the progress of their childrens learning: what they learn? How they learn? Why they learn?" This response affirms the UNESCO, (2000) explanations which mentioned as Parents' level of education, has a multifaceted impact on children's ability to learn in school. Parents with little formal education may also be less familiar with the language used in the school, limiting their ability to support learning and participate in school-related activities. Some parents are complaining that their childrens are out of their (parents) control and do nothing so they give responsibility to the school". Adding to this other discussant explained that some parents consider the school as "a jail and want their children to stay at school so that they don't

see their child around home committing any disturbance [...achuma gara mana barumsaa deemanii haa taa'ani nurraa...].” The same discussant further explained that some parents deny their children’s disciplinary problem and stood with them saying that “no my child didn’t do this” instead of following, advising and correcting them.

The above description of the participant shows that parents are found to be unsupportive and uncooperative in following up the progress of their child (in activities like homework), and in correcting the disciplinary problem of their child.

According to another discussant in the FGD group environment has a great impact on the student. He held the position that:

...the environment in which the learners grow up and live, the community from which he/she came and the culture has an impact on the student learning. Some environment is supportive while some are not. If the surrounding societies give much attention to the education the students also give much attention to the education and vice versa. If there are gang-bangers in their surrounding they want to be like that. Environment plays a significant role in shaping the environment...

FGD #3 June, 28, 2007 Morning

According to UNATCOM, (2004) if children stay in an unfriendly environment at home like where parents fight or quarrel from time to time or where it is noisy, they cannot concentrate. They will also fail to do their homework. This affects their performance and commitment to school work. The respondents’ explanation also shows this.

4.2.2.5. Low socio-economic background of students

It is true that schools are the place where the students from different socioeconomic background came to learn. During the data collection all the informants indicated economic problem as another barrier to quality of education. With this regard one of the participants in the FGD indicated that:

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...we have students from different socio-economic status. Those students from poor families don't get enough food, cloth and don't have all other required materials for learning so they don't attend the class properly. instead they attend the class on alternate day base i.e. if they attend the class one day they participate in some kind of income generation labour in the next day [...guyyaa tokko yoo baratan guyyaa itti aanuummoo hojii hummaa hojjetu...] by which they may cover their living expense...

FGD #1 May, 21, 2007 Morning

The report of the participant clearly shows that the economic problem made the students not to concentrate in their education rather to search for other income generating means by involving themselves in labour.

4.2.3 Barriers Associated With Equipment, Facilities and Teaching-Learning Materials

In the course of my in-depth interview and FGD with the informants I understood that there is no sufficient fund or resource for the schools, which according to the participants, emanated from poor support from the government and the community. Provision of adequate fund helps to provide more textbooks, reduce class size and improve teacher education and school facilities. This inturn has a positive impact on quality of education that the children receive.

4.2.3.1 Lack of support

The interviewees and FGD participants stated that there is no adequate support from individuals, the government and the community to equip the school with all the required teaching-learning materials and to construct additional classrooms and provide chairs. The following excerpt was taken from the FGD was illustrative of this:

...at present time the government gave the responsibility to fund the schools to the surrounding community except provision of salary and textbook (which are provided by the government." However, the community cannot afford adequate fund to school with the current

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living expense. Thus, the schools suffer from lack of fund to construct additional classrooms and chairs, to buy teaching-learning materials required for teaching-learning process....

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

The discussant in the FGD further explained that most of the time students enrolled in government schools are those from poor family, which have no capacity to provide sufficient fund for the schools. Therefore, the schools are in short of fund where as economically capable parents enroll their children in private and mission schools (which they think have better quality) and pay nothing for the government schools. I understood that approaches relying on the communities alone to fund the schools seem to have not provided adequate results.

4.2.3.2. Lack of textbooks and other instructional materials

The participant also remarked that there are no sufficient text books for the students. One of the informants, I₉ explained that " there is no sufficient text books for the students and the problem gets worse especially for those whose medium of instruction is Amharic." Another FGD participant confirmed that:

...besides shortage of text books, the way textbooks, syllabus and teacher's guide distributed has a great problem. Text books are distributed at the end of academic year (around March and April) so we can't able to use the text books effectively. Some times we got teachers guide with out text books while in other time we got the teachers guide without text books...

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

The finding of the study indicated that lack of textbooks (the only reference material for the student as the respondents describe) mainly results from inefficient distribution system.

The participants also strongly remarked that there is no strong pedagogic center having the necessary² teaching-learning materials and skilled workers so that they can make their teaching more tangible for the students. Shortage of facilities like field (for playing), balls, laboratory equipments, radio and library were other factors that they think affect the quality of education they deliver for the child.

However, it is believed that school facilities have an important impact on the students' performance and teacher effectiveness. Working in adequately equipped schools where the students among other things have access to schools library, textbooks has a positive impact on the delivery of quality of education.

4.2.3.2. Overcrowded student population

Overcrowded classrooms added to inappropriate sitting type was other factor that crippled quality of education. The interviewees explained that the number of students in a given classroom was very large and make the teaching-learning process very difficulty especially in assessing students, in evaluating their exercise books (class activity and home work) which inturn complicate the continuous follow up of student progress. In the same vein an excerpt taken from the FGD affirmed that:

...having a large number of students in the classroom will result in a difficulty of implementing continuous assessment and participatory type of learning... Inappropriate type of sitting in the classrooms hinders the implementation of active learning method. Some seats allows the student to sit only in one direction others are inconvenient to group the students and making the students in circle for discussion... the intended methodology and the actual condition in the classrooms don't fit...

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

It seems that all the above description is solid to show that the schools suffer from very poor conditions for learning: dilapidated buildings, insufficient desks, overcrowded classrooms and few or no learning materials.

There is a growing evidence of positive correlation between the adequacy of a school facilities and student performance. Students attending schools in a better condition outperform students in substandard buildings by several percentage points (Earthman, 2002). In affirmative of this Amare, (1998) assert that shortage of instructional material and overcrowded classrooms not only affect quality of education but also determine it. Therefore, it seems unreasonable to expect positive results from programs that have to operate in a non conducive working environment.

4.2.4 Barriers Associated With Teaching-Learning Process

4.2.4.1 Implementation Self-contained approach

All members of the FGD and interviewees consider self-contained approach as barrier to quality of education. During my data collection I do not see any informant in favor of this issue. Every one is against this issue. During the interview one of the informants, I₆ attempted to explain it as:

...teachers have shown resistance from the very beginning against self-contained approach, but enforced to implement it. As far as the teacher themselves don't accept the approach how can they implement self-contained approach effectively...

INT #6 March, 9, 2007 Afternoon

The following excerpt by the FGD participants is affirmative of this view:

...the way the teachers have been and still is implementing self-contained approach has a negative impact on quality of education. This is mainly emanates from lack of interest and knowledge in all subject area taught in primary school. Teachers interested in teaching mathematics for instance, may have no interest and knowledge to teach language or others and vice versa. So what the teacher did is that he/she emphasizes subject(s) which he/she likes and gives very little attention to other subjects in which she/he lacks interest or knowledge. In self-contained approach no one interferes the teacher so the teacher teaches as he/she likes...all subjects don't get the same attention from the teacher this inturn make the students not to have a basic knowledge in all subjects..."

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

Another FGD participant from the other group confirmed that teachers from the very beginning have² no clear understanding of the self-contained approach owing to this they don't accept the approach. However, according to a respondent teacher are forced to implement self-contained approach. Because of this they give more attention to the subject they like and little or no attention to the subject they don't like. Franklins, (1968) cited in Tesfaye, (2006) contended that expecting all teachers to like all to teach all subjects is unrealistic that it ignores the factors of aptitude and interest and the scientific fact that people do better work when doing what they like and enjoy.

During the interview one of the informants, I₁₃ explained his experience in the following way: *"...I don't like Mathematics but, I am imposed to teach mathematics in self-contained approach. Those students in my class don't have the basic knowledge of mathematics because of me..."*

According to the participant the self contained approach causes unbalanced development of the child, to hate some subjects and to like others. In this study, it is evident that the dis-advantage of Self-contained approaches out way its advantage for teachers.

Another reason why the participants believed that self-contained approach have a problem is that "if the teacher has faced a problem that enforces him/her to be absent from the school (classrooms) for week or more the students are also enforced to stay without teacher for the same amount of time because there is only one teacher that teaches them and the school doesn't have substitute teachers to replace those who are absent."

When talking about self-contained approach with participants they also explained that those groups of students which are assigned to a weak teacher

suffer the entire year from the inadequate ability of the teacher where as students who get a relatively knowledgeable, skilled and qualified teacher could be advantageous and perform well. Moreover, response from the participant shows that the self-contained approach requires the teacher to stay continuously with learner the whole day, all year round and thus both the teachers and learners get bored.

From the above anecdote one can understand that although the government accepts the self-contained approach as an effective strategy for first cycle primary school in its policy document its implementation is under question. The informants are seriously criticizing self-contained approach believing that students are promoted to the next grade level without having a basic knowledge expected from their respective grade level.

Teachers participated in the study were also asked to tell whether the self-contained approach has uphold or discarded. All the participants hold the opinion that the self-contained approach should be discarded from the system soon. Their justification for this was the earlier mentioned draw backs. This finding confirms what was found by Husen, (2001) in the study entitled as "Teachers and Head teachers views on the self-contained classrooms in Dessie primary schools." He found that the majority of teachers involved in the study had negative attitude toward self-contained classrooms and hold the position that it should be abandoned soon. Regarding this issue Tesfaye (2006) further states that lack of interest to teach all subjects, lack of motivation to teach, large class size and lack of facilities made the self-contained approach ineffective. He recommends that all the necessary setup that the approach demand should be fulfilled before its implementation.

4.2.4.2 Free promotion

As to the issue of free promotion teachers complain that it creates a big problem to the quality of education. They indicated that at any cost students will be promoted to the next grade level. This is done by arranging tutorial class or other means for the poor performing students. However, the teachers explained that the tutorial class doesn't serve its objectives this is because the students are already informed that there is no repetition from grade one to four so they don't want to come and attend the tutorial class.

In line with this the FGD participants are quoted to have said:

...although the government says that there must be continuous assessment in primary schools it doesn't give any sense especially in the first cycle primary school because with any kind of effort you are obliged to make all students promoted to the next grade level. So what the teachers (not all) did is that instead of suffering let all the students promoted to the next class. This is done without acquiring the basic knowledge, skill, attitude in the respective grade level because of this when most of the learners join the upper primary school (5-8) the complexity of the subject increases as grade level increases so the student lost the interest and found the school environment complex (unsupportive) and finally dropout...

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

Those Informants teaching in upper primary school (5-8) strongly refuse the issue of free promotion and held the position that in upper primary school they found many students who can't read and write and this is, what they contend the result of free promotion. Students simply run through the grade level without having the basic knowledge of that grade level.

Offering another perspective two informant I₄ and I₁₉ explained the concept of free promotion as:

... free promotion doesn't mean that letting all students pass from grade to grade without having a basic Knowledge, skills, attitudinal change rather it involves continuously assessing the students

performance, identifying those needy students, arranging tutorial class for the poor performing students and helping all students to grasp the basic knowledge of all subjects...

INT #4 March, 5, 2007 Morning and

INT #19 April, 9, 2007 Afternoon

From the above explanation I found that there is some sort of distortion regarding the issue of free promotion. Majority of the teachers explained that free promotion was letting all students to be promoted while few teachers oppose the idea and explain that although the students are freely promoted you (teachers') assess students continuously- Know the kind of the students they are and then you devise strategies or means to help the students learn well and promoted. In this sense, it is evident that teachers were not committed to their work. Instead of helping the students by arranging tutorials and other mechanisms they prefer to let students promoted from grade to grade.

4.3 Theme-3 Current Status of Quality as Utilized by Schools

4.3.1 Teachers Criteria to evaluate quality

Table 4.4 teachers' criteria to evaluate quality

		Informants (I)	
1	Criteria up on which teachers evaluate quality	Teacher qualification	All
		Class size	All
		Availability of teaching learning materials	All
		Facilities and equipment	All
		parents participation in teaching-learning process,	All FGDs and I _(1,3,5,9, 11,12)
		supportive environment	All FGDs and I _(1,3,7,10,17)

Teacher participants in this study commented extensively about the criteria up on which they evaluate quality of education, the general condition of quality of education and the practice to improve quality of education in primary school. As quality it self is not defined, it is difficult to clearly determine indicators to be

used for evaluating quality of education. The different perspective and possible disagreement on quality also apply to quality indicators. In line with this CEDEFOP, (1997) describe that the meaning and value of quality indicators will depend strongly on the context. Since defining quality indicators is not the purpose of this study but to understand quality issues in education, I tried to describe indicators used to evaluate quality by the teachers in their context. As data from FGD and in-depth interview revealed teachers were aware of the criteria up on which the quality of education is evaluated or the indicator use to evaluate the quality of education as it was indicated in many literature including the education statistics annual abstract (prepared by MoE). These indicators represent key enabling factors to ensure that students learn well in school and that such learning is relevant and valuable to their lives.

Almost all of the responses given by the participant surface around skilled and trained teacher, adequate supply of teaching-learning materials, student section ratio. The following excerpt taken from the FGD participant could be good example of the criteria employed by teachers to evaluate quality of education:

...the availability of skilled, well trained and well trained qualified teacher in primary school, lower student section ratio (50:1) , availability of required (sufficient) number of teaching learning material, facilities and equipment, parents participation in teaching-learning process, supportive environment...

FGD #2 May, 28, 2007 Morning

4.3.2 Current status of quality as viewed by teachers

In the course of my interview, the interviewees explained the general status of quality of education in primary schools. All the informants participated in this study were not satisfied with the current quality of education existing in their school. They also describe that the effort to improve quality is not sufficient although there are some improvements. In one of such interview one of my

informants, I₃ pointed out that the currently existing condition of quality of education in primary school is not promising. Adding to this he (I₃) further explained that as long as there are many problems (like poor training of teachers, unqualified, unmotivated and poor paid teachers, lack of supportive environment) surfacing the education system keeping quality of education seems very difficult. Adding to this another informant, I₁₁ indicated that it is far from reality to say confidently there is quality of education in the schools although there are some improvements which he mentioned as preparation of curriculum, textbooks, teacher guide, and construction of schools in every kebele.

The FGD participants by pointing out some strong point found in the school like implementation of active learning methodology, community participation (relatively), presence of some limited opportunity for training, textbooks explained that movement to keep the quality of education is insufficient and complicated with many problems like poor support for the school from the government side, from the parent side and others. The following excerpt taken from the FGD was illustrative of the subject:

...to begin with some of the improvements: student-centered methodology which involve active participation of the students, community participation (relatively with past), availability of textbooks (comparing with past), construction of more schools in location accessible to all students, and although not satisfactory the presence of training opportunity are strong point observed in the school. However, if we see the general condition of the quality of education in schools it is not satisfactory. It is complicated by many problems; teachers by themselves are poorly paid and not happy, lack of support from the government except the provision of textbooks and salary for teachers, community participation was not as expected, poor socio-economic status of student, scarcity of resource. With such complication it is difficulty to say we are delivering quality of education to child...

FGD #1 May, 21, 2007 Morning

In the same vein one of my informant, I₉ during interview give the following account:

...If you observe the classrooms it is overcrowded, filled with inappropriate sitting, the floor is not cemented these all don't favor quality of education. It seems that we are distributing education to students but, not making them understand [...barnoota barataaf hiraajirra malee hubachiisaa hin jirru...]. The schools have no adequate fund to construct additional classrooms, chairs; funding the school became the responsibility of the community but, the community was unable to afford. Students are poorly nourished due to economic problem so they don't concentrate on their study...and many things. Thus, the quality of education in primary school is under question...

INT#9 March, 16, 2007 Morning

As the above two explanation revealed the quality of education in primary school was complicated with many problem. As it was described by the participant the quality of education in primary school is not promising. It seems that attention was on quantity rather than the quality. It needs a great attention from all stake holders; government, teachers, parents, students to have an effective primary school.

4.4 Theme-4 Teachers' Effort to Improve Quality

Table 4.5 Efforts to improve quality education

		Informants (I)	
1	Efforts to improve quality by teachers	Founding of various committee	All
		Implementation of continuous assessment	All FGDs and I _(1,3,4,5,10)
		Experience sharing among teachers	All
		Preparing question-answer forum for students	All
		teacher-parent regular meeting	All

As indicated in the table above a variety of perspectives and explanations has been proposed regarding the practical contribution of teachers to promote quality of education in their schools.

4.4.1 Founding of various committee

In describing the practical contribution of teachers to improve quality of education in primary school the participants of this study pointed out that there are about ten separate committees which work towards the improvement of quality of education. According to the participants these committees are: fund raising, documentation, question and answering, dropout, gender, experience sharing, library, evaluation, project, maintenance, counseling service.

According to the FGD participant, for instance, the maintenance committees collect and maintain chairs, desks, tables, textbooks etc so that they can serve properly. Fund raising committees generate income for the school through various means to equip the school with required teaching-learning materials. Gender committees give awareness raising training to the students and surrounding communities regarding HIV/AIDS, Gender, and Harmful traditional practice etc. The rest of the committees are also their own responsibility. All of them work to make primary education effective. However, they explained that their activity was limited due to paucity of the resource. The interviewees also remarked that teachers conduct action research (project) to know students problem; why they dropout, absent from the classrooms, why they came late etc and respond to students problem accordingly. They also explained that teachers contribute money to equip schools with teaching-learning materials including construction of classrooms, chairs etc.

4.4.2 Implementation of continuous assessment

Another activity that the participants explained as a mechanism of promoting quality of education in their school was implementation of continuous assessment. With regard to this issue one of my informants, I₃ explained:

...as to my experience one strategy I (and other teachers) employed to improve quality of education is implementation of continuous assessment. I assess students' performance and then I identify those students which have poor performance. I arrange tutorial classes for poorly performing students so that they can improve their performance by grasping the basic knowledge of the subject they have been taught.

INT #3 March, 1, 2007 Morning

The participants also explained that, based on assessment result, the teachers call the parents of the students who perform poorly and discussed in detail about the performance of their students. Feedback has been given for the parents so that they can follow the progress of their students, create a conducive environment for their student, give them enough time to read, to do their home work etc.

4.4.3. Experience sharing among teachers

When talking about quality issues in education with participants, they discussed sharing of experience among teachers teaching at the same level as one of the strategies that they implement to promote quality of education. According to the participants, this was done with the intention to learn from the strength of others and correct their weaknesses. In one of such explanation my informants, I₉ give the following account:

... exchange of experience between teachers teaching in different classrooms is one of our strategies to promote quality. It enables us to learn from the strength of others. We observe the colleagues classrooms: how he/she teaches, interact with the students, present the content, methodology etc. we accept his/her strength and use it in our own classrooms and give him/her a constructive comment in his/her weakness so that he/she can improve his/her teaching...

INT #9 March, 16, 2007 Afternoon

Likewise the FGD participants were also explained their experience as "... one experienced teacher who is relatively better informed about one issue is selected from each department and gave training for other staff members".

4.4.4. Preparing question-answer forum for students

Preparation of question-answer forum for the student was other issue that emerges from the data. As the participants explained, this forum would inculcate a sense of competition among the students and initiate them to work hard. For example, in the course of my interview with I₄, she offered the following account regarding the strategy the teachers employed to improve quality of education in primary school:

... I, along with my colleagues prepare question and answer forum in the form of competition for the students with the intention to make the students learn from each other by sharing their experience and cultivate a sense of competition between the students in the same classroom and in different classrooms....

INT #4 March, 5, 2007 Morning

4.4.5. Teacher-Parent regular meeting

Through analysis of the data I found that teachers' regular meeting with parents emerged among the strategies to promote quality of education in schools. As participants indicated this meeting creates an opportunity to discuss on overall problems of education that affect quality of education. Although the meeting has fruitful and brought many ideas to the sector, the participants claimed that some parents are reserved in translating the decision passed on the meeting in to practice. Informant, I₁₄ give the following account:

...we have regular meeting with parents to discuss on problems of the schools. In the meeting the progress of the students, performance of the school, problems of the school and so on was reported and then discussion was held in detail on the issue with parents to devise solution to the schools problem...important decision was passed however some parents were refused to do what was said in the meeting...

INT #14 March, 28, 2007 Morning

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INT #14 March, 28, 2007 Morning

Views from FGD participants also explained that “teachers have a monthly regular staff meeting in which every department has reported its performance.” According to these FGD participants this meeting enables them to evaluate their performance, to identify their weakness and strength; to device a way of tackling the problem they face in the course of teaching-learning process, to share their experience and learn from each other and to improve their overall performance. They also explained that there is a meeting with parents to discuss on the overall problems of the schools. However, they pointed out that almost more than half of the parents do not came and attend the meeting.

In sum the finding of the study indicated that despite the many problems hampering the delivery of quality of education teachers carried out many activities which helps to improve quality of education in their schools.

Chapter Five

5. Summary, Conclusion and Implication for Practice

5.1 Summary

This study endeavored to explore teachers' perception of quality issues in education with the intention to understand the issue from the teacher perspectives. The study employed qualitative case study design with the assumption (core belief) that reality is socially constructed by the participants and there are many truths. This research approach was appropriate as I was trying to understand the complexities of the issue under investigation through the lived experiences, perceptions and perspectives from a holistic standpoint.

To this end, Teachers, who I believe are the most engaged insiders in education system, teaching in Government primary school of Nekemte, located at about 330km to the west of the capital city, Addis Ababa were involved in the study. Data were generated via interview and FGDs from nineteen purposefully selected teachers. In all, 19 teachers were interviewed and three FGDs were held. The data secured through these techniques are thematically analyzed and organized in to four themes to answer the research questions, which where;

- How do teachers in primary education understand quality in education?
- How do teachers in primary education perceive barriers in delivering quality education?
- How do teachers in primary education evaluate and promote quality education in their school?

Most of the data reported is based on the words of my respondents. This was to ensure that their voices were not left out in the analysis and to enable readers easily identify the unmodified experiences of the respondents.

5.2 Conclusion

1. Defining quality of education

Participants response were surfaced largely around the issues of outcome-students achievement, behavioral change brought on the students and the ability of the student to use what they learn in their everyday lives after they finish the program; input - qualification of the teacher, finance, teaching-learning materials and facilities. Although the issue of process (what happens in the classrooms) was equally important as input and output the finding of the study indicated that it gets little attention from the teacher respondents. Thus, based on the finding of the study, it is concluded that teachers narrowly interpret the term quality in education-interms of two dimensions (input and output) in defining quality. Teachers in all settings strongly remarked that quality of education is decisive and demanding. Thus, it is clear that they well understood the importance of quality.

2. Barriers to quality

For the reasons that affect quality of education the finding of the study identified many factors that affect the delivery of the most wanted quality education in schools. The chart below illustrates the barriers to the delivery of quality education. I have divided these barriers in to four categories.

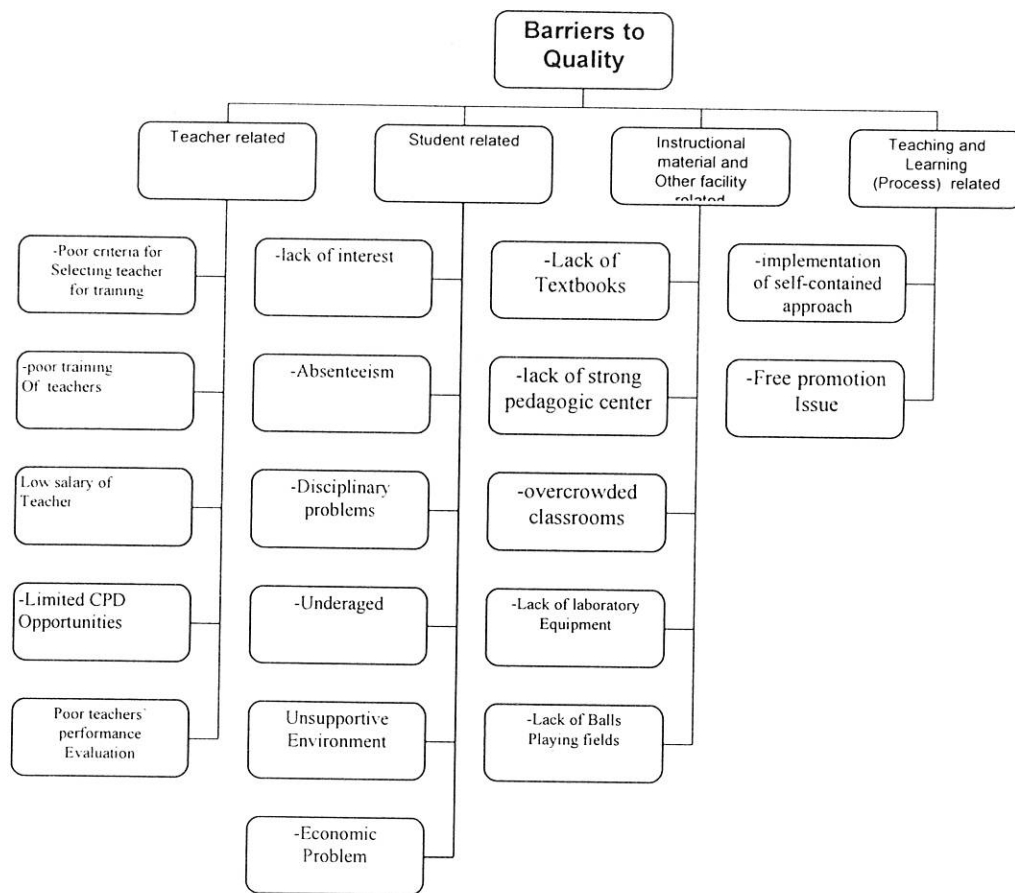


Figure 5.1 Barriers to quality designed from interview and FGDs data

Despite the effort made to provide quality education and progress made so far the study revealed that there are many factors that affect the quality of education.

2. Current status of Quality as utilized by the schools

Skilled and trained teacher, adequate supply of teaching-learning materials like textbooks, student section ratio, supportive environment, parents participation in teaching learning process are found to be the most extensively used criteria for evaluating quality of education by the teachers. Based on the finding of the study I concluded that the teacher participants have some knowledge of the indicators mostly used to evaluate quality of education.

Participants of the study felt discomfort about the current status of quality of education in their schools. Teachers participants were frequently explained that primary schools suffer from very poor condition of learning; dilapidated buildings, insufficient seating, overcrowded classrooms and few or no learning materials. Students are taught by unqualified, poor paid and unmotivated teachers. The environment is not supportive. The participation of parents in the education system is not as expected. Based on the findings of the study it is evident to conclude that the quality of education in primary school is “not promising” in the words of the teacher participants and complicated with many problems.

4. Efforts to improve quality education

Concerning the practical contribution of teachers to improve quality of education, the study identified several activities that are carried out to improve quality of education by the teachers. organizing various committees which operate at school level and work toward the improvement of quality, the implementation of continuous assessment to identify the needy students, experience sharing among teachers to learn from the strength of others, preparing question-answer forum for the students to cultivate sense of competition among the students, regular meeting with parents to discuss some issues related to education are found to be the strategies employed by the teachers to improve quality of education as the finding of the study indicated.

5.3 Implication for Practice

The findings of this study are believed to have some implication for practice. The implications might show areas of intervention to improve the most wanted quality of education. As we think of improving quality in education, we need to

look in to the implications involved. Below are some of those major implications to address.

One important implication associated with the findings of this research is the need to break the problems of teachers including salaries, work environment, administrative support etc. Teachers are the most important actors for the proper operation of the education system. Therefore, the following are points which need due consideration by respective stakeholders; especially educational officers at any level:

- Teachers are the most valuable resource available to schools. In the realization of quality learning an investment in teacher quality and ongoing professionalism is vital. Hence, teachers need to be provided with appropriate training in the institution and a wide range of professional development opportunities in order to improve teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes. In line with this, teachers need to be provided with intensive and practical refreshment courses, workshops and trainings on the implementation of self-contained approach, continuous assessment, quality awareness and learner centered methodology.
- Selection of the teacher candidates for training would base itself on the academic merits of the candidates.
- Teachers need to be provided reward/incentives/award based on the skills knowledge and performance they brought to the classrooms to uphold their morale.
- It seems logical to reconsider the salary structure of the teachers to attract and sustain qualified professionals in the teaching profession.
- Actions that encourage good teachers, give the opportunities to grow in the teaching profession and recognize their effort need to be taken by the concerned body.

A second implication associated with the finding of this research study is that of providing fund for various school activities. The participants of the study uniformly indicated that poor support of the government and shaky participation of the community in the schools system would deform the quality of education. Relying on the community to fund the schools did not brought adequate results. Therefore, intervention of the government in providing adequate fund for schools seems vital so that the schools are equipped with the necessary teaching-learning materials; construct additional classrooms, chairs and others. This inturn positively affect the quality of education. Schools should be institutions where teachers want to teach and students want to learn. School facilities have a direct and lasting effect on the quality of education for students. Therefore, we need to embark upon journey toward restoring our country's educational infrastructure so as to improve and solidify the future of our children and our country's.

A third implication is the need to create and nourish parent/Community-School Partnerships. Education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities within society. They are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate, by equipping them with skills important in society. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnerships between schools, parents, and communities so that parents/communities can: establish home environments that support children's learning at schools; raise money for schools; advocate enrollment and education benefits; boost morale of school staff; actively attending school meetings to learn about children's learning progress and classroom behavior.

Moreover, there is also a need to establish effective community based school leadership. Parental involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. The teachers and other school staff feel they should be accountable to community only when the community holds some power over them or if their continued employment or salaries depend on community satisfaction. This would make Teachers and school staffs feel more obliged to deliver better education for the students in order to respond to the needs of parents and communities. Parents are also more involved in the day-to-day management of the school where they see what is happening and what needs to be corrected. Participation can greatly help develop accountability, which contributes to improving the education delivery.

The fourth implication is that the need to resolve student disciplinary problems. Students need to learn to behave well for the existence of health learning environment. Solving student disciplinary problems requires the commitment of school administrators to educate students, parents and members of the community about the need for tough but fair discipline policies/behavior rules that should be reasonable and doable. Moreover, it seems important to identify disruptive behaviors and devise strategies to counteract and alleviate the plaguing discipline problems in the schools.

The final implication of this study is that the need to provide sufficient textbooks timely. Participants indicated that late distribution and lack of textbooks impaired the quality of education in primary school. Therefore, it seems logical to distribute the textbooks for the students timely in sufficient amount. This could easily solve the problem.

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APPENDIX A

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

“Primary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Quality Issues in Education in Nekemte”

Guide for Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Date _____

Time FGD started _____

Time FGD end _____

Number of participant _____

Experience _____

Qualification _____

Subject Teach _____

Instruction

My name is Fekede Tuli. I am a graduate student at the University of Addis Ababa. As a part of my program requirements, I must complete a thesis for graduation. I have chosen to study **Primary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Quality Issues in Education** with the intention to understand quality issues in education from teachers perspectives. Your cooperation by participating in this study would be greatly appreciated.

This FGD guide is presented to you to generate pertinent data concerning your perception about quality issues in primary education. In doing so I gave due attention to the ethical concern that would develop trust on the part of the participants. Accordingly, the following ethical consideration is presented to the research participant before the actual discussions.

Participant’s agreement

I understand that by participating in this study, I am giving my informed consent as participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that

might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have a right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no prejudice.

Note. Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

1. How do you see quality of education and its dimension in primary school? How do you think that the quality of education in primary school affect the future career of the learner?
2. What factors do you observe that favor or disfavor improvement of quality education in primary school?
3. What are the strengths and limitations of the current delivery of education in your school in relation to quality?
4. What do you think are the stakeholders of primary education that need to involve in various process of education?
5. What quality improvement strategies do you employ in your school? How do you establish these strategies? How did these strategies help you to achieve quality of education in primary school?
6. What do you think should be done to improve quality of education in primary schools?
7. Would you describe the current status of quality in primary education? What indicators do you use?
8. Is there any thing important that you want to add to what has been discussed so far?

Thank You for Your Cooperation!

APPENDIX B

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

**“Primary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Quality Issues in Education
In Nekemte”**

Guide for Interview

Date _____

Time Interview started _____

Time Interview end _____

Experience _____

Age _____

Qualification _____

Subject Teach _____

Instruction

My name is Fekede Tuli. I am a graduate student at the University of Addis Ababa. As a part of my program requirements, I must complete a thesis for graduation. I have chosen to study **Primary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Quality Issues in Education** with the intention to understand quality issues in education from teachers perspectives. Your cooperation by participating in this study would be greatly appreciated.

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that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have a right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no prejudice.

Note. Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher.

Interview

1. What does quality of education mean to you?
2. What do you think that the importance of quality in primary education?
3. What effects does quality education have in the future career of education?
4. When do you say that there is quality of education in your school? What factors do you consider are relevant to quality in primary education?
5. What factors hinder the delivery of quality of education in primary schools?
6. What means do you propose to get rid of or reduce the hindrance factors affecting the delivery of quality education?
7. How do you measure quality of primary education?
8. What are indicators to measure quality of education? is there any type of quality management committee that were established to control quality of education in your schools ?
9. What do you think is a better strategy for improving the quality of education in primary schools or would you describe ways toward quality of education in primary schools?
10. In your school what activities are carried out to improve the quality of education? In connection with this is there any effort you have made to improve quality of education in primary education?
11. Any other remarks or suggestion you want to add_____.

Thank You for Your Cooperation!

APPENDIX C

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Sex	Position	Degree	Years/ service	Subject	Date interviewed	Level
I ₁	Male	Teacher	Diploma	27	English	23-F-2007	5-8
I ₂	Male	Teacher	Diploma	23	History	27-F-2007	5-8
I ₃	Male	Teacher	Diploma	21	Physics	1-M-2007	5-8
I ₄	Female	Teacher	Certificate	19	General	5M-2007	1-4
I ₅	Female	Teacher	Certificate	17	General	6-M-2007	1-4
I ₆	Male	Teacher	Diploma	22	Afan Oromo	9-M-2007	5-8
I ₇	Female	Teacher	Certificate	20	General	13-M-2007	1-4
I ₈	Female	Teacher	Diploma	21	Mathematics	14-M-2007	5-8
I ₉	Male	Teacher	Diploma	16	Geography	16-M-2007	5-8
I ₁₀	Male	Teacher	Diploma	19	EDPM	19-M-2007	5-8
I ₁₁	Male	Teacher	Diploma	25	Chemistry	20-M-2007	5-8
I ₁₂	Male	Teacher	Diploma	24	English	22-M-2007	5-8
I ₁₃	Female	Teacher	Certificate	21	General	23-M-2007	1-4
I ₁₄	Female	Teacher	Certificate	23	General	28-M-2007	1-4
I ₁₅	Male	Teacher	Certificate	21	General	2-A-2007	1-4
I ₁₆	Female	Teacher	Diploma	21	English	6-A-2007	5-8
I ₁₇	Male	Teacher	Diploma	16	Afan Oromo	9-A-2007	5-8
I ₁₈	Female	Teacher	Certificate	14	General	12-A-2007	1-4
I ₁₉	Male	Teacher	Certificate	24	General	15-A-2007	1-4

Key I-informant

F- February

M –March

A-April

Declaration

I, the under signed, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

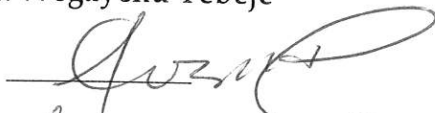
Name: **Fekede Tuli Gameda**

Signature: 

Date: _____

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

Name: **Dr. Wegayehu Tebeje**

Signature: 

Date: July 20, 2007