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**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

**School Accountability for Learning Outcomes: A Case Study of Secondary  
Schools in Ethiopia**

**Begna Ordofa Kajela**

**June, 2024**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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**School Accountability for Learning Outcomes: A Case Study of Secondary  
Schools in Ethiopia**

A doctoral thesis submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum Studies

By

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Under the Supervision of  
Professor Amare Asgedom

June, 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Begna Ardefa entitled  
School Accountability for Learning Outcomes: A  
case study of secondary schools in Ethiopia

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**  
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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this doctoral thesis entitled: *School Accountability for Learning Outcomes: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in Ethiopia* is entirely my research output towards the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum Studies. This thesis work has not been previously submitted by the researcher in either in part or whole in any other university, or elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.

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## CERTIFICATION

I, hereby, certify that the thesis, *School Accountability for Learning Outcomes: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in Ethiopia* -- submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction by Begna Ordofa for the award of the degree of DOCTOR of PHILOSOPHY in Curriculum Studies -- is carried out under my professional guidance and supervision. The entire thesis or a part of it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in other higher education institutions.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

DFIM	Delegation, Finance, Information, and Motivation
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EHEECE	Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination
ERIC	Education Resources Information Center
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
GEQIP	General Education Quality Improvement Program
LOs	Learning outcomes
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEAEA	National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency
NLA	National Learning Assessment
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
REB	Regional Education Biro
RISE	Research on Improving Systems of Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDR	World Development Report
WEO	Woreda Education Office

## Abstract

*The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to develop an understanding of school accountability for learning outcomes in Ethiopian secondary schools. Data were collected from 63 key school stakeholders, including teachers, directors, education experts, parents, and students through interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, document analysis and observations were used as data gathering strategies. Four schools, two high-performing, and another two low-performing, were chosen for this purpose. Lant Pritchett's theoretical framework was used to guide the research. The findings of the study revealed that the four design elements of accountability (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) were coherent with learning outcomes in the high-performing secondary schools. In contrast, academic activity is overlooked while loose cooperation among school actors to improve learning, and numerous extracurricular activities were witnessed in the low-performing secondary schools. Tight finance is common in all schools but absence of attention to supporting learning is the feature of the low performing schools. High-performing schools focused on process and learning outcome data. Nothing will happen to agents in low-performing schools for the low academic achievement, whereas they can be held accountable in the high performing school. Parents in the low performing schools are unaware of the importance of holding the school accountable for their children's performance than in high-performing schools. Hence, the low-performing schools focus on schooling, while the high-performing schools are coherent for learning outcomes. Implications of the study include ensuring appropriate school systems that are coherent with learning outcomes and supporting front-line providers. In addition, further research on this topic is suggested in the Ethiopian education system as a whole.*

**Key terms:** *accountability relationship; learning outcomes; delegation; finance; information; motivation; coherence*

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to identify the overall purpose and context of the study. It briefly introduces the topic of this study. It provides background information on the topic under investigation. The problem, the research questions guiding the investigation and the objectives of the study are then discussed in more detail. This section also explains the relevance of the study, its limitations, definitions of important terminology, and the structure of the thesis.

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Ensuring learning at school is a struggle for the souls of nations and/or children in today's world, as highlighted by several studies (Hanushek, 2019; Mishra & Mehta, 2017; Nolan, 1997). The quality of learning is closely linked to a nation's economic prosperity (Hanushek, 2019). Learning empowers children to acquire essential knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for this fast-paced and uncertain future, which researchers call learning outcomes (Schleicher, 2018; Pritz, 2010; Bloom 1977). Parents today send their children to school to equip them with the skills they need to face the challenges of the future. This is because schools provide educational opportunities that can help students tackle societal challenges that may arise, prepare them for jobs that have not yet been created, and teach them to use technologies that have not yet been developed (Berger & Frey, 2015; Tasquier, Knain, & Jornet, 2022; Fagerberg & Hutschenreiter, 2020). As a result, states, governments, parents, and other stakeholders have invested resources into ensuring learning at school.

However, learning is facing a crisis in many countries worldwide, as reported by UNESCO (2014) and the World Bank (2017). Students in various nations are leaving schools without obtaining basic skills necessary for their lives. Millions of students in low and middle-income countries are not learning despite spending time in school. Additionally, comparative studies on international learning assessments have revealed that skills in many middle-income countries are lower than their aspirations (The World Development Report (WDR), 2018). Although spending on education and access has improved in developing countries, the level of learning remains low (Mbiti, 2016).

The issue of poor learning outcomes is more severe in developing countries in Africa and some parts of Asia. According to Mbiti (2016), although there has been a significant increase in education spending and enrollment of students in developing countries, the level of learning achieved remains low. The World Development Report (WDR) (2018) further revealed that learning difficulties are widespread in Africa, with 75 percent of third-grade students in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania struggling to comprehend Basic English sentences. Similarly, UNESCO (2014) reported that approximately 175 million young people in impoverished countries, such as South and West Asia, cannot read a sentence in its entirety. These findings show that the learning crisis is a prevalent problem affecting the education systems of many countries worldwide.

In the same line, various scraps of evidence suggest that the same is true of the Ethiopian education system. Various local studies, such as the National Learning Assessment (NLA), the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) reports, regional exam results, the results of the classroom assessment and interviews with teachers and parents show that student learning in Ethiopia is also in crisis. Accordingly, it is noted that the overall achievement score or the national mean score of the subjects for all grades was less than 50%. For example, the average grade 10 score for all subjects was 36%; and for Grade 12: 47.8%. In the 10th grade only 13.8% achieved 50% and above; and in grade 12: 34.9% (Woldetsadik, 2013). According to the 2018 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) results, only 6.2% of Ethiopian children in grades 2 and 3 achieved the intended reading benchmark across all languages. This outcome has further declined in the 2021 EGRA performance results. Additionally, only 32.4% of Ethiopian students in grades 2 and 3 demonstrated functional reading literacy, according to a study by Tiruneh, Hoddinott, Rolleston, Sabates & Woldhanna (2021). Moreover, the mean score of various subjects in grades 4 and 8 in five consecutive National Learning Assessments (NLAs) from 2000-2015 was less than the minimum standard set by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which is 50%. In the Oromia region, the score is only 43.67%. (Tiruneh, Hoddinott, Rolleston, Sabates & Woldhanna, 2021; NEAEA, 2016). According to the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap Report, a large number of high school students lack the expected knowledge, attitudes, and skills. This results in them being ill-equipped for the workforce after completing secondary education. Additionally, the 2021-2022 Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE) revealed that only 3.3 percent of examinees achieved a score of 50% or above, which came as a shock to many stakeholders (Fana News, 2023).

This evidence shows that learning outcome in Ethiopian schools, including the Oromia region, is of concern. Therefore, many schools are not producing citizens for this dynamic world. This is making children to lead precarious lives after school. In general, this can lead the nation of Ethiopia, directly or indirectly, into a social, political and economic crisis.

To understand the problem being investigated, it's important to clarify how the learning outcome is conceptualized in this study. It's evident from the definitions provided by various authors that learning outcomes are primarily broad statements of students' accomplishments. They specifically outline what a learner is expected to know, comprehend, and be able to perform. Learning outcomes encompass a wide variety of student characteristics and abilities. They are anticipated at the conclusion of a learning activity as a gauge of how students' learning experiences have aided their personal growth over a specific period of learning. The learning outcomes are the result of testing the academic achievement of students. These outcomes act as performance indicators to monitor the academic progress of both schools and students. In this study, learning outcomes are defined as the academic performance or achievement of students based on the results of national tests (Dobbins, Brooks, Scott, Rawlinson, and Norman, 2016; Pritz, 2015; Adams, 2006; Bloom, 1977; Bingham, 1999).

According to Dobbins, Brooks, Scott, Rawlinson, and Norman (2016), understanding learning outcomes by agents is very important for better academic practice. Learning outcomes urge agents to implement focused learning activities. Learning outcomes may be compared more easily across national schools and benchmarked against national and international norms (Pritz, 2015). Similarly, one of the purposes of learning outcomes is to ensure accountability in educational institutions including schools (Brooks, Dobbins, Scott, Rawlinson, and Norman, 2014). Pritz (2010) indicated that learning outcomes are considered either as an educational, instructional, and curricular tool or an accountability tool. Hence, it is noted that learning outcomes are used to measure students' performance, compare schools against a given standard, and assure accountability in schools.

It is a global practice that schools are accountable for ensuring that their students achieve academic success (Rosenblatt and Wubbels, 2021). The term "accountability" refers to the duty to act responsibly and be answerable to others for one's actions to maintain efficiency in one's service (Ricci, 2018). According to Kim (2018) and Ebbeler et al. (2016), school accountability

is an educational reform that employs standardized criteria to assess students' learning outcomes scientifically and holds schools accountable for the results. It is a principle that evaluates educational outcomes based on student achievement and aims to use data-based activities to enhance learning outcomes.

According to Pritchett (2015), school accountability is described as the relationship between a principal and agents at the management level with four design elements. These elements are in principle designed or structured by the principal. Principals are understood as actors who can hold others accountable and agents are those individuals or organizations who can be held accountable. He indicated that if these four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) of accountability relationships are coherent with learning outcomes, then quality learning will be assured at school. This definition of school accountability is the basis for this study. To understand accountability very well it is necessary to consider also questions like who is held accountable; accountability to whom; accountability for what; and how to account (or by what means) (Amare, 2007; Smith, Sparkes, & Thurlow, 2001). This study focuses on 'for what to account'; schools are accountable for learning outcomes or students' academic performance.

School accountability in Ethiopia has been addressed in various reports, documents and guidelines, although it has not yet been formally practiced in the system. For example, the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-2030) report recommended establishing an accountability system at different levels of education (Tirussew et al. 2018). Furthermore, the Education Sector Development Programme 6 (ESDP VI) emphasized the need for accountability to improve learning outcomes in the country's education system (MoE, 2021). As a result, this study aims to explore accountability for learning outcomes in selected secondary schools in Ethiopia, focusing on Nekemte town in the Oromia regional state.

According to a document by Oromia Education Bureau (1998), schools, especially in the Oromia region, are accountable for achieving student learning outcomes. To achieve these learning outcomes, schools must collaborate with the Woreda Education Office, parents, teachers, principals, administrative staff, and students. However, more research is needed to understand the coherence of this accountability relationship to learning outcomes. The schools are mainly financed by the state. Besides, the community, NGOs, and individuals (rich people)

are additional sources of funds for the school. Schools are also expected to generate money by themselves. The document also indicates that finance is cited as the main motivator for schools, including teachers and principals who have performed well on regional and national exams in addition to other academic and non-academic criteria. But the practice of motivation also needs empirical research to understand whether it is aligned with learning outcomes or not.

The main role of secondary education in Africa, including Ethiopia, is to prepare students for higher education and to create a workforce for the world of work. Secondary schools should produce learners with the skills and knowledge to support a country's growing demand for a highly skilled and well-educated workforce in a global world. High-quality secondary education is seen as a prerequisite for both the successful integration of young people into the modern economy and the knowledge revolution and for successful competition in the new globalized, knowledge-based economy. Secondary schools prepare students not only for entry into secondary education, but also for the workforce and lifelong learning. As a result, they have attracted the attention of all stakeholders in the education sector, including the government, parents, teachers and even the learners themselves (Joshi & Verspoor, 2013; UNESCO, 2005).

The recent educational reform in Ethiopia has changed the previous structure of secondary education, which lasted nearly three decades, from a two-cycle structure (9 & 10; 11&12) to a one-cycle structure (9th to 12th grade) (Ministry of Education, 2021). Secondary education was further expanded through the establishment of additional schools. In Ethiopia, particularly in the Oromia region, there has been a focus on improving its quality and relevance in view of the increasing demand for secondary education. Besides, in the country, the need for highly skilled workers at different levels who can actively and effectively participate in the global labor market is the driving force behind ensuring effective learning in schools (Tirussew et al. 2018).

By the time this research was being conducted, Ethiopia has eleven regional states, among them the Oromia regional state is one. Its working language is Afan Oromo. Secondary education is financed by the region while its curriculum framework is driven by the Federal Ministry of Education. Hence, it has a similar general feature or structure to other secondary schools found in the rest of the country. This region has significantly improved access to education for the poor too. This region has significantly improved access to education for the

poor too. According to Ministry of Education (2020), the number of secondary schools in Ethiopia in the 2019/20 academic year was 3,688, of which 34.7% are these schools in this region. While the gross enrollment rate (GR) in secondary schools (9th to 12th grade) in the Oromia region (in the same year) was 1,289,027. On the other hand, the proportion of key educational inputs such as qualified teachers, class size and textbooks is better in the secondary school of the region compared to primary education. However, despite all of these and many other efforts by General Education Quality Improvement Program, Regional Education Bureau, Non-Governmental Organizations and universities, still learning is a problem. The learning profile in Oromia region – as of other parts of Ethiopia is too shallow. As a result, many children emerge from their schooling experiences inadequately prepared for their adult roles in their society, politics, and economy (Tirussew et al. 2018).

Nekemte is one of the beautiful cities in the western part of the Oromia regional state. This city is considered as the center of business for many zones and regions like Bunno Bedele, West Wollega, Kellem Wollega, and Horo Guduru wollega Zones, and Benushangul Gumuz regional state. It has many government and non-government schools working actively on schooling. A number of students coming from the surrounding woredas and zones learn at these schools, though learning is being a problem in many of these schools. Hence, this study aims to explore the understandings and experiences of school accountability for learning outcomes in selected secondary schools in Ethiopia, with a focus on Nekemte town of Oromia Regional State.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Numerous efforts have been made on various fronts in a number of education systems around the world to address the learning crisis, such as working on inputs and processes. Research in many countries (including Ethiopia) shows that such approach couldn't minimize the learning crisis (Glewwe, Kremer, & Moulin, 2009; Mbiti, Muralidharan, Romero, Schipper, Manda, & Rajani, 2019; Asadullah, 2005; Dufflo, Dupas and Kremer, 2015; Tirussew et al. 2018). Glewwe and associates (2009) found that the provision of textbooks to school children in Kenya had no impact on test scores. Mbiti and associates (2019) also found no impact on test scores from awarding a large premium subsidy to schools in Tanzania, where a large portion of the subsidy was spent on textbooks. Furthermore, studies in Bangladesh by Asadullah (2005) and in Kenya by Dufflo, Dupas and Kremer (2015) have shown that class size (student-teacher ratio)

has no impact on learning outcomes. In addition, De Ree, Muralidharan, Pradhan, and Rogers (2018) showed that unconditionally doubling teacher salaries in Indonesia had no impact on student learning outcomes (double for nothing).

Many resources have also been invested in Ethiopia, with a focus on inputs and processes in the education sector, but quality issues remain low. The Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap Report shows that for many years, great emphasis has been placed on inputs such as book supply, teacher qualification, plasma education, new curricula, school improvement packages, etc. to improve the quality of education (e.g. at secondary level) , but performance is not up to the required level (Tirussew et al. 2018). In addition, reforms have been made in the teaching-learning process, such as the introduction of active learning methods, normative continuous assessment, action research, etc., but still learning outcome is declining (Tirussew et al. 2018).

The World Development Report (WDR) (2018) noted that inputs and processes matter to achieve learning only when the educational system is characterized by accountability coherence for learning outcomes. Providing sufficient resources for education is crucial, but resource scarcity in the system explains only a small part of the learning crisis. One reason is that inputs often don't get to the front lines. If the inputs are not used effectively and help agents teach to the student's level, it is wasted. Inputs and processes must be coherent to learning. We argue that this is possible by realizing accountability for learning outcomes in the school system. The system or context in which the input and process function matters in order to improve student learning outcomes, particularly the accountability system (Yan, 2019; Mbiti, 2016; Pritchett, 2015).

Nations have increased their use of accountability systems in education to improve students' academic achievement (Rosenblatt and Wubbels, 2021; Parker, 2015) as inputs and processes can only have a major impact in the context of a high accountability system (Yan, 2019; Mbiti, 2016). Accountability is considered as a significant factor that impacts some facets of school culture (Ebbeler et al., 2016; Smith & Benavot, 2019). And this has been espoused by many studies showing that school accountability helps improve learning outcomes (e.g., Yan, 2019; Komba, 2017; Mbiti, 2016). In the same way, the World Development Report (WDR) (2004) noted that the poor system of educational accountability leads to a dysfunctional school. Additionally, Pritchett (2015) stated that public education systems work when there is

appropriate accountability in the system. Moreover, Carnoy and Loeb (2002) pointed out in their study that countries with consistent accountability systems have a clearly positive impact on student performance. Consistent with this, Komba (2017) found that the lack of clear accountability, structure and arrangement in the education system resulted in poor quality. Laseley (2012), Rodriguez (2015) and Mbiti (2016) also found that when accountability in education is organized and focused on improving learning outcomes, the learning crisis is minimized. In the US, for example, accountability is understood as a response to persistent dissatisfaction with the poor academic performance of American students (Rosenblatt and Wubbels, 2021). Therefore, it is argued that the system of accountability in the education sector should be realized in order to achieve a breakthrough in learning outcomes.

However, the school-level accountability relationship has not previously been studied, particularly in the Ethiopian context, because; there is a lack of sufficiently published results on accountability in general and its coherence for learning outcomes in particular in the country. As a result, the coherence of the four design elements with learning outcomes is unclear in the Ethiopian context. Exploring the variations in understandings of accountability among secondary schools was not specifically addressed. Therefore, the goal of this study was to understand the accountability relationships in secondary schools, particularly its coherence with learning outcomes. It attempted to understand school accountability for learning outcomes by exploring the experiences of four secondary schools identified as 'high achievers' and 'low achievers' based on EHEECE results in their natural settings. Pritchett's model of coherence between learning outcomes and design elements of accountability (delegation, finance, information and motivation) was used as a guiding framework in this research to realize this purpose. I believe that this study has revealed more loopholes in the Ethiopian school system that can give clues to the policy makers. In addition, it will spark more research on this topic in the Ethiopian education system as a whole.

Numerous empirical studies on the topic of educational accountability are being carried out worldwide. For example, Xie (2022) used a case study method to examine research titled "The Role of Parents in the School Accountability System: Insights from a Hong Kong Case." This study attempted to describe Hong Kong's experiences related to the school accountability system, particularly the role of parents. The researcher hoped to gain a deeper understanding of

the situations and their meaning for those involved. Similarly, a study by Gershberg, Meade, and Andersson (2009) entitled “Providing Better Educational Services for the Poor: Accountability and Context in the Case of Guatemala's Decentralization” used a qualitative case study. The cases relate to rural elementary schools in Guatemala. They sought to examine how two community-based reform models fit within the accountability framework of the World Bank's 2004 World Development Report. These two studies focused only on the implementation of the accountability process in schools. Similarly, Komba (2017) adapted the accountability framework developed in the 2004 World Development Report to understand the relationship of accountability in the Tanzanian education system. The study used a qualitative research approach informed by historical case study design that solely depends on documents. However, the study did not consider the coherence of the relationship of accountability with learning outcomes.

The current study differs from other studies (e.g., discussed above) in four main ways: First, it attempted to examine school accountability for learning outcomes based on the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) that are important factors to improve students' achievement. Second, the current study used the coherence approach to examine school accountability. Third, the principal-agents relationship of accountability, particularly, a model of coherence between learning outcomes and design elements of accountability (delegation, finance, information and motivation) developed by Pritchett was used as a guiding framework in this research to realize this purpose. Fourth, this study focused on school level accountability called the management (see section 2.5) than teacher accountability.

The motivations that led me to study this subject are fourfold: First, despite many efforts, our students lack competence in national and regional assessments. Second, post-secondary students face many challenges (academic), especially in universities. Third, as a curriculum expert I want to contribute to the improvement of learning outcomes at school. Fourth, as a teacher educator and researcher on the subject, I can teach my student teachers to develop the attitude of accountability. As a result, they can influence the development of similar attitude in their students. That's because; schools are seen as places where students can get many experiences (like this) through the hidden curriculum. Being responsible or accountable for what they do and speak is an important habit for these kids in this era of accountability.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate school accountability for learning outcomes by trying to understand the experiences of four secondary schools in Ethiopia, identified as 'high-performing' and 'low-performing' based on EHEECE results, with a focus on Nekemte town of Oromia Regional State. To realize this goal, the following research questions were used as a basis throughout the study process.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

The overarching research question that the study asks relates to how the design elements of accountability (delegation, finance, information and motivation) in school are coherent for learning outcomes in selected secondary schools in Nekemte town. To answer this overarching research question, the following sub-research questions were raised:

1. How do participants in each school describe about their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes?
2. How do each school's financial resources support learning outcomes?
3. What kind of information is most frequently sought to assess each school's performance?
4. How do participants describe the alignment of the motivational activities with learning outcomes at their respective schools?

### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

#### ***1.4.1. General Objective of the Study***

The general objective of this study was to understand school accountability for learning outcomes.

#### ***1.4.2. Specific Objectives of the Study***

In order to achieve the above general objective, the following specific objectives were pursued:

- Examine the coherence of school delegation with the learning outcomes in the selected secondary schools.
- Assess the coherence of financial resource with learning outcomes in the selected secondary schools.

- Identify the coherence of information produced in schools with learning outcomes in the selected secondary schools.
- Scrutinize the coherence of the motivational activities with the learning outcomes in the selected secondary schools.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The aim of this study was to understand school accountability for learning outcomes. Learning outcome in Ethiopian schools has become worrisome in recent years. Millions of students are leaving schools without acquiring the necessary knowledge, attitude, and skills, making them live precarious lives after school because they live in this competitive and dynamic world. Many attempts have been made to address this issue. However, the problem of learning has not been solved. On the other hand, the issue of school accountability for learning outcomes remained poorly understood in Ethiopia. The relationship of accountability in schools has not been well studied so far. Perhaps the outcome of this study would have a much greater contribution as a knowledge base in the existing literature regarding this topic.

In my opinion, understanding the relationship of school accountability and its coherence to learning outcomes at school may particularly bring to the attention of teachers, school directors, parents, students, and educational experts and authorities at different levels to the necessity of focusing on improving learning outcomes. It also reminds them that they are accountable for learning outcomes. In turn, it may add to their knowledge that the coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) to learning outcomes is important to improve students' academic achievement. I believe that a better understanding pertaining to the specific foci under study would allow school stakeholders to see how to be coherent to learning outcomes. This could contribute to the current pressing issue of learning outcomes in the Ethiopian school system.

Hence, this study sheds light on another approach for improving learning in schools. It creates awareness that promoting accountability for learning outcomes in school is important for improving quality education as it is currently interpreted in terms of learner performance (Browes, 2021). It encourages a new model for ensuring quality education. That means the result

of the study in this research pushes for a new paradigm that can be useful to enhance the quality of education. Besides, the relationship of accountability in school might become stronger. It can help them identify their roles in the relationship. This study also shows the real problems in the Ethiopian schools that hinder improvement of learning outcomes. Additionally, this study may possibly provide good insights and research expertise about multiple case study methods for conducting accountability in school settings.

Moreover, the study can be of paramount importance for practices. Hence, educational actors, including parents, students, teachers, directors, educational authorities, and experts at different administrative levels at large, might be benefited from the outcomes of the study. This study may serve as an alarm to lay solid groundwork for designing evidence-based strategies to put efforts forward to promote academic practices at school. In a similar light, studying the phenomenon of school accountability may be used as an impetus to rethink and formulate courses of action such as awareness creation and training interventions to abolish the problem of learning.

Furthermore, given the centrality of coherence to the success of the school system (Ptitchett, 2015), the significance of this paper lies in the way it brings together theories and concepts about accountability relationships with the real context of schools. Working on accountability in school in general will help develop an attitude of answerability, which is very important during this time. The core responsibilities of curriculum specialists include improving instructional practice and increasing student learning. Therefore, as a curriculum expert and teacher educator, it helps me to play an important role in this case. For example, it is possible to guide teachers in their academic activities to apply this concept and be consistent with learning outcomes. Additionally, promoting school accountability is helpful in creating smooth context or environment for the effective implementation of the curriculum. This made it possible for me, as a curriculum expert or specialist, to work with teachers and administration to come up with a plausible recommendation for improving instruction and curricula.

Also, the outcome of this research can be used as a springboard for policy formulation. Quite possibly, it may help the federal and regional educational organizations (like MOE and REB) as a base to school-level strategies that can assure the coherence of the elements

(delegation, finance, information and motivation) in the relationship of accountability to learning outcomes to solve the learning crisis in the nation.

In summary, this research is assumed to contribute to the existing knowledge and research in educational accountability in the following ways:

- 1) This study is believed to shed light on the practice of accountability in schools. It can indicate how actors in a school can work coherently to learning outcomes.
- 2) It might suggest to the existing body of knowledge a better way of practicing accountability in school that can contribute to the improvement of learning, particularly in the Ethiopian context.
- 3) The findings and data gathered in this research may be useful in guiding educational policy guidelines, teacher education, and curriculum in the Ethiopian context.
- 4) Finally, these findings might encourage discussions among scholars concerning these issues in the Ethiopian school system as well as at the global level.

## **1.6. Delimitation of the Study**

As for this study, I wanted to rely on an exploration of school accountability for learning outcomes. And accountability can take several forms in school, such as teacher accountability, parent accountability, learner accountability, and school leaders/directors accountability, but this study limits itself to the coherence of the four design elements in the relationship of accountability with learning outcomes. There are four types of principal-agent relationships of accountability in the educational system: policy, compact, management, and voice or client power. This study delimits itself to the management level where educational actors such as the woreda education office, the front-line providers at schools (teachers and directors), parents and students are involved. This is because of the limited capacity of the researcher and the critical position of the school in improving learning outcomes. Secondary school is the focus of the study, as the researcher is a teacher educator at one of the universities in the country (Ethiopia), and I have been working closely with secondary schools for many years. Therefore, this study is limited to secondary schools in the Oromia region, particularly the administrative town of Nekemte.

## 1.7. Definition of Terms

**Accountability:** It is a relationship that connects the principal with the agents through the four design elements (Delegation, Finance, Information, & Motivation).

**Delegation:** is about what the principal wants from the agent. It is an officially set goal that must be achieved by a school.

**Finance:** is the resource allocated to agents to perform their task.

**Information:** is about how the principal assesses the agent's performance at school.

**Motivation:** is about how the principal motivates the agent based on their performance.

**School Accountability:** is conceptualized as an accountability relationship at school level that connects the principal (e.g., the Woreda Education Office; parents/students) with the agents (teachers and directors) through the four design elements (Delegation, Finance, Information, & Motivation).

**Accountability Coherence:** Is the alignment of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) to the learning outcomes.

**Learning Outcomes:** are the general statements of students' achievements. They explicitly describe what a learner should know, understand, and be able to do. And, they are expected at the end of a given program, course or lesson. They are results from the testing of student achievement and are performance indicators to be used to monitor achievement.

**Learning crisis:** Learning crisis can be defined as a situation in which a high percentage of children are not learning despite an increase in schooling. Poor learning outcomes, immediate factors such as unprepared students, teachers lacking enthusiasm, inputs failing to reach classrooms, inadequate management and governance, and deeper structural causes characterize the issue (WDR, 2018).

**Understanding:** Participants' views, experiences and the meanings they give to school accountability for learning outcomes.

## **1.8. Organization of the Thesis**

This research document is organized into ten different chapters that include multiple subject matters. Accordingly, chapter one presents the introduction of the thesis, highlighting background, statement of the problem, key research questions that directed the study. The chapter described objectives, significance and delimitation of the study. It also disclosed definition of key terms that assure conceptual clarifications in the study, and finally an overview of the structure of the thesis. Chapter two entirely concerned to a review of relevant literature and empirical research evidences important to the current study. The theoretical framework of the study is also presented. In chapter three, the rationale for the qualitative research approach; the research design; data sources and data collection instruments; case selection and sampling techniques; access and permission; context of the study; my role in the research process; method of data analysis; ethical issues; strategies to ensure the trustworthiness and/or credibility of the study. Chapter four primarily outlines the findings of the study related to case S-A (high-performing private school) while chapter five presents the results of the study linked to case S-B (low-performing public school). Chapter six presents findings from case S-C (high-performing public school). Chapter seven describes findings associated with S-D (low-performing private school). Chapter eight on the other hand depicts the cross-case analysis among the cases. Chapter nine presents the discussion and conclusion part of the paper. Chapter ten describes the implications of the study including the strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, this thesis presented lists of references and pertinent appendices.

The next chapter comprised of the literature review that attempted to entail the general context of the problem under study. The chapter mainly aimed at studying relevant literature and results of previous empirical evidence, which in particular helped me to better comprehend the phenomena of school accountability for learning outcomes.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The purpose of this literature review is to develop an understanding of literature, empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives concerning the specific foci under study. The chapter has provided insight into the context related to the subject under investigation. In addition, it helped refine the research questions and provide possible general directions that the researcher might follow (Hatch, 2002). Accordingly, this part of the study attempted to understand the two grand concepts: learning outcomes and school accountability, and their relationships. Specifically, it included outcome-based education, defining learning outcomes, the importance of learning outcomes, measuring learning outcomes, learning crisis, and the way out from learning crisis under the major topic of learning outcomes. In addition, the conceptualization of accountability, the historical background of accountability in education, the importance of accountability in educational settings, the conception of school accountability, the practice of accountability in school, constraints of accountability in school, empirical studies on accountability in school are presented under the broad topic school accountability. Moreover, school accountability in the Ethiopian context, school accountability and its relationship with learning outcomes, and the theoretical framework of the study are considered in this chapter.

#### **2.1. Learning Outcomes**

Learning outcomes (LOs) are the backbone of the curriculum field and a learner-centered approach in the education system. And, this time, the global education community has switched its discussion of enrollment to learning outcomes. The reason for this shift in focus lies in the learning crisis in many countries around the world (Custer, King, Atinc, Read, and Sethi, 2018). The ultimate goal of this study was to find implications for improving learning outcomes at school. As a result, it is necessary to understand how this concept is used in this study. This part of the paper presents subtopics like outcome-based education, defining learning outcomes, the importance of learning outcomes, measuring learning outcomes, learning crisis, and the way out of this crisis.

### ***2.1.1. Outcome Based Education***

Outcome-based education advocates that schools need to focus on learning outcomes. They must work hard to acquire the competencies (or knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that make learners competent in this dynamic world. Outcome-based education theory bases the education system on goals (outcomes). At the end of the educational activity or experience, each student should have achieved these goals. Due to globalization and rapid changes in technology and the labor market, outcomes-based theory has attracted attention in many countries. The concept of learning outcomes has become a tool to promote international comparability of qualifications and labor mobility (Kinta, 2013).

This approach focuses on the desired result of education expressed in outcomes and attempts to address and assess them about what is invested in education (Killen, 2000). Outcome-based education sets clear standards and efforts are made to ensure students are learning to the highest possible level before leaving school. And schools must equip learners with these necessary skills and qualities (Killen, 2000). It is noted that avoiding unnecessary expenditure on educational resources and equipping graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes directly related to the world of work. As such, stakeholders at all levels are expected to work to make student achievement through these standards a reality. This theory can serve as a foundation for holding schools accountable for learning outcomes.

### ***2.1.2. Defining Learning Outcomes***

Education should play its role in preparing students for this dynamic and challenging time. And it is a global practice that schools are primarily accountable for that (Rosenblatt and Wubbels, 2021). Focusing on learning outcomes draws attention in the school to the explicit and detailed descriptions of what students are learning and what they have to learn (Allais, 2012), which is crucial to improving student academic achievement. This sub-topic focuses on defining learning outcomes.

Different authors described learning outcomes in different ways. Table 1 attempted to summarize some of these definitions from the literature given by the following authors.

**Table 1: Selected definitions of learning outcomes**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Definition of learning outcome</b>
Dobbins, Brooks, Scott, Rawlinson, and Norman (2016), Prøitz,(2015)	A term that provides general statements about student performance after completing a specific learning period.  A result from testing student performance to be used for comparisons and benchmarking. It is considered a source of information to identify ineffective learners and schools, take action and work to continuously improve learning outcomes.
Adams (2006)	It is performance marker for tracking progress.
Gosling and Moon, 2001; Donnelly and Fitzmaurice, 2005; Moon, 2002	It is an explanation of what a learner should know, comprehend, and/or be able to demonstrate at the conclusion of a learning period.
Watson 2002	In the sense of “something the learners can now do that they could not do before,” learning outcomes referred to as changes in people as a result of a learning experience.
Jenkins and Unwin, 2001	Learning outcomes are statements about what the student is likely to be able to achieve as a result of a learning activity.
Bingham, 1999	It is an explicit description of what a learner should know, understand and do as a result of learning.
Bloom 1977	It is a term that involves a broad range of cognitive and affective characteristics and abilities of students that are a measure of how their learning experiences have supported their development as individuals.

Agreeably, we can see that (Table 1) the various definitions of learning outcomes do not differ significantly from each other. From the various definitions, it is clear that learning outcomes are first and foremost general statements of students' achievements. They explicitly describe what a learner should know, understand, and be able to do. They represent a wide range of student attributes and abilities. Secondly, learning outcomes are expected at the end of a learning activity or period of learning as a measure of how students' learning experiences have supported their development as individuals. They are results from the testing of student achievement and are performance indicators to be used to monitor achievement.

In addition, Pritz (2010) classified learning outcome definitions into two broad categories based on shared characteristics: established definitions and alternative definitions. The established meanings pertain to definitions that essentially describe the word learning outcome as result-oriented, full-ended, and measurable. These notions are often historically founded in or share similarities with basic ideas from behaviorism, the objectives movement, curriculum planning, or mastery learning. Accordingly, a learning outcome is a written statement of an intended and/or desired outcome to be manifested through student performance. This cluster's fundamental characteristics are the creation of learning outcomes and the provision of criteria for measuring (formative and summative) attainment of predetermined learning. The alternate definitions of the phrase "learning outcome" are sometimes the result of a critique of established definitions. The authors make an effort to describe and justify their alternative definitions, which are based on more open-ended learning views such as cognitive, constructivist, and sociocultural theory. One fundamental belief shared by these authors is that all learning cannot be reduced to written, pre-specified declarations of learning outcomes. Another issue is that it is impossible to cover all learning with pre-specified learning outcomes, making measuring all learning impractical. Finally, Pritz (2010) concluded that all of the authors' definitions are tied to the concept of purpose. Learning outcomes are considered as either an educational, instructional, and curriculum tool or an accountability tool; other authors perceive learning outcomes as two-dimensional, i.e., serving both functions.

In general, the conceptual definition of learning outcomes in this study is that it is a performance indicator that compares and monitors school's as well as students' academic

performance through various exams (e.g., national). In other words, the learning outcome in this study is defined as student academic performance or achievement based on national test results.

### ***2.1.3. Importance of Learning Outcomes***

Learning outcomes are used to indicate the goals and competencies expected of the learner at the end of a subject, semester or cycle. These are statements that may include skills, understanding, and abilities that we need to develop. They are regarded as performance indicators to be used to monitor achievement (Adamas, 2006). According to Dobbins, Brooks, Scott, Rawlinson, and Norman (2016), understanding learning outcomes by agents is very important for better academic practice. Learning outcomes urge agents to implement focused learning activities. Learning outcomes are stated to make qualifications more simply described by offering generic statements of students' achievements upon completion of a specific learning activity or program. Learning outcomes are supposed to make certifications easier to articulate. As a result, they may be compared more easily across national schools and benchmarked against national and international norms. According to Pritz (2015), learning outcomes are a significant notion in a changing education policy landscape, improving features such as benchmarking and competition. As a result, they are easier to compare among institutions against a given norm. The expectation to express learning outcomes from the learner's perspective is said to reinforce the shift in educational institutions toward a focus on learning. In support of this, Adam (2004), Ewell (2005), and Shepard (2000) demonstrated that learning outcomes have been presented as a fundamental component of a paradigm shift in education, defined as a shift in emphasis from teaching to student learning.

According to Allais (2012), the concept of learning outcomes appears to be increasingly dominating international education policy. Many countries around the world are emphasizing the importance of learning outcomes in their education and qualification systems. Learning outcomes help to decide what to achieve in order to compare qualifications across countries, improve prior learning recognition, and improve educational quality. They also give employers more information about what qualified learners are capable of doing. Because learning outcomes can convey the essence of what is taught across various learning programs, However, learning outcomes cannot play the roles that are claimed if they are not well understood and implemented.

As a result, knowing and focusing on learning outcomes is critical in guiding school agents to match their activities to academic aims and to actualize student learning.

It is also indicated that one of the purposes of learning outcomes is to ensure tick-box accountability (Brooks, Dobbins, Scott, Rawlinson, & Norman, 2014). The global progress of education towards the end of the twentieth century has been described as exceptional, owing to an increase in the use of assessments for measuring outcomes in national educational systems (Kellaghan & Greeny, 2001). The impact of such international assessments, particularly the PISA studies, has been extensively researched, and they have been reported to be effective in influencing national policies in a number of countries (Hopmann, 2008). They provide an evidentiary base for educational policy players, allowing them to either support or negate policy (Pettersson, 2008). Similarly, the contemporary development of high-stakes testing of learning outcomes is viewed as a means of fostering accountability in the educational system. Hence, another side of the discussion on learning outcomes relates to how the concept is linked to issues of accountability in education (Pritz, 2015).

Hence, learning outcomes represent what is explicitly assessed and accredited to the student, and they provide a starting point for a sustainable model for curriculum design in educational institutions that shifts the focus from input and process to the celebration of student learning (Allan 1996). Besides, learning outcomes are considered either a tool for educational, instructional, and curriculum purposes or a tool for accountability reasons. But, learning outcomes are also regarded as two-dimensional, encompassing both the aforementioned purposes. And these two goals are not mutually exclusive because they complement one another (Pritz, 2010).

#### ***2.1.4. Measuring Learning Outcomes***

Measuring learning is not an easy activity. It requires careful and organized action that is carried out at different levels with different tools. The measurement of learning is not limited to international tests (PISA) or high-stakes tests. It can cover a range of assessments, including formative classroom activities. You need to identify learning gaps in the classroom. And promoting classroom-based assessments is one of many important approaches to alleviating such problems. In addition, national assessments, national exams, and international assessments are

also used to indicate learning. Using a range of tools to measure learning examines the likelihood of meeting different needs, from classroom activities to systems management. For example, they can be simple oral questions from the teacher, regional assessments, or national assessments, and when they are complementary, data can be generated to show the practical gaps related to student learning. Hence, learning outcomes are used as indicators of student learning and their careful measurement is important for improving them in schools. This study took the national exam result at the end of grade 12.

### ***2.1.5. Learning Crisis***

Education should equip students with the essential skills for this century. However, it turns out that many education systems in many countries have not been able to fulfill this mission. Many reasons may give rise to this, but the main problem is that education systems in a number of countries place an emphasis on enrollment and attainment rather than quality (or learning) (Mibiti, 2016; Tirussew et al. 2018).

After several years in school, children in a number of educational systems develop the necessary skills very small. Many of them lack basic literacy skills. An assessment carried out at the end of the 2nd grade (e.g. in Ghana and Malawi) showed that more than 4/5 (four fifths) of the students could not read a single word like “the” or “cat”. A test result from 2011 also found that only half of third grade students in Nicaragua could correctly solve  $5 + 6$ . In the same line, only 3/5th (three-fifths) of students at grade 3 (e.g., in urban Pakistan – in 2015) could correctly perform a simple subtraction like  $54 - 25$ . Also, in 2007, fewer than half of sixth graders in East and South Africa may be able to do more than simply decipher words. And less than 40% of these students got pass basic math. In 2016, 50% of students in rural India could fluently read a text at the level of the grade 2 curriculum at grade 5 (WDR, 2018).

The same applies to the Ethiopian education system. According to Iyer, Rolleston, Rose, and Woldhanna (2020), while the school enrollment rate has increased alarmingly in Ethiopia, the education system is known for its learning crises, in which many children go through schools with a lack of basic numeracy and reading skills. For example, some students in grades 10 and 12 achieved less than 50% in all subjects (Woldetsadik, 2013). In addition, the National Learning Assessment (NLA) and Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) reports, regional

exam results, and classroom assessment results indicate that learning outcomes are very low in Ethiopia. Likewise, in most regions, more than 25% of 2nd grade students could not read a word, and only 32.4% of them demonstrated basic reading literacy (READ, 2014; Tiruneh, Hodidinott, Rolleston, Sabates & Woldehanna, 2021; NEAEA, 2016). Hence, all of this evidence shows that the learning crisis is widespread in many countries around the world, including Ethiopia.

Hence, learning crisis is a situation in which a high percentage of children are not learning despite an increase in schooling. It is resulting in skill, attitude and knowledge crisis and making children facing a precarious life in this dynamic era. The main question, however, is what should be done to get out of this crisis.

#### ***2.1.6. The Way Out from Learning Crisis***

Despite many efforts to improve inputs and processes, it has been shown that the learning crisis is still an issue in many countries around the world. A paradigm shift is likely taking place today, with a change in emphasis from teaching to student learning (Adam 2004; Shepard 2000; Ewell 2005). Historically, when it comes to quality, the primary focus has been on input variables such as student numbers and fiscal measures. However, for many years, traditional input-oriented curricula have been criticized for being overly focused on the teacher rather than the learner (Kellaghan and Greaney 2001). More accuracy in curriculum design is required to gain the student's attention. This necessitates the expression of anticipated learning after the completion of courses or modules through learning outcomes (Ewell, 2005). This in turn affects actors in educational institutions at every level that are working on improving learning outcomes.

Many have argued that inputs and processes can be effective in the context of the accountability system (Yan, 2019; Kombo, 2017; Pritchett, 2015; WDR, 2004). There are many explanations for how the accountability system creates such a positive context for improving learning achievement. For example, Mbiti (2016) has shown that accountability contributes to the efficient use of resources in schools. Since accountability improves the use of information in education, it makes sense to improve learning by identifying gaps immediately. In this context, Custer et al. (2018) suggest that accountability encourages the provision of feedback for both the

institution and society. It significantly increases parental involvement in improving school learning. That's because information on learning can help parents become more aware of the quality of education. However, the lack of such information prevents them from getting better services from schools and governments and from responding immediately to the problem. For this reason, parents and other actors recognize the poor learning outcomes lately after the learners are confronted with poor labor market prospects (WDR, 2018). This implies that learning, with the right tools, needs to be measured at the right time and reported to the concerned individuals, including parents, so that they can identify who is learning and who is not. Based on this data, any remedial action can be taken to improve the gap. Therefore, through the transparent use of data in schools, an accountability system can enable parents and other stakeholders to be directly involved in improving their children's learning.

Similarly, WDR (2004) pointed out that accountability is a mechanism for thinking globally about schooling and how we measure the effectiveness of our schools in promoting learning. It also creates a condition for how we can provide the necessary support to ensure that our schools become even more effective. It helps the actors understand their roles and responsibilities concretely and precisely. In addition, it is used to reduce bad behavior and encourage good behavior in school. In other words, accountability can lead them to understand their relative strengths and weaknesses on a regular basis. In addition, actors in the accountability system would be required to pay more attention to improving their knowledge, skills, and competences (Bhalla, Negi, & Panda, 1998). Likewise, accountability in the school ensures the professionalism of teachers. According to Johnson (2015), teachers' 'sense of accountability for students' learning needs is an indicator of their increased professionalism (Wise, in Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005). These imply that without an accountability system, there is little or no information about the agents' responsibilities and the assessment of their fulfillment. Actors do not have the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities, and there is no motivation to fulfill them. Therefore, accountability improves educational performance and, consequently, helps improve learning outcomes. But it should be noted that unless the coherence of the accountability relationships in school is realized, it is difficult to assure better outcomes. In other words, creating a positive context is important for improving learning outcomes.

In the same vein, the WDR (2018) showed that the problem of the learning crisis persists because it is invisible. One possible explanation for this invisibility of the learning crisis is that the information used in the education system draws little or no attention to who is learning and who is not. As a result, there are no remedies to improve the crisis. Therefore, information that is coherent with learning outcomes should be collected and disseminated across the education system using a variety of assessment tools. According to WDR (2018), however, there is a lack of standardized national rating systems in low-income countries to measure learning and give policymakers feedback on improvement. In addition, the education system reports more on enrollment than on learning. In other words, it is more common to focus on inputs (e.g., number of schools, number of teachers, teacher salaries, and school grants) than actual learning.

Finally, it is argued that the learning crisis can be minimized if the system of accountability is coherent for learning outcomes. That means the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) in the relationship of accountability and their coherence with the learning outcomes can significantly improve learning outcomes. In other words, funding coherent with learning can help improve learning outcomes. Information also has the power to identify learning problems in school and seek immediate solutions. Additionally, when agents are motivated based on their work results (learning outcomes), they go a long way towards improving learning outcomes. In addition, a delegation focused on learning outcomes is a stepping stone to improving learning.

## **2.2. School Accountability**

This sub-topic covers the second grand theme that is important to understand the topic under investigation. It describes ideas like the conceptualization of accountability, the historical background of accountability in education, the importance of accountability in educational settings, the conception of school accountability, the practice of accountability in school, and empirical studies on accountability in school.

### **2.2.1. Conceptualization of Accountability**

Having the right conception of a given issue is the right beginning for an action. It helps to have a clear picture of the point under consideration. This part of the chapter helps us to have a better understanding of the general concept of accountability. To this end, the meaning of

accountability, types of accountability, questions that lead to understand accountability and related concepts like responsibility, transparency, and answerability are discussed.

**Meaning of Accountability:** Different authors provided the meaning of accountability in various ways. Some of these meanings are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Selected Meanings of Accountability**

Authors	Definitions of accountability
Ricci 2018	It is the duty to act responsibly and to be accountable to others for one's actions in order to maintain effective and logical connections between planning, decision, action and verification.
Romzek & Dubnick, 2018	Accountability as a relationship is about an individual or agency being responsible for the performance expected by a significant “other.”
UNESCO, 2017	Accountability is a process meant to assist people or organizations in fulfilling their obligations and accomplishing their objectives.
Han & Demircioglu, 2016	It is being obliged or expected to provide justification for one's actions or decisions.
Brundrett & Rhodes, 2011	The term ‘ <i>accountability</i> ’ defines a relationship in which one party – sometimes interpreted as an individual, sometimes as an institution – has an obligation to account for their performance or actions to another.
Black, 2008	Accountability relationships are means by which actors seek to ensure that their requirements for an organization are met.
Levitt et al. 2008	Accountability is an ethical concept that refers to appropriate behavior and is concerned with the responsibility of individuals and organizations for their actions towards other individuals and organizations.
Boven, 2005	It can be described as a social relationship in which an actor feels obliged to explain and justify his behavior to an important person.
Leithwood, 2005	The term “account” means to give a report on, provide a justifying analysis or explanation, make a statement of explanation of one’s conduct, to offer a statement or exposition of reasons, causes, grounds, or

motives, or simply to provide a statement of facts or events.

The World Development Report /WDR, 2004	Describes accountability as a relationship between actors (such as politicians, providers and citizens) with five characteristics: delegation, financial, performance, information and enforceability.
Schedler, 1999	Defines accountability as: “A is accountable to B if A is obliged to inform B of A's actions and decisions (past or future), to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the event of any wrongdoing.”

Sockett,1980                      Accountability is the obligation to deliver an account of what is done.

From Table 2 it is understood that accountability is a relationship between actors that are characterized by an obligation and responsibility to justify performance, one for a significant other. And, it is a means of helping people or institutions meet their goals. According to Ricci (2018), the concept is especially well-known in Western societies. It is theoretically derived from political science studies and ought to be regarded as a crucial tenet of democratic systems. UNESCO (2017) noted that actors have an obligation, based on legal, political, social, or moral justification, to provide an account of how they meet clearly defined responsibilities. The World Development Report (WDR) (2004) also describes accountability as a relationship among actors in terms of a typical employment relationship. For instance, the person is given a set of tasks termed as *delegation*. Then, the person will be paid a wage that is known as *finance*. Next, the employee accomplishes the task, which is called *performance*. After that, the contribution of the employee will be assessed, which is considered as *information*. Finally, based on the information, he acts to reinforce good or discourage bad performance, which is called *enforceability*. Similarly, Pritchett noted that to understand accountability in school, people can view it as a sequence of activities exchanged between a principal and agents. These include activities related to: delegating tasks; assigning finance or resources for the task; verifying the accomplishment of those tasks; and maintaining motivational activities (rewarding or sanctioning) for the performance (Pritchett, 2015).

To sum up, the definition of accountability is accompanied by some common ideas like urging meeting responsibilities, being checked out by an external body, the ethical concept of striving for proper behavior, the emphasis on outcomes, and accountability as a relationship. In the present study accountability is operationalized as a relationship that connects the principal

with the agents through the four design elements (Delegation, Finance, Information, & Motivation) – (see the theoretical framework section of this study). Another way of understanding accountability is dealing with types of accountability.

**Types of Accountability:** To understand more about the general concept of accountability, it is essential to deal with the types of accountability identified in the literature. Accordingly, based on the way it is organized, its purpose, and the context in which the system works, this subtopic attempted to describe types of accountability like organizational accountability, political accountability, legal accountability, moral and ethical accountability, professional accountability, vertical/horizontal accountability, process/outcome-based accountability.

*Organizational/Bureaucratic accountability:* organizational accountability is synonymously used with bureaucratic accountability. In this type of accountability system, hierarchical relationships are common. It is exercised by superiors through hierarchical relationships. It is supposed to assure compliance with some explicit rules or standards including public service targets in an organization (Levitt et al 2008).

*Political accountability:* This type of accountability system is exercised by elected and appointed politicians and is mainly about achieving democratic control. The mechanisms are implemented in three dimensions: election of representatives of political parties; ministerial, when accountability is applied indirectly through ministers that are held accountable for every affair in their ministry, and legislation expressed in constitutional or other equivalent documents. Political accountability involves politicians and is aimed at democratic control and it might for instance in the governmental system (Levitt et al 2008).

*Legal accountability:* is a type of accountability system in which courts and quasi-judicial accountability systems play a central role. It is mostly about checking the integrity of organizational and individual behavior. Legal accountability involves courts and its purpose is to control the balance between organizational and individual behavior and works through the legal system (Levitt et al 2008).

*Moral and ethical accountability:* Moral and ethical accountability is based on internal values or intrinsic motivations as well as external code of conduct and works again in the professional organization. But, it is different from professional accountability in that the former

type involves self and internal values (Levitt et al 2008). According to Wagner in Normore (2004), moral accountability is based upon a sense of responsibility. This is to mean that a feeling that one is responsible to one's clients (eg. students and parents), to colleagues, and to oneself. On the other hand, legal accountability is being responsible to one's employer in terms of fulfillment of terms of employment. It is possible to satisfy legal responsibility yet not live up to moral responsibility. For example; a teacher may take his classes according to schedule, but in a disinterested manner fulfilling the requirements of legal accountability, but not of moral accountability (POWAR, 1998).

*Professional accountability:* focuses on conformity to standards and codes of conduct for professional behavior; checked by peers, through their professional institutions. The actors are professionals. For instance, teachers' professional accountability is enabled in part through the establishment of a professional regulatory body, which has the statutory duty "to help improve standards of teaching. Hence, professional accountability is established by norms, ethics, and standards of professions and the main actors are professionals and it works in the context of professionalism (POWAR, 1998).

*Vertical or Horizontal Accountability:* Levitt et al. (2008) also noted that one can better understand accountability by looking at the vertical and horizontal accountability types. Literature indicates that horizontal accountability is becoming more important. Traditionally, vertical relationships were the dominant form of accountability and control, with accountability to the public exercised ultimately through ministerial responsibility to parliament. A chain of top-down hierarchical relationships characterized the organizational pyramid. In recent years, the rise of multiple agencies with regulatory, inspection, audit, and scrutiny responsibilities has encouraged a gradual shift to more horizontal accountability arrangements in the public sector. That move has emphasized the administrative and legal aspects of accountability and weakened political accountability. Horizontal accountability includes greater scope to hold individual civil servants to account. Superiors, as well as subordinates, can be questioned about their decisions, behavior, and performance. The new public management system contributed to the growth of horizontal accountability by developing a more contractual style of working relationship between service commissioners and service providers (Levitt et al. 2008).

*Process-based or outcome-based accountability:* Different authors also showed that accountability can also be categorized as process-based or outcome-based accountability. An actor might be accountable for both processes (how work is accomplished) and outcomes (what happens) in any service delivery institution. Traditionally, accountability in the public sector has focused on processes for which the measurements are relatively clear and objective. However, the dynamic and changing relationship between process and outcomes creates a dilemma, specifically when accountability requirements for process and performance are contradictory (Levitt et al. 2008). The application of modern management techniques to increase accountability initially concentrated on inputs, then on the school process, and then finally began to focus out of depression on the product of schooling, i.e., student achievement (Guthrie, 1978). Currently, the accountability system places less emphasis on compliance (process) and more on results (Anderson, 2005).

Thus, dealing with the types of accountability helps to understand the meaning of accountability. For example, when one says that an agent is accountable to another for his actions, it is not only to say that he or she is expected to deliver an account but also to affirm that he is obliged to do so. In the core case, it can be assumed that such an obligation exists on the basis of a legal contract. On the other hand, when agents are accountable to codes of conduct, they are being professionally accountable. Hence, agents or actors have an obligation, based on organizational, legal, political, social, professional or moral justification, to provide an account of how they meet clearly defined responsibilities. This study focuses mainly on outcome-based type of accountability.

### **Important Questions that Lead to Understand Accountability**

To understand accountability very well, it is necessary to address questions like who is held accountable; to whom to account; for what to account; and what the consequences of goals that are set for them (Amare, 2007; Socket, 2008; Stecher, Kirby, Barney, Pearson, and Chow, 2004; Smith, Sparkes, and Thurlow, 2001; Adams and Kirst, 1998)?

Literature indicates that trust and accountability are considered two faces of the same coin (Ehren, Paterson & Baxter, 2020). Of course, accountability requires trust in individuals or organizations to be accounted for because; it is for whom you trust you hold accountable.

Internationally, trust in teachers is much greater than trust in the education system (e.g. in the USA, UK, China, Germany, and New Zealand). It is evidenced that among 21 countries 17 of them trust more in teachers rather than in the education system (GLOBAL TEACHER STATUS INDEX, 2013). This implies that people want to account for the teacher than the system. This is to mean that the community expects more from the teacher than the system. But, I argue that it is difficult to separate the teacher from the whole (the system). If someone wants improved learning outcomes, then an accountability relationship that is coherent needs to be assured. Such relationships should involve the interaction of every actor in the system with a focused direction. Hence, it is essential to understand *who is held accountable* in education. For me, as a researcher of accountability coherence, all stakeholders forming the system need to be accounted. According to Pritchett (2015) answers for who is held accountable (in education) are front-line providers (teachers and principals), parents, learners, the state (e.g., politicians and policy makers), and organizations (like ministry of education, schools, district education offices, ---).

The second question is related to “*to whom to account?*” To answer this question it is essential to look at the example given by Pritchett (2015) about a relationship of accountability in the education system (see section of this chapter that described the theoretical framework of the study). Pritchett indicated that there is a principal-agent relationship in an education system. Principals are those who make others accountable, while agents are those who are held accountable. Accordingly, organizations are accountable for the state; front line providers are accountable for both organizations and parents; and states are accountable for the citizen (people).

The third question is about “*for what to account?*” According to Adams and Kirst (1998), individuals or bodies can be accountable for raising student proficiency (measured by standard tests) - learning outcomes, or for compliance with rules & regulations, or for following recognized professional practices, or etc. based on the type of the educational accountability. Pritchett (2015) noted that agents might be accountable for access, or schooling, or learning outcomes based on the type of the mission/delegation given to the agents. But, this study tried to understand accountability for learning outcomes. In line with this, Zarei, Bagheri, and Sadighi (2021) noted that learners should share responsibility for their own learning. And, learner accountability focuses on the full participation of students in their learning opportunities

arranged by the school or their teachers. Similarly, parents and principals also need to be accounted for the student's achievement in school. And, undoubtedly, many scholars agree that teachers are accountable for students' learning outcomes (Lewis & Young, 2013).

The last question is associated with the consequences of goals that are set for them (*What are the consequences of goals that are set for them?*). If the agents or institutions that are held accountable did well, rewards might be given to them. The rewards can include access to government funds; greater autonomy in the use of resources and bonuses for educators. But, if they fail to realize their delegation or mission sanctions including deprivation of autonomy or limitation of resources, or school closure can be given to them (Ryan et al. 2017). Similarly, sanctions can include professional sanctions, or loss of certifications and budget reduction (Munoz-Chereau et al. 2022; Adams and Kirst, 1998).

To conclude, through the questions like, *who is held accountable; to whom to account, for what to account, and what are the consequences of goals that are set for them?* It is possible to grasp the concept of accountability and how it works in different contexts, particularly in the education system. Besides, it will help us identify who is going to be accounted for, to whom, for what, and what will happen based on the goals that are set for them. Besides, actors in education are accountable for both process and the results. However, it is understood that accountability for outcomes is getting attention as it is interpreted or associated with quality education. Hence, this study is based on the result-based type of accountability system, arguing that learning outcomes should be the paramount focus of schools.

It is also important to look at terms and concepts related to accountability to clarify the term in more detail. Let's discuss them because they are important for a better understanding of what accountability means.

**Related Concepts to Accountability:** In literature, there are terms and similar concepts that are oftentimes used interchangeably. Sometimes, these terms confuse many of the users of these terms. Levitt et al (2008) showed that accountability is often used synonymously with concepts of responsibility, transparency, liability, answerability, and other ideas associated with the expectations of account-giving. Under this specific part of this writing, let us see some of these and other related concepts to accountability.

*Responsibility:* Responsibility is one of the related concepts which need to be understood in order to elucidate the idea of accountability (Green, 2011). Oftentimes, responsibility and accountability are used interchangeably. But, they do have basic differences. For instance, responsibility is mainly a moral, not a contractual or technical notion. It does not depend on hierarchical structures which are typical of accountability (Ibid). Accountability can be characterized by “something external to an agent” Kemp’s work (as cited in Green, 2011:82). The logic of accountability relies on control, while responsibility is based on trust (Green, 2011; Sugrue & Mertkan, 2017). Besides, responsibility is based on the professional mandate, but accountability is defined by current governance. In addition, the standardized contract is of accountability, while situated judgment is for responsibility. Furthermore, internal evaluation & implicit language are the features of responsibility. However, external auditing & transparent language constitutes accountability. The process of accountability is framed by political goals, while responsibility is by professions (Sugrue & Mertran, 2017). In responsibility, you account to yourself and to your conscience, while in accountability, you account to an external body that acts as a principal.

Responsibility may be individual or collective, and action-oriented or moral. People might be responsible for various tasks, or they can feel morally responsible for promoting certain activities. They are not necessarily answerable or obliged to report results. Many people can be responsible for making something happen, but the final accounting ought to be attributed to one individual (UNESCO, 2017). Therefore, one can learn that the major difference between these two concepts lies in the issue of ‘control’. Responsibility relies on self-control on one’s own task, while accountability or external monitoring and answerability are to a body that needs the result of the agent’s service.

*Transparency:* Literature shows that it is difficult to differentiate accountability from transparency. It is indicated that transparency is important to impose higher standards of accountability (Bovens, Dubnick, Gorur in Smith and Benavot, 2019). On the other hand, accountability ensures transparency of activities (Levitt et al, 2008). According to Green (2011), transparency is used as an important instrument of hierarchical control. Also, transparency is assumed to be a prerequisite of modern democracy. By transparency means urging public service organizations to specify clearly practitioners’ objectives and goals. Transparency provides facts about numbers, and league tables for a public inquiry. It is taken as the democratic way to be

accountable. Transparency is related to the ability of agents to give public justifications. It is to mean being brought account, providing information of what one has done according to the goals that have been set, or else, to legitimate expectations that others may have one. However, it is argued that sometimes transparency fails to realize accountability, by resulting in unintended, unwanted consequences like fabrication. But, it contributes to enhancing trust in public accountability. And, the discourse of transparency leads to the conception of accountability in education. Hence, from this one can understand that transparency is one aspect of accountability where it is one means of assuring accountability.

*Answerability:* Another concept related to accountability is answerability. To be answerable means (Green, 2011) to be able to give an account. Similarly, accountability refers to answering and rendering accounts or explanations (UNESCO, 2017). Accountability should have the quality of answerability (the right to receive relevant information and explanation for actions), and enforceability (the right to impose sanctions if the information or rationale is deemed inappropriate). Amare (2007) indicated that accountability can be realized if a transparent system of answerability is in place. He added that answerability can be performed for example, in the form of report writing that can assure answerability. This implies that answerability is a mechanism or the tool through which accountability is rendered.

In general, responsibility, transparency, and answerability are terms that are highly associated with accountability with little difference. Responsibility is different from accountability in that it is based on morals or trust. On the other hand, transparency is assumed to facilitate accountability while, accountability urges transparency on individuals or institutions. Lastly, answerability is considered a mechanism to be accounted for. These three terms are highly related to each other as well as with the term accountability, and understanding them will help someone to have a clear picture of the accountability system. In general, accountability is all about being transparent for what one is doing, is to be answerable for what one did and also to be responsible for his or her work in general.

### ***2.2.2. Historical Background of Accountability in Education***

Among the causes of the accountability movement in the global context poor service delivery, economic crisis, and competition among nations on limited resources are the common ones (Leithwood 2005; Levitt et al., 2008). In addition, the societal and political conditions have

necessitated the employment of accountability systems among the service providers including the schools. Historically, the accountability movement started in the USA during the sixties in business/commercial/industrial sectors. It was later extended to the educational sector because of the inability of schools to register impressive results. It was increasingly felt that “there are children who cannot read satisfactorily, cannot reason properly, don’t care for learning in general and are pretty well alienated from adult society” (BAWA, 1998: pp27). Therefore, the worry with continuously falling standards of education led to looking for causes as well as remedial actions to reverse this trend (BAWA, 1998). Similarly, Leithwood (2005) stated that in addition to the dissatisfaction with progress in changing the school system, the wider economic, political, and social context of which schools are part calls for educational accountability; for instance, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, have been influenced by New Right and neoliberal ideologies. Similarly, the increasing emphasis on global measures of school effectiveness – i.e. the nation’s performance on international testing regimes such as PISA – has worked to validate these forms of accountability in England (as it has in other contexts such as the USA and Australia).

Accountability is an international issue (Anderson, 2005) and many countries are holding individuals and institutions accountable for their services, for example in the education system. There are many reasons for countries to hold teachers and schools to account for their service delivery. According to Guthrie (1978), citizens’ dissatisfaction with the schools maximized by rapidly rising school costs, and the declining of students’ achievements in test scores were some of these reasons. Furthermore, nations increased their use of accountability systems in education to compete in international tests (Parker, 2015) and to ensure that public schools did at a level necessary for economic supremacy (Anderson, 2005). For instance, in the USA public faith in schools has been repeatedly questioned by many social and educational critics. They raised questions like “ were we competing with Russians?”, just after the launching of the Russian Satellite Sputnik in 1950; “who was responsible for ensuring a quality education for each child?”, just after the sociologist James Coleman and others began to document that public schools were simply not creating equitable opportunities for all young people in the 1960s; “ were schools in the united states educating young people to be competitive in a globalized world?”, just after the 1983 “ the Nation at Risk report was released. Moreover, in 1994, President William J. Clinton signed into Law Goals 2000, a document that provided a mandate for defined academic

standards and specific performance measures; and in 2002, President George W. Bush promoted and supported the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, and most recently, the Obama administration promulgated its own educational legislative fix (the race the top) to reward states endeavoring to establish strong standards and reward excellent teaching.

Moreover, Mbiti (2016) noted that since the developing countries do have inadequate educational resources, they must develop a mechanism that assists them the efficient and effective utilization of these resources as the learning outcome also remains low. Mibit added that with those all difficulties in developing nations, teacher absenteeism was raising, which was an indicator of a low level of accountability in the system. These all necessitate accountability in education.

In addition, WDR (2004) showed that poor service delivery requires institutional changes that can enhance the relationships of accountability among different stakeholders. Oftentimes, the voices of the poor people indicated complaints related to the absence of misbehaving teachers and demands for illegal fees to send their children into school or to influence examination results. And, these also call for an accountability system in education. Levitt et al (2008) revealed that with increasing demands to improve service quality and final outcomes of public services, accountability has become a cornerstone of public sector reforms, where professionals and professions are central, including schools, health care, and social care.

Hence, the history of the evolution of accountability in the education system shows that difficulties facing nations at the global level have forced them to implement accountability in the education sector, as it is used as a tool to improve them. Particularly, the problem in the education systems related to learning outcomes urged them to create this new context - called educational accountability. Hence, UNESCO (2017) noted that accountability is a promise for curing the education systems. But, it should be designed carefully, on what motivates educational actors.

### ***2.2.3. Importance of Accountability in Educational Settings***

According to Evans (2008) and Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) the problems in education can be solved by not only having quality teachers in the classroom but also urging schools accountable for educating students. Similarly, Mbiti (2016) noted that accountability

contributes to the efficient use of resources including time and effort in school. In addition, it is important to shape or reduce bad behavior and to promote good behavior by actors in education. The WDR (2004) pointed out that accountability offers a mechanism for thinking about school education globally; how we measure our schools' effectiveness in promoting learning; and how we can provide the necessary support to make our schools even more effective. It can also provide feedback to both the institution and society; help teachers understand their roles and responsibilities concretely and precisely; regularly understand their relative strengths and weaknesses; Teachers would be forced to pay more attention to improving their knowledge, skills and competences (Bhalla, Negi & Panda, 1998).

Since accountability improves the use of information in education, it makes sense to improve learning by identifying gaps immediately. In addition, through the transparent use of data in schools, accountability provides opportunities for parents and other stakeholders to participate directly in improving their children's learning (Custer et al. 2018). Therefore, accountability is also important in strengthening parental involvement in improving school learning. In addition, accountability in the school ensures the professionalism of teachers. According to Johnson (2015), teachers 'sense of responsibility for their students' learning needs is an indicator of their increasing professionalism (Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005).

In the education setting, accountability is assumed to be important to recover dysfunctional schools (Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005). It promotes the efficient use of information and other existing resources necessary for learning in school (Kombo, 2017). Hence, despite the different taught (even sometimes contradictory taught), it is inevitable that accountability is a very important issue that needs focus in the education system, particularly to improve learning outcomes. It is possible to say that with no accountability system, there is no or lack of information about the responsibilities of agents and how their fulfillment is evaluated. No provision with the necessary resource (e.g., finance). Actors do not have the necessary capacity to meet their responsibilities. And, there is no motivation to fulfill their responsibilities. Hence, accountability improves service delivery in education and consequently contributes to the improvement of learning outcomes.

Finally, the general understanding of accountability system is useful for someone who wishes to influence or change the context in the education system for improving learning outcomes. The next section deals with the conception of school accountability.

#### ***2.2.4. The Conception of School Accountability***

Dealing with how school accountability is conceptualized is important to achieve the objectives of this study. Educational scholars have described school accountability in various ways based on their backgrounds, motives, and the contexts in which they are conducting their studies. Kim (2018) defined school accountability as an educational reform that applies standards that learners must achieve to evaluate their performance in a systematic way. And it assumes schools to be accountable for the outcomes. It is a principle of appreciating and blaming the results, measured by learner achievement. It is a data-based task that aims to enhance learning outcomes. Therefore, it is a measurement of learner performance against set of standards (Ebbeler et al. 2016). Similarly, school accountability is described as the process of sharing assessment results to the community and parents (Harris and Brown, 2013). Ebbeler et al. (2016) defined it as a system that utilizes data to report to external bodies to display some aspect of school achievement. Loh and Hu (2014) described school accountability as collaboration among teachers and reflection on their teaching activity for colleagues. Gustafsson, Ehren, Conyngham, McNamara, Altrichter, and Ohara (2015) showed that school accountability is about realizing quality education for all.

Besides, school accountability is presented as a process of assessing school performance based on learner achievement. Schildkamp et al. (2014) defined it as a mechanism used to evaluate instruction based on learning outcomes. Nathaniel, Pendergast, Segool, Saeki, and Ryan (2016) described that school accountability controls teacher quality and effectiveness based on learner performance. It is a mechanism of controlling schools based on learner performance. It can also be defined as a system that monitors the school's performance profile based on learner performance. Internationally, school accountability is a policy used to measure learner achievement and teacher effectiveness. Based on Ryan, Nathaniel, Pendergast, Saeki, Segool, and Schwing (2017), school accountability is an activity of evaluating schools and instructional quality based on student test scores in nationwide and national education assessments.

It is also described as a principle applied in schools to enhance the performance of actors. School accountability, based on Loh and Hu (2014), is a method of motivating stakeholders in the school based on their performance. Consequences might be school closures and staff restructuring (Nathaniel et al. 2016). Teachers might be sanctioned or rewarded based on the level of their pupils' test scores (Ryan et al. 2017). As a result, schools are judged based on the number of students who are ranked below, at, above, the standard (Ebbeler et al. 2016).

To sum up, the literature review indicated that the type of accountability used in schools is result-based system of accountability where schools or teachers are ranked based on learner performance. Then, school accountability is a system that uses predetermined standards/school delegations to hold actors/agents accountable for learning outcomes. It is a process whereby student performance is reported to external bodies like the ministry of education, parents, and the community. In addition, school accountability is a policy that employs motivational activities (rewards/sanctions) based on learner academic achievement or enhanced learning outcomes. However, since schools are multifarious in nature, we argue that the definition of school accountability should be more than what has been indicated above. In this study school accountability is conceptualized as the relationship at school level that links the principal like the Woreda Education Office, or parents with the agents: teachers and directors, through the four design elements: delegation, finance, information, & motivation.

### ***2.2.5. The Practice of Accountability in School***

In present times, nations are promoting school accountability to improve learning outcomes. In this particular part of the paper we will attempt to scrutinize how schools practice accountability in schools. According to Munoz-Chereau, Gonzlez and Meyers (2020), countries like US, England and Chile are well known in their practices of accountability in education. In the US, schools are accountable to the states (Munoz-Chereau, Gonzlez and Meyers (2020) as well as to parents and community members (Figlio, & Loeb, 2011). They are accountable for ensuring that students perform in assessments. The identification process must be carried out at least every three years and made publicly available. Graduation rate is used as an indicator in identifying high schools. States must identify at least one non-academic indicator. Often, states have included a measure of school climate, teacher engagement, or learning opportunities for both students and teachers as an indicator of school quality because they are linked to student

outcomes such as school achievement and socio-emotional development. Of course, academic factors taken together must count much more than the others. This implies that schools are accountable for students' academic performance based on standardized tests and other non-academic tasks like school improvement. Access to state treasuries/funds is an aspect of the consequence. Positive consequence can lead to increased resources or autonomy in utilizing these resources at the school level; and bonuses for agents in successful schools. But, sanctions might include deprivation of autonomy or restraint of resources (Figlio, & Loeb, 2011; Ryan, Nathaniel, Pendergast, Saeki, Segool, & Schwing, 2017).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the local authority are the bodies to whom schools in England are answerable for their performance on national exams and tests. Ofsted is a non-ministerial department of the British government that reports to Parliament. This implies that hierarchical structures hold schools accountable for a variety of aspects of their performance. In England, schools are accountable to consumers-parents (Acquah, 2013). In addition, schools are accountable for learners' academic performance and other contextual aspects. Therefore, information about learners' academic performance and other key metrics (e.g., absenteeism and expulsions) are used to hold schools accountable. Information is available to parents in different forms. The first is the results of the national tests carried out, which are published by the government; this is also widely reported and commented on in the media. The second source of information is Ofsted School Inspectorate reports. If schools assessed as inadequate do not meet the minimum requirement after receiving an improvement notice, they can be closed. School closure is possible if consumer demand drops significantly (parents leave). A more likely result is a reduction in funding: Since funding is based primarily on learner enrollment, a school's budget will decline as it becomes less popular and the number (of students) declines (Munoz-Chereau, Gonzlez & Meyers, 2020; Acquah, 2013).

In Chile, schools are accountable for student learning (67%) and other academic and non-academic outcomes (33%). Instead of information about individual student grades, the average score for the tested grade group is used for this purpose. School performance is assessed by central government through state-level institutions that are functionally decentralized, autonomous, with their own assets and acting in coordination with the Ministry of Education.

Schools are grouped into the appropriate performance category: *high* if student performance is above expectations, *moderate* if student performance is as expected, medium-Low if student performance is below expectations and poor if student performance is significantly below expectations. This categorization system has widespread consequences as it sets rewards and sanctions associated to intervention, the level of autonomy and support for schools. For example, schools categorized as insufficient are put through external intervention programs (Troncoso, 2019).

To conclude, schools are answerable to bodies such as governments, parents, and various institutions set up for this purpose. They are primarily accountable for students' learning outcomes through the use of assessment results at various levels. In addition, based on these results, schools can be rewarded or sanctioned through autonomy, funds and parental exit by removal of their children. Hence, understanding the backdrop of the schools as well as the nation is required to promote such a system in schools. However, there are disadvantages connected to accountability in school, which is the focus of the next section.

#### ***2.2.6. Constraints of Accountability in Schools***

Acknowledging the limitation of a study before someone else does is a hallmark of scientific research. It can mean that the researcher fully understands the research problem. Besides, it may provide clues for other researchers to conduct additional research on the subject. After reading various literary works on accountability, I've realized that it has both positive and negative aspects in the education system. Therefore, this sub-section attempts to address these confines.

Accordingly, studies indicate that accountability limits the freedom of actors in the school system particularly teacher autonomy (Holye & John, 1995; Webb, 2002). As a result, schools became the place where only the interests of external authorities are realized because; it executes external standards for practice and performance that control the norms of the profession Blomgren (as cited in Helgøy & Homme, 2007). Also, Merki (2011) showed that negative effects like score inflation, teaching-to-the-test, and increased emotional strains are clearly the negative impacts of accountability systems in schools. Besides, the tension between professional judgment and market demand to satisfy the client has made teachers feel obliged and

compromise with student wishes (Lundstrom, 2015). As a result, teachers need to be market-oriented to some extent. Since the funding follows the students, there is the risk that a school may not attract enough students, and few teachers would risk teacher joblessness or the closure of entire programs or schools. Similarly, Webb (2002) noted that the increase in accountability leads to a culture of performativity that has created tensions between professional commitments and beliefs and the imperative to meet performativity requirements. Consequently, this tension affects teachers' subjectivities, causing a lack of creativity, professional integrity, and fun in teaching and learning.

Therefore, the purpose of specifying such restrictions in a particular study, as clearly stated at the beginning, helps to have a complete know-how about the issue under investigation. Hence, this study focuses on the benefits of accountability in education and also recognizes its limitations. Next, the discussion of the empirical studies on accountability in school follows.

### ***2.2.7. Empirical Studies on Accountability in School***

The topic of accountability in school has in recent times received more consideration in the research field. According to MacMacpherson (1995), such studies are useful in struggling for the soul of education. This might raise questions as to why the subject accountability in education has got more attention in recently. Studies on school accountability have been conducted in different contexts with different aims. Some of the issues considered by these researches are described below.

Shields et al. (2021) attempted to investigate how school and teacher accountability influences student performance across private and public schools. The result showed that the link between accountability and learning outcomes varies based on context. However, this research could not clearly indicate the sort of context in which learning outcomes are enhanced and why not in another. I think, this should find an answer through future studies. In addition, the study tried to distinct teacher accountability from that of the school. I contend that all actors need to involve in the accountability relationship.

The other issue considered by a few of other empirical studies was related to the relationship between classroom assessment and accountability. For example, Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2018) noted that with the increasing significance of accountability and assessment-

based instruction in all school systems, the notion of fairness in student assessment at the classroom level was an imperative issue in recent years. The findings of this study showed that fairness in assessment made it encouraging in supporting student performance, suggesting the positive aspect of accountability in improving learning by boosting the fairness of classroom assessment. Similarly, Barnes et al. (2017) studied the opinion of 179 K–12 teachers on assessment purposes from an individual-centered standpoint using an exploratory factor analysis (a quantitative method). The result of the study revealed that teachers prioritize assessment activities for the sake of accountability. This suggests that accountability in school is related to assessment results. They were conducting an assessment to ensure accountability in the school. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the issues that cause teachers to become stressed (Ryan, Embse, Pendergast, Saeki, Segool, and Schwing, 2017). Therefore, more research need to be carried out into how such stress can be reduced.

The other theme focused by some studies was connected to data use at school and accountability. In this age of accountability, data use in schools is crucial. Data is useful to improve transparency, which is among the features of the system of accountability (Bovens, Dubnick, Gorur, in Smith and Benavot, 2019). Studies indicated that data literacy is important for teachers and other actors in the school. But, results of empirical research noted that a number of teachers lack the required skills to effectively utilize data and improve their impact on improving student learning outcomes (Reeves, and Chiang, 2018; Kippers, Poortman, Schildkamp, and Visscher, 2018).

Moreover, studies showed that intervention is crucial to improve data literacy at school. For instance, Kippers, Poortman, Schildkamp, and Visscher (2018) indicated that the data use intervention involving groups of teachers and school leaders improved using data to resolve educational problems at their school. In the same way, Reeves and Chiang (2018) noted that findings from two enactments of the interventions showed changes in data-driven decision-making by pre-service and in-service teachers.

Furthermore, Dyson (2020) made inquiries on teachers to scrutinize how teachers design, implement, and experience inquiry in New Zealand high schools. In inquiry educators question, investigate, reflect, share, and use data about their own practice. It assumes teachers as dynamic, and decision-makers in their own context (Sinnema, Meyer, & Aitken, 2017). The result of the

study revealed that inquiry is an important but controversial concept; teachers feel stressed when performing inquiry; and their tasks of inquiry sometimes slip into accountability.

Besides, Weddle, Lockton, and Datnow (2021), in their study on urban schools under pressure to enhance student achievement, noted that research-practice partnerships (RPPs) are envisioned to include practitioners and researchers as equal partners to find solutions for urgent practice problems. Findings revealed that strong accountability moderated how teachers considered improvement efforts, initiating them to be initially wary of data-centric RPP tasks.

The following studies concentrated on accountability and teacher evaluation, with a focus on improving teacher quality. Paufler, King, and Zhu (2020) employed an exploratory case study to examine the views of actors in a high school during the employment of an alternative assessment system dedicated on teacher support and development in the US. The results of this study showed that administrators and teachers valued the emphasis on relationships or communication. But, the conflicts inherent in the integration of evaluation and support posed difficulties. These included mistrust of policymakers' motivations and teachers' need for more support. This indicates that practitioners' lived experiences might enlighten policymakers about to what extent accountable and how assessment systems can effect teachers' professional development and pupil learning. Bradford & Braaten (2018) explained the experiences of a middle school mathematics and science teacher with new statewide teacher evaluation mechanism in their case study. The findings of this study noted that these mechanisms initially had likely as professional learning opportunities. But, inadequate opportunities to make sense of what counts as better teaching prohibited teachers from learning, which led to teacher demoralization. Evaluation processes challenged teachers' professional identities by modifying notions of professional competence by making no sense to the teachers. The findings of this study notify debates about teacher evaluation and help researchers question the link between accountability and teacher professional development.

Paufler and Sloat (2020) indicated that accountability policies at school district in the United States are directly associated with teacher evaluation. And it reveals the change in the international public dialogue on educational accountability, particularly associated to the quality of teachers. This means that increased emphasis is being placed on teacher accountability to improve teacher quality in schools. These studies, however, reveal that the solution is to give

emphasis not only on teacher accountability, but also on other actors in the school system and their coherence.

Parent involvement in school accountability has been another area of research in the literature. Xie (2022) examined the role of parents in school accountability in the context of Hong Kong. He claimed that parents as a group are important actors who can influence education policy but are not given attention. This study used a qualitative approach to understand the problem. In addition, the theoretical accountability triangle was used to examine the data. Three different patterns of parental attitudes were identified, suggesting a rather loose coalition between parents, with the majority supporting the political intentions and only a small proportion criticizing their consequences and ethics. This implies that emphasis should be placed on the coherence of different stakeholders in school accountability.

To conclude, the empirical studies conducted in various circumstances yielded different outcomes, as previously stated. As a result, I realized that many empirical researches are also required to obtain a deeper understanding of the setting of Ethiopian schools in relation to the subject under study.

### **2.3. School Accountability in the Ethiopian Context**

Ethiopia is a sub-Saharan African country where almost half of the population is made up of children and young people. While the country is successful in access to education, there is a big gap in quality assurance. The status of students' academic achievement is very low and shocking to many stakeholders in the country (Tirussew et al. 2018). For example, on January 27, 2023, government officials officially announced the results of the 2021-2022 Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination through various media (e.g., Fana News, 2023, 32:57). Only 3.3 percent of students who took the same exam received a passing mark (50 percent). More than 95 percent of these secondary school learners scored grades below 50 percent. We believe that educational reform is required in Ethiopian schools. Educational accountability, for example, should be enhanced.

School accountability in Ethiopia is addressed in various reports, documents, and guidelines, though the practice was not touched. For instance, the recent report on the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018–30) recommended establishment of an accountability

system at different levels of education (Tirussew et al. 2018). Besides, the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program 6 (ESDP VI) stressed that accountability for improving learning outcomes is required in the Ethiopian education system (Ministry of Education, 2021). This implies that school accountability for quality education has recently become one of the main focuses in the Ethiopian education system at all levels of education.

The World Bank (2005) noted that Ethiopia's decentralized education system needs to guarantee accountability for results. And organizing and sharing information in the education system is critical to improving accountability for results. The availability of proper information at the school level may assist increase a community's interest in ensuring that its schools receive a fair share of public education resources. But, Pritchett (2015) contends that information only cannot guarantee accountability in school.

Accountability is considered as part of school inspection process in Ethiopia. According to Ministry of Education<sub>1</sub> (2013), inspection provides an objective assessment of how well schools do in teaching and learning, the quality of education provided, and the outcomes achieved by their pupils. According to Ministry of Education<sub>2</sub> (2013), inspection is a valuable instrument for fostering improvement since it establishes the minimal levels of quality that all schools must reach and holds schools accountable for their performance and growth. This implies that inspection is an instrument to promote accountability in Ethiopian school, though its practicality is vague.

The inspection method attempts to realize accountability through the input, process, and output model. The ESDP V strategic plan placed a high priority on strengthening the inspection organizational structure in order to achieve the full capability to inspect schools in accordance with the set standards (Ministry of Education, 2015). Furthermore, important stakeholders from the Woreda to the federal level, including officials in each region, advocated for the use of this data in quality improvement efforts. As a result, inspection is used to generate information on school performance in order to enhance accountability. This suggests that school accountability is considered to be fostered through an inspection procedure that solely collects information about the school's standards in terms of input, process, and outcome. However, according to Belina (2021), the inspection technique devised at MOE was not actually executed as envisioned and lacked connectivity to operational practice affecting the realization of accountability

negatively. Furthermore, school inspection data are not used for either reward or accountability based on learning outcomes.

Hence, the issue of school accountability for learning outcomes in Ethiopian schools is vague. School accountability in the nation is typically associated with the inspection result which is based on input-process-output process method. Therefore, it is difficult to say something about the status of school accountability for learning outcomes in the Ethiopian schools. This implies that more research needs to be conducted to understand school accountability for learning outcomes in Ethiopia using a different approach. The next sub-topic attempted to show how school accountability and learning outcomes are closely related.

#### **2.4. School Accountability and its Relationship to Learning Outcomes**

This part of the chapter dealt with the link school accountability has with learning outcomes. Based on the literature school accountability is associated with different attributes in school. If we look at the trend (year-by-year), the focus of research has shifted from institutional-level accountability (e.g. Ammar, Bifulco, Duncombe, & Wright, 2000; Webster, & Mendro, 1995; Janssens & van Amelsvoort, 2008; Stufflebeam, 1994) to teacher-level accountability in the recent years (e.g., Paufler, King, & Zhu, 2020; Paufler and Sloat, 2020; Han, 2018; Bradford & Braaten, 2018; Ryan et al., 2017). This shows that the studies separated teacher accountability from that of the school as a whole. It seems that research on accountability in education often emphasizes examining the accountability of actors separately, such as the accountability of teachers, learners or parents, and school leaders. They give less focus to the interaction of all actors in the whole school system. I argue that targeted interaction among these actors needs to be encouraged at the school level. That's because; such interaction determines the performance of the overall school system; it shares responsibility with all actors in the system and this might minimize the practice of making teachers merely responsible for learning outcomes; it helps to minimize the pressure on teachers at school; actors will support teachers and school administrators to improve learning outcomes by involving in the accountability system. Therefore, school accountability should be understood as a coherent relationship of accountability for learning outcomes that enhances student learning in school (Ebbeler et al., 2016; Mizikaci, 2006; Pritchett, 2015).

According to Pritchett (2015), a system is a collection of various actors who have their own objectives but are connected by feedback loops. Every actor in the system rests on each other to realize the goal of the whole. This means that a strong link between actors is important to achieve the general outcomes of the system. Similarly, the principle of systems theory indicates that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And that means that the interaction of these elements is crucial, than acting in separation from each other (Mizikaci, 2006). In the same way, education is a system in which various institutions or actors interact with each other to assure better educational outcomes (World Development Report, 2018). If many of these elements have a coherent activity towards the end of their task: learning outcomes will be enhanced. In general, it is tough to isolate the teacher from the overall system. Therefore, trusting both the system and the teacher equally is essential to achieve improved learning outcomes in school.

Accountability in school is also associated with information/data use (Kippers, Poortman, Schildkamp, and Visscher, 2018) and motivational activities in school (Ryan et al., 2017; Munoz-Chereau, Gonz´alez, & Meyers, 2020). But, these are not enough to have an influence on learning outcomes as school system is complex more than these studies tried to show. Other elements should be included in the accountability relationship like a clear delegation and resources focused on learning (Pritchett, 2015). Consequently, I believe that improving learning in schools necessitates an alternative accountability framework coherent with learning outcomes. This might include an accountability relationship with four design elements such as delegation, motivation, information/data and finance. And these elements should be coherent with the learning outcomes. Moreover, collaboration among education stakeholders can be improved through the relationship accountability, and this stakeholder coherence is crucial to be effective in their task and to minimize the anxiety that rises because of the accountability system. Furthermore, it enhances teachers' and other actors' notions of accountability (Weddle et al., 2021; Schnellert, Butler, & Higginson, 2008). Therefore, the relationship of learning outcomes and school accountability can be effective through the aforementioned four design elements. And learning outcome might improve if these elements are coherent to learning at school. The theoretical framework of the study is the next point of discussion.

## **2.5. The Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

This subtopic begins with an overview of the system theory, Pritchett's framework of accountability relationships for basic education system and an outline of related literature that can serve as the study's theoretical underpinning.

### ***2.5.1. System Theory***

The whole is far more than the sum of its parts or elements, according to the systems theory principle (Mizikaci, 2006). This indicates that the interrelationship of the parts is crucial and not in isolation from each other. According to Mele, Pels, and Polese (2010), systems theory is an interdisciplinary theory about any system in society, nature, and many scientific fields that provides a framework for studying phenomena from a holistic perspective. Education has often been viewed as a technical problem requiring a technical solution. However, when you look at education with systems thinking, you see that the different components of the system interact. This leads to greater complexity that requires more than just a simple technical solution (Ndaruhutse, Jones and Riggall, 2019). Education is a system in which many actors or institutions interact with each other to achieve better educational outcomes (World Development Report, 2018). If many of these actors have a coherent practice towards the end of their work: learning outcomes, then educational outcomes will improve.

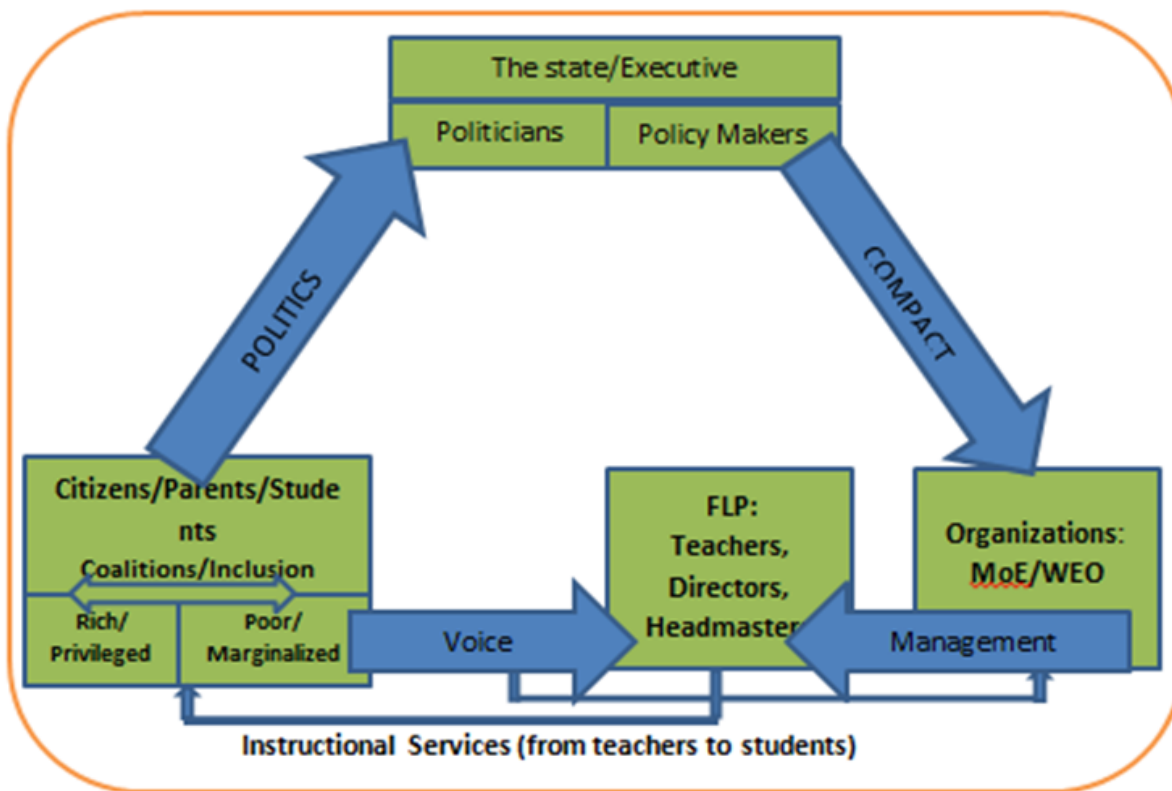
According to Ndaruhutse, Jones and Riggall (2019), systems thinking is important in the education sector because it expands the possibilities for solving problems by expanding thinking and supporting the articulation of problems in new and creative ways. Systems thinking differs from linear thinking or cause-and-effect thinking in that it recognizes more complex interdependencies and how multiple components can affect each other in different ways. It also helps to differentiate between the underlying problem and the symptoms of a deeper problem. Furthermore, systems thinking requires that all components of a system interact coherently to support the functioning of the whole (Abenga, 2009). A system can be defined as a collection of different actors that have their own goals but are interconnected through feedback loops (Pritchett, 2015). The system can consist of both subsystems and units, or parts, that make up the entire interaction (Mizikaci, 2006). For example, the school system can be viewed as a subsystem of an education system. Systems theory provides a perspective for understanding

schools as dynamic and interconnected entities. All actors or elements in a system (e.g., the school system) depend on each other to achieve the goal of the whole. This implies that a strong relationship between elements is crucial to achieving the overall results of the system (Pritchett, 2015).

### ***2.5.2. Pritchett's Framework of Accountability Relationships***

Pritchett (2015) described educational systems as having actors and connections with one another. Pritchett developed a framework for an educational system that shows an accountability relationship. The framework designed encompassed four sets of actors (see the blocks in Figure 1), with precisely defined accountability relationships between the actors. Pritchett described that educational systems can be successful when there is sufficient flow of accountability in the system, which he described it as coherence between, within, and across accountability connections. Accountability relationships happen between principals and agents. The principal designs goals for the agents to act according to the delegation. Pritchett's theoretical framework is shown in Figure 1 as a matrix of four principal-agent connections and four design elements for each relationship. The next paragraphs deliver a quick description of this four by four theoretical framework.

Pritchett (2015) noted that politics, compact, management, and voice/client power are the four principal-agent relationships. Politics is described as the relationship between citizens (considered as the principal) and legislative, the highest executive and fiduciary authorities of the state (as the agent). A compact is a relationship between legislative, fiduciary authorities and the highest executive of the state (as the principal) and educational organizations and authorities (as the agent). Management is an interaction between educational organizations and authorities (as the principal) and front-line providers (FLP), school directors and teachers (as the agents). And voice, or client power, is the interaction between parents or children, the recipients of services (as the principal), and school directors and teachers (the agent). Figure 1 presents the operation of an educational system. The arrows represent actor relationships, which Pritchett refers to as accountability relationships. The feedback loop bears a resemblance to an electric circuit in which accountability flows. If the circuit fails at a given point, the system's performance suffers.



**Figure 1:** The basic accountability triangle showing a system of education with 4 relationships of accountability each with four elements (DFIM) - adopted from Pritchett (2015).

Each of these accountability relationships, according to Pritchett, is organized around four design elements: delegation, funding, information, and motivation. These components are regarded to be critical for improving learning outcomes.

### **Delegation (D)**

Delegation is to mean what the principal needs from the agent. It is a formally established goal that should be realized by a school. Gordon (2022) defines schools as service providers committed to facilitating students' learning. According to the World Development Report (WDR, 2018) the education system in several countries suffers from a misalignment of the main learning goals. The various parts of the education system do not work together; and include many actors with multiple, often contradictory, interests. And this can endanger the learning goals and distract the system from emphasizing on learning. In addition, much more focus is given to schooling than learning in the education system. As a result, explicit and consistent delegation to

learning outcomes is critical in order to create relevant performance information for accountability (Normore, 2004). The rationale for this is that the school's defined mission is critical to realizing the school's vision. Carrying out the school mission necessitates large-scale projects and programs, as well as day-to-day activities as the school community works toward its vision (Gordon, 2022). However, I believe that mega projects should not hinder with schools' ability to focus on learning activities. Students profit little or not at all from an education system that is not focused on learning.

### **Finance (F)**

Finance is the resource that the principal assigns to the agent in order to complete their task. Accountability is about communicating how resources are used to attain goals (Ricci, 2018). However, educational funds are often allotted in ways that are mismatched with effective learning, which agents are given to accomplish (WDR, 2018; Pritchett, 2015). Insufficient finance for education is a challenge for realizing student learning in low-income countries. However, investing large sums of money in the education sector will not result in improved educational outcomes, unless it is coherent to learning (Chung, 2015; Baker, 2012). Baker (2012) indicated that sufficient financial resources with strong accountability for their utilization, is essential to enhance student learning outcomes. But, inadequate finance for education is a challenge for increasing student learning in low-income countries. Despite this, teachers' salaries consume about 80% of the budget, leaving barely any room for other learning-related tasks such as textbooks and in-service training (WDR, 2018).

Hence, finance coherently assigned to learning activities is crucial in schools. And, information linked with the performance of the schools based on students' achievement is another important issue in this study.

### **Information (I)**

Information (I) is about how the principal assesses the performance of agents at school. In this age of accountability, data utilization at school is crucial to increase transparency and improve learning (Smith & Benavot, 2019; Wayman & Jimerson, 2014). One of the purposes of data use in schools could be accountability (Wayman & Jimerson, 2014). Also, student learning outcome improves when decision-making based on data is successfully implemented (Hoogland

et al., 2016). But, effective utilization of data at school needs clear goals (Hoogland et al., 2016) since they offer opportunities for all actors to have a common direction at school (Yin & Buck, 2019). Agents at school use data in their daily activities to enhance learning outcomes (Dyson, 2020). However, absence of access to quality information and coherence around the usage of data are challenging at school (Schildkamp et al., 2014; Dyson, 2020). Also, the contests schools face in usage of data effectively are (e. g. in the UK, Germany, Poland, Lithuania and the Netherlands) absence of access to evidence data, lack awareness in data usage and incoherence around the utilization of data (Schildkamp et al., 2014). All of this shows that information or data literacy has become a problem in the school system.

### **Motivation (M)**

Motivation (M) is to mean the way the principal motivates agents based on their performance. Accountability helps enhance employee motivation (Ricci, 2018). Motivation is an internal force that propels a person to act or advance toward a goal (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, & Price, 2013). Personal preferences, situational incentives and interactions between these two factors can influence motivation (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018). Sanctions and rewards on the basis of educational outcomes are important characteristics of school accountability. However, evidence shows that schools are also accountable for non-academic tasks (Ryan et al., 2017). The rewards might include greater autonomy in the use of resources, access to government funds and bonuses for educators. In contrast, sanctions might include denial of autonomy or restriction of resources (Ryan et al. 2017). Also, if schools do not achieve the minimum standards after getting an improvement notification, they might be closed. A school closure is possible when consumer demand falls significantly. In other words, when parents drop out or exit their children from the schools. A more likely punishment can be a reduction in funding as funding is based primarily on student enrollment. A school's budget might drop if it is less popular since the number of students decreases (Munoz-Chereau et al. 2022). Hence, motivation and accountability are highly related to each other. The coherence of these four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) is essential for improved learning outcomes (Pritchett, 2015). And, this study tried to explore this coherence to learning outcomes at school.

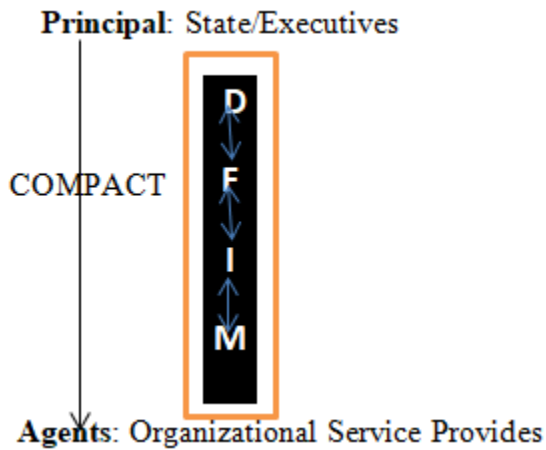
### ***2.5.3. Coherence as an Important Concept to Improve Learning Outcomes***

Coherence is another significant concept in this study to understand the problem under study. According to Pritchett (2015), the coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) with learning outcomes is important for high school performance. WDR (2018) expresses coherence as consensual focus. It's the way every part of a system functions as a whole. According to WDR (2004), coherence is the proper and practical way for educational institutions and systems, including schools, to function. A system is a collection of actors with separate and shared goals that are connected to each other via a feedback loop (Prichet, 2015). In a coherent system, actors interact in a focused manner (WDR, 2004). Similarly, Fullan and Quinn (2015) identified coherence as a key concept for fundamentally guiding how schools and systems function stably and collectively and individually. Therefore, coherence involves a common way of thinking between people involved in a particular system and a shared deep understanding of the nature and purpose of the work. This concept is associated with what occurs in the actions and thoughts of people as a whole and individuals. Robinson et al. (2017) and Reiersen and Becker (2021) showed that effective learning takes place in a coherent school system. This is because it allows school stakeholders to change the agenda from a mile wide and an inch deep to one that is focused, shared and sustainable. It also provides learners with close supervision, which can improve their learning outcomes (Robinson et al., 2017). School coherence promotes student achievement by helping all stakeholders understand their role in improving students' academic performance (Reiersen & Becker, 2021).

### ***2.5.4. Types of Accountability Coherence in the Education Settings***

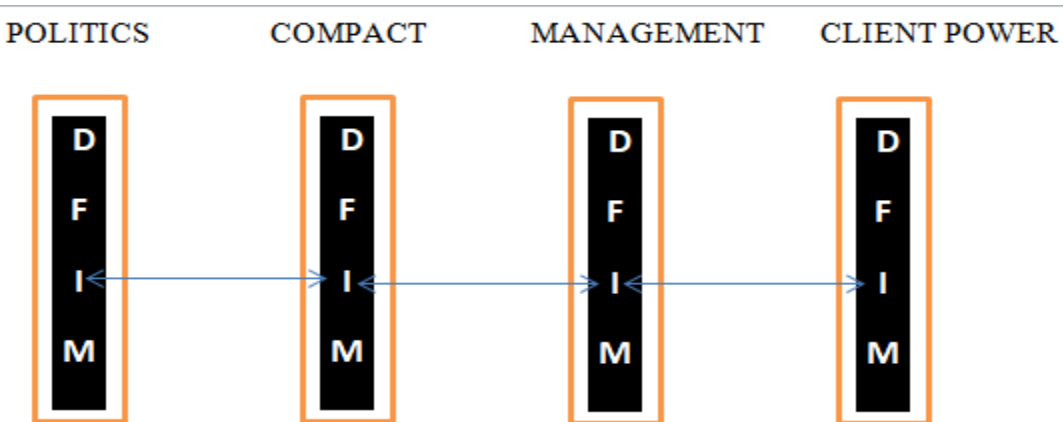
Pritchett (2015) identified three types of accountability coherencies in the education system, which is discussed below. The first type of accountability coherence is called coherence within an accountability relationship. With this type of coherence, each of the four accountability relationships has four design elements that must be coherent with one another. This implies that if delegation is coherent to learning outcome, the rest three will also be coherent to learning outcome. In a compact accountability relationship, for example, the delegation is coherent with the other design elements. Graph1 shows type I accountability coherence in COMPACT.

**Graph1:** Type I accountability coherence



The second type of coherence is linked to a design element across various accountability relationships. With this type of coherence, you select one element (e.g. information) from the four relationships and consider the alignment. In such cases, inconsistencies can arise when an element of the accountability relationship (e.g. D or I) is conceived or acted differently between the accountability relationships. For example, if information (I) about the performance of an agent (e.g. a teacher) is collected and disseminated differently in the four accountability relationships, then there is no coherence. Graph 2 shows the second type of accountability coherence.

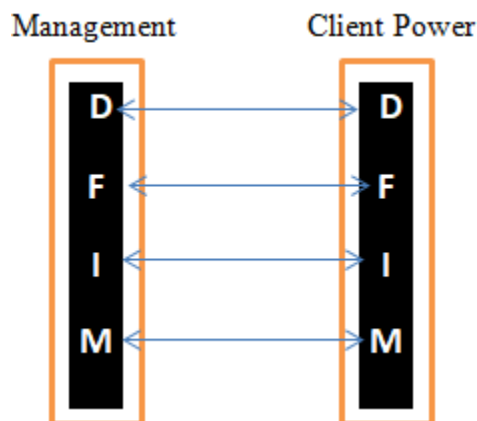
**Graph 2:** Type II accountability coherence



The third type of coherence is identified as the coherence between the four elements found in two different accountability relationships. You will consider all of the design elements

and review their alignment between two accountability relationships (that have different principals but may involve the same agents). And in such a case, even if both relationships are internally coherent, there may be inconsistencies between the two relationships. The best examples of this latter type could be the incoherence between management and client power (common agents: teachers and directors); and between compact and client-power-accountability relationships (common agent: organizational providers - schools). Graph 3 shows type 3, accountability coherence between the management and client power on the basis of the four elements.

**Graph 3:** Type III accountability coherence



Generally, accountability coherence in schools could be realized when the four design elements of an accountability relationship are internally aligned; when misalignment across the four accountability relationships of a design element is minimized; or when reconciliation between two accountability relationships that affect the same agents occurs. Describing all the three kinds of accountability coherence in educational settings is crucial as it allows other researchers or scholars to conduct their own studies based on either of these thoughts in an education system. Therefore, coherence is defined in this study as an alignment of all the design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) to learning outcomes (see Table 3).

Pritchett (2015) revealed that accountability coherence is important to cure the learning crisis in school. Pritchett noted that coherence of accountability means the consistency of the four elements of the accountability relationship to learning outcomes. Incoherence to learning outcomes might happen when delegation is mismatched with improving learning outcomes; or

incompatibility is noticed between what agents are required to do (i.e., improving learning outcomes) and the financial resources; or misalignment observed between what is measured as a piece of information and students' learning; or inconsistency noticed between motivational activities and students' academic achievement.

This study emphasizes on the *Management* accountability relationship (see Table 3). Such a type of relationship occurs at the school level. In the relationship the Woreda Education Office (WEO) is the principal, whereas school directors and teachers are the agents. Teachers and school directors are accountable to Parents/ students and the WEO at school. I conceded that focusing on one part of the framework may not contribute to understanding the entire education system of the country. But this study helped shed light on the practical problems that hindered improving learning outcomes in secondary schools. In addition, it can serve as a basis for further research in this area.

**Table 3:** The coherence of the design elements to learning outcomes in a principal-agent relationship

The 4x4 analytic matrix for system of basic education				
Four design elements of each relationship of accountability	Principal-Agent relationships of accountability			
	<i>Management</i>	Voice/client power	Politics	Compact
Delegation → Learning Outcomes				
Finance → Learning Outcomes				
Information → Learning Outcomes				
Motivation → Learning Outcomes				

Table 3 presents the coherence of the design elements with learning outcomes (LOs). The arrows show that each element is aligned to the learning outcomes. According to Pritchett, one of the primary reasons for disappointing learning outcomes is that education systems have long been structured with an emphasis on enrollment goals rather than learning and lacked coherence

for learning across aspects of the systems. He argues that if the four elements are coherent with learning, the learning outcomes will improve. Hence, the aim of this study was to understand the coherence of the four design elements with learning outcomes at the management or school level.

In conclusion, the results of the literature review and the theoretical framework showed that the issue of accountability in schools has received increased attention among many researchers around the world in recent years. In contrast, the current understanding and practice of accountability in schools in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, are obtuse. Based on this review, more empirical research was suggested in the study field, for instance, on school accountability for learning outcomes in Africa, particularly Ethiopia.

The theoretical framework also indicated that the focus of this study was the management-accountability relationship, which is a decentralized system and mostly accomplished at the school level. I am limited to this level because it is beyond my capacity to study the whole system described in Figure 1. But I believe that it is very important to study this particular relationship of accountability (management) because, if there is a problem in that particular area or point, the entire system will fail. The study involved three types of actors or research participants: the Woreda Education Office (WEO), teachers and directors, and parents/students. In addition, it showed that data about the four design elements—delegation, finance, information, and motivation—should be collected from these participants and other sources of data. Similarly, the theoretical framework indicated that examining the coherence of these four elements with learning outcomes (LOs) is the goal of this study. It also showed that in the Ethiopian context, the management accountability relationship is observed between the Woreda Education Office (the principal) and directors and teachers (the agents). But this is not enough to assure improved learning outcomes in school. Involving parents and learners (as principals) is also important to strengthen accountability. The collaboration of these actors to improve school learning is essential. It is difficult to focus only on teachers and directors, as learning also depends on the actions of others like parents, students, and experts at the WEO. And Pritchett argued that in order to improve learning outcomes at school, the four design elements of accountability should be coherent with learning outcomes. These conceptions were the basis of this study.

The next chapter typically describes the study's research methodology, and it describes and justifies all the methodological choices made in the study. Also, it provides a detailed review of the methods and procedures that have been employed to investigate the topic being studied.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research Methodology

The study employed multiple qualitative case studies to study school accountability for learning outcomes. The study addressed four research questions: 1) How do participants in each school describe about their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes? (2) How do each school's financial resources support learning outcomes? (3) What kind of information is most frequently sought to assess each school's performance? (4) How do participants describe the alignment of the motivational activities with the learning outcomes at their respective schools? This chapter described the research methodology of the study and considered discussions on: the rationale for the qualitative research approach; the research design; data sources and data collection instruments; case selection and sampling techniques; access and permission; context of the study; my role in the research process; method of data analysis; ethical issues; strategies to ensure the trustworthiness and/or credibility of the study.

#### 3.1. Paradigms

I used a constructivist philosophical perspective as the basis for my study. This philosophical thought encourages researchers to explore subjective realities (ontology), engage with participants (epistemology), and apply qualitative methods (methodology) to gain deeper insights into complex phenomena. Constructivist thought was particularly appropriate for my studies as it allowed me to immerse myself in the worldview of others and attempt to gain an understanding of the socially constructed reality of a school environment (Cropley, 2022). According to this paradigm, the contexts in which research participants live can influence their knowledge (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 2003). Therefore, this idea assumes that sufficient contextual details and the presentation of participants' voices must be taken into account in the results of the study. This helped me to put myself in the participants' shoes and feel their emotions. The knowledge generated within the constructivist paradigm is often presented in the form of case studies or detailed narratives that describe the interpretations constructed as part of the research process (Hatch, 2002). Ontologically, this thought is assumed to deal with multiple-realism or pluralism. Accordingly, there are multiple realities and perspectives to be discovered (Creswell, 2007; Žukauskas et al., 2018). Advocators of this thought oppose the view that there is a single, objective methodology for generating knowledge. I used this philosophical thought

while considering the diversity and variation in the views of my research participants and myself. In the constructivist approach, the researcher should interact with the research process. Interaction is necessary to gain a deep understanding of what is going on (Willis, 2007). This paradigm gives emphasis to subjectivity, context, and the role of the investigator in shaping understanding. Regarding this, different researchers commended that those who made the constructivism research paradigm the basis for their study method need to have close interaction to deeply study the phenomenon and make clear about the truth of the phenomena that they intended to attain in their research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Cooper & White, 2012).

### **3.2. Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach**

A qualitative research approach was used to realize the aim of this study. I preferred this approach because it allowed me to understand the context of the problem being studied. The main focus of this study was to examine the context of schools. Bryman (2012) explains that qualitative research involves studying human behavior within its natural occurrence. This is because the most authentic way to understand how people form their opinions and behave is to observe them in real-life situations. Therefore, this study attempted to gain an understanding of the context in which the data was collected. The study found it challenging to comprehend the perspectives of participants in the chosen secondary schools by isolating them from the environment in which they operate. Nguyen and Tull (2022) highlighted that ideas can only exist and persist within a social setting and cannot be comprehended outside of those circumstances. Therefore, the issue of context was of greater importance in this study.

Besides, I chose to use a qualitative approach for my study because text and context are closely linked. The aim of my research was not only to examine the context but also to understand the text. According to Bryman (2012), qualitative research seeks to understand some aspect of social life, or the text. My study delved into the opinions, feelings, and experiences of participants regarding the coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) for learning outcomes in their schools (Mohajan, 2018). I sought to understand how individuals in secondary schools interpret their experiences, how they interact with their environment, and what significance they attribute to their experiences in relation to school accountability for learning outcomes (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2012).

Hence, this study tried to realize its aim by exploring the meanings that stakeholders might attach to the school's accountability for learning outcomes in their respective schools. I used the four design elements as a stepping stone to understanding how school accountability relates to learning outcomes. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, I examined the experiences or views of the stakeholders operating in the system (e.g., directors, teachers, and other stakeholders) by asking them about their relationships, experiences, and meanings about the phenomena under study. My focus was to understand how these participants interpret and make sense of their experiences in order to better understand the reality in the schools. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research is interpretive and naturalistic, which means that researchers studying qualitative data investigate things in their natural settings and attempt to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

To conduct my research, I spent a considerable amount of time conducting interviews, discussions, and observations, and reviewing documents in the school setting. As a qualitative researcher, this allowed me to gain a better understanding of the participants' perspectives and the significance they place on the issue, as well as to capture their voices in their natural environments (Creswell, 2009; Punch, 2013). As a result, I sufficiently included the voices of the participants in this final report (Hatch, 2002).

Thus, the qualitative research allowed me to understand the coherence of the four design elements with learning outcomes in the school context. By exploring the experiences, thoughts, feelings, and views of the research participants and the natural context in which they were being observed. I was able to gain deep insight into the subject under study—school accountability for learning outcomes—after spending ample time in the school setting. As a qualitative researcher, I was encouraged to engage with the text and context, to gain deeper insights into the subject under study. Therefore, understanding the text and context was crucial to achieving the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study.

The assumption of multiple realities was another reason that made me choose the qualitative approach. This research focused on the views related to school accountability for the learning outcomes of those working in schools. The results of the study were interpreted based on the shared perspectives of all the participants involved, as the reality in schools or cases is constructed socially. Based on their backgrounds, motives, emotions, and values, they had

different views on school accountability for learning outcomes, particularly on the coherence of the four design elements with learning outcomes. As a qualitative researcher and an experienced individual in school work, I included the views of various stakeholders, such as Woreda Education Office experts, teachers, school leaders, students, and parents, to enrich the findings. I used various data collection methods, such as semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, documentary analysis, and naturalistic observation, to understand and explore the diverse realities of the participants. Therefore, pluralism, or the recognition of multiple realities, made the qualitative research approach appreciated in this particular study. It was recognized that research should be conducted with a subjective approach, acknowledging multiple realities.

The other reason why I chose the qualitative research approach was that it allowed me to undergo collaborative, close, and long-term interaction with the research participants. My relationship with these participants could also contribute to a smooth and collaborative interaction with them. It encouraged me to talk or interact with people in the school and understand the issue under investigation. This approach is called an emic approach (Willis, 2007; Hatch, 2002). Hence, the close interaction between me and the participants in the research was crucial in this qualitative study. For instance, in research interviews, the interaction between me and the interviewees was critical for developing my understanding of the issue under study (Garton & Copland, 2010; Roiha & Iikkanen, 2022). The researcher-participant interaction heavily influenced the quality of the data. The researcher's data becomes richer and more authentic as he or she gets closer to his or her participants. This approach helped me create a relationship with participants called a therapeutic relationship. This included building trust, demonstrating empathy, active listening, being nonjudgmental, emotional communication, and other skills (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, I built positive relationships with participants to achieve the intended objectives of the study. My close interaction with them was one of the conditions for me to deeply explicate what they (re)constructed and have a better understanding of the phenomena. In qualitative research, knowledge is socially constructed and influenced by the context in which it is examined. Cooper and White (2012) asserted that the interaction between the researcher and participants is crucial in understanding the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasized the importance of collaborative understanding between the researcher and participants. Therefore, in this study, the interactions between me and the participants played a critical role (Eide & Kahn, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to examine how schools in Nekemte Administrative City are held accountable for their students' learning outcomes. To achieve this goal, I conducted a qualitative research approach using a multiple case study design. This method allowed me to consider context as an important element to examine and helped me understand the reality in schools. Moreover, this approach allowed me to gain insight into the subject being studied through the participants' perspectives and my interaction with them. During the research, the participants and I worked together to develop an understanding of school accountability for learning outcomes. Through mutual engagement, we constructed the subjective reality under investigation. This approach encouraged me to build knowledge together with the participants by taking into account my experience as a qualitative researcher. Understanding was the most important element of this qualitative research, which is why we used qualitative research approaches to achieve the study's objectives. The next point of discussion is about the qualitative case study research design.

### **3.3. The Research Design**

I employed a qualitative case study research design to attain the aim of this research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study aimed at conducting intensive studies to gain a deeper understanding of the issue under study within its environmental context (Ridder, 2017). Robson's definition was used as the basis for this study. A case study, according to Robson (1993), is a research strategy that incorporates an empirical investigation of a specific contemporary *phenomenon* in its real-life setting, involving various sources of evidence. Thus, this study examined school accountability for learning outcomes in some selected secondary schools in Nekemete town. I used multiple sources of evidence or data, like documents, interviews, observations, and focus group discussions, using different groups of school stakeholders such as teachers, school leaders, parents, students, and educational experts.

This study utilized the case research method to deepen the understanding of a specific problem using multiple cases. A case study can be of two types: a single-case study and a multiple-case study. The former design is used to investigate and comprehend a unique or critical case, while the latter involves analyzing two or more cases or replications of the same phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2003; Yin, 2017). Accordingly, the present study used the multiple case study method to get an insight into the

coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) with learning outcomes in four cases in the administrative city of Nekemte. A multiple-case study was very important for the present study as it enabled me to get more convincing evidence, making the study more robust than a single-case study (Yin, 2017). For example, Schildkamp, Karbautzki, & Vanhoof (2014) used the multiple case study method to deepen their understanding of what data-based decision-making looks like in schools in five different countries (the UK, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and the Netherlands). They examined the use of data for accountability and other practices in these countries and identified the enablers and barriers to this. Hence, a similar method was used in this study to get an insight into the problem under investigation.

In addition, this study applied the principal-agent relationship of accountability theory in the education system developed by Pritchett (2015) to understand school accountability for learning outcomes in secondary schools. The other reason for choosing this particular method was that case studies and theory have a significant link. According to Rule and John (2015), case studies often begin with a certain theory and seek to apply it to one or more situations, possibly in different contexts, to grasp the bi-implications between the cases and the theory. Hence, based on Pritchett's theory, I considered the four design elements to analyze the coherence of accountability in the cases with learning outcomes. Ridder (2017) and Rule & John (2015) indicated that a case study helps to understand the phenomena and determine whether the cases fit with the theory. Hence, in this study, Pritchett's theory of accountability was used to understand the problem under investigation in four secondary schools. The findings and experiences in these schools helped me to determine the coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) with the learning outcomes in school, which provided me with a clear picture of the problem under investigation.

To conclude, the study utilized a qualitative case study research design, specifically a multiple-case study. It employed a holistic multiple-case design to achieve its aim. Secondary schools, including both public and private schools, were selected as cases based on their performance in the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE). For an in-depth insight into the matter under investigation, a total of four high schools (two high-performing and two low-performing) were selected. The selection process details are available in

the next subtopic. I compared the four cases to identify different themes and common themes related to school accountability for learning outcomes. This helped me to illuminate the diverse aspects of the topic under investigation. More specifically, my focus was on understanding what was happening in schools and how teachers and principals (agents), the Woreda Education Office (principal), and other actors (parents and students) gave meaning to it. The experiences and conceptions in these four cases can help us determine the coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) with the learning outcomes in school, thus providing a clear picture of the topic under study. It's important to note that this method is not the same as experimental research. Instead, it's a qualitative case study method which doesn't involve controlling variables. The goal of this research wasn't to build or develop a theory, but rather to shed light on experiences and findings, and to determine the extent to which the cases fit with the given theory. Based on the findings of this study, I suggested possible ideas to policymakers and researchers who are interested in the area, in an effort to influence the situation in the school positively.

### **3.4. Data Sources and Data Collection Instruments**

My research employed a qualitative research approach with multiple-case study design. This part of the thesis presents mainly the data sources and instruments of data collection.

One of the main activities in this study was identifying useful data sources to achieve its aim. To get a complete and insightful picture of the problem, I sought rich data that provided in-depth and diverse information. This required using data sources from a variety of individuals and settings (Maxwell, 2004a), such as teachers and directors in secondary schools, students, parents, educational experts (i.e. a secondary school supervisor), and the head of the Woreda Education Office (WEO). Additionally, documents such as school reports, teacher and director evaluation checklists, and the physical setting of the school were used as sources of data in the study. The strategies used to collect rich data from these sources were crucial and will be described next.

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the topic being investigated, I utilized various methodologies and triangulation. This technique helped to improve the study's rigor, breadth, and depth, as well as provide corroborative evidence of the data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To collect primary data from sources, I utilized data collection methods such as

semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, document analysis, and naturalistic observation. These varied techniques enabled me to explore detailed information about accountability for learning outcomes in schools.

I used a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, often not set in order (or flexible). I tried to elicit discussions between the interviewee and me to develop an understanding of the participants' experiences or thoughts. I used this particular data collection strategy since it was appropriate for the study to elicit rich, detailed descriptions. Furthermore, it allowed me to clarify claims and seek new information. This particular data gathering tool enabled me to record the interviewee's perspective or experience about school accountability for learning outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Hence, it allowed me to obtain in-depth information about the participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, arguments, motivations, and feelings about the subject by raising questions with them (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To this end, building trust and rapport between me and the participants—talking to and listening to them—were some of my important roles in the interview sessions to capture the meaning of the experience in their own words. Of course, using a list of predetermined interview guides helped me minimize some of the disadvantages of this particular data gathering tool, like difficulty managing time and escaping important questions.

I prepared the semi-structured interview guiding tools based on the research questions. Then, I requested three doctoral colleagues to assess and comment on the tool. I considered their suggestions and resubmitted the interview guide to my supervisor. Although a semi-structured interview has predetermined questions, the sequence and wording of the questions can be altered based on the interviewer's opinion of what is more appropriate or inappropriate for a particular interviewee. Extra questions may also be included. After the supervisor's approval, I conducted three face-to-face pilot interviews. The pilot interviews helped me identify preliminary themes that focused on the issues surrounding the inputs and their impact on student learning.

I made some changes to the interview questions and their order based on feedback from the pilot interviews. These changes helped me accomplish the study's objectives more easily. The final interview schedule is included in the appendix. I then conducted face-to-face interviews with school leaders, teachers, parents, and students (except for one) in the school compound in order to elicit their experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Moser & Korstjens, 2018) on school

accountability for learning outcomes. Although the interview framework was similar for all participants, it was adjusted to their experiences and levels to achieve the study's objectives. Only one teacher was interviewed by telephone. Interviews with the head of WEO and a secondary school supervisor were held in their offices after their consent. Depending on the participants' willingness to contribute, each interview took between 30 minutes and 1 1/2 hours. With the exception of two participants, who did not agree to be recorded, everyone was tape-recorded, and then verbatim transcription was conducted.

Therefore, the purpose of the interview was to understand how agents maintain accountability in their daily activities in secondary schools. In addition to obtaining relevant information about how the four elements of accountability align with learning outcomes, data was also gathered to gain insight into the practice and the reasons behind it. This helped me choose a strategy to gauge the teachers' opinions about the issue being studied.

In addition to the data collection techniques mentioned earlier, I organized focus group discussions with students to gather more information (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The discussion revolved around a few general questions on the four design elements (excluding finance) to get feedback from all students in the group (Creswell, 2012). This method helped me gain a better understanding of the learning activities and how they relate to learning outcomes using the aforementioned elements. It helped me detect possible sources of problems with the issue under discussion. Creswell (2012) noted that in such a data collection tool, the interaction of the members from related backgrounds affords the opportunity to ascertain significant concepts that may be misplaced with individually produced data. In the discussion, I asked the group to explore two issues. First, I attempted to explore their feelings about the school that supports their learning and, second, how the school works with them and their parents to improve learning outcomes. The instrument was also used to dig out challenges that hinder the school's ability to focus on learning. Hence, this method was selected because it helped me understand more about the issue of accountability and coherence in schools.

Therefore, twenty students, five from each school, were divided into four groups for four separate focus group discussions. With participants' consent, each FGD was audiotaped. Participants were encouraged to openly share their thoughts and experiences regarding school accountability in the interview. I tried to encourage everyone to use this platform to share their

thoughts. The first interview in S-A lasted 80 minutes, while the second in S-B lasted 50 minutes; the third discussion in S-D lasted 30 minutes, and the fourth conversation in S-C lasted 40 minutes.

I reviewed documents from schools and the Woreda Education Office to gather more relevant information about the topic being studied. Both primary and secondary sources of data were analyzed to understand the phenomena being investigated and achieve the research objectives. For example, I conducted a qualitative analysis of documents such as annual reports and teacher evaluation checklists, which complemented the data gathered through interviews (Bowen, 2009). The data from the document were analyzed and evaluated in order to derive meaning, gain insight, and build an empirical knowledge base. This study includes compiled documents from school, as well as from the Woreda Education Office. The required information was gathered through the use of text notes and a few numbers. Documentation is crucial, especially for qualitative case studies that result in detailed case descriptions (Yin, 2017).

Lastly, I conducted naturalistic observation or field notes to gain a better understanding of the school context. The observation was held on the physical aspects of the school, such as the classroom (e.g., blackboards, desks, and class size), laboratory rooms, and library, and information displayed on buildings, notice boards, or gates. I mainly used a photo camera and the field notes method to capture the necessary data from these places. This method allowed me to record all aspects of the school environment, including the school's resources, particularly those related to teaching and learning activities, as well as the information utilized in the school. An observation checklist was not utilized to gather observational data since quantification is not the main agenda for this study and cannot address contextual information about the whole school. This data collection method helped me supplement the data gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions. Furthermore, by documenting the context in which individuals work, observation can help researchers explore the entire social setting in which they function (Mulhall, 2003).

### **3.5. Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness and/or Credibility of the Study**

Qualitative researchers must convince their readers by conducting trustworthy research that yields results that are consistent with reality or that represent information gathered from participants. The reason is that the credibility of qualitative research studies and results can be

easily affected by the researcher's bias or subjectivity (Patton, 2002; Gay et al., 2006; Creswell, 2014). Hence, it is outlined below that I utilized some strategies to ensure the findings of this study were as trustworthy as possible.

I used Creswell's suggestion about the strategies for determining the credibility of a qualitative research study. Creswell (2014), for example, identified eight primary strategies for determining the credibility of a qualitative research study. For example, triangulating, using member checking, clarifying bias, using a rich and thick description, presenting negative or contradictory information, spending extended time, using peer debriefing, and using an external auditor are what the author (Creswell) has mentioned. He advised researchers to use one or more of these strategies to validate their empirical findings. Accordingly, I followed and implemented the following strategies to ensure the credibility of the findings and the study in general: triangulating, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and thick description. The following subsection presents each of these techniques.

In this study, I used multiple methods of data collection to ensure the purpose of the research. Triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of many methods or data sources to generate a thorough understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). It has also been viewed as a qualitative research approach for testing validity by combining data from multiple sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Hence, I included data collection tools like semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, documentary analysis, and naturalistic observation. In addition, the study collected data from different types of people, including teachers, school directors, students, parents, and educational experts, to gain multiple perspectives and validate the data. Moreover, I used secondary sources, or different literature and research studies, to collect data for the study.

In the process of field research, I spent a significant amount of time with the participants to develop a close and trustworthy connection with each of them, gather a large amount of interview data, and identify any difficulties that could hinder the data collection process in the area of the study. Gay et al. (2006) noted that prolonged engagement with the data-collecting process helps researchers be fully oriented to the research context, take into account distortions or challenges that may affect data quality, and create a trusting relationship with participants. Hence, in this study, the data collection process took about 7 months, leading to valuable insight

into the perspectives and experiences of the participants. However, the drawback of extended engagement is that it requires more financial resources, energy, and time. As mentioned above, one of the lengthy periods in the data collection process was owing to the security issue in the study area.

As for this study, I uncovered the research work to my professional colleagues from Curriculum and Instruction as well as the educational leadership departments of my university to obtain comments, questions, and feedback on the aspects of my research methodologies used in general and the findings in particular. Gay et al. (2006) stated that peer debriefing entails the researcher soliciting input and criticism from his peers and professional colleagues. I believe that this technique added value to the persuasiveness of my results in the study. I especially provided the final report to my fellow doctoral students so that they could give me comments, feedback, and criticisms. I gathered all these as a platform to enhance the quality of my thesis work and specifically preserve the validity of the data and outcomes.

I tried to intensively review essential scientific literature, present adequate data and research reports, and provide thick descriptions to establish the transparency, rigor, and validity of the methodological and discussion parts. In qualitative research, the term "thick description" refers to observations and interpretations that incorporate a level of contextual depth. Hence, I attempted to describe in depth the research procedures, including the design, rationales, study sites and participants, methods of data collection, and analysis, through a detailed review of the literature (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Besides, a clear and detailed report of the results of the study with adequate data from significant reviews and research findings from different sources of data was analyzed intermingled. In general, it was ascertained in this dissertation that thick descriptions of the methodology used in the dissertation and the findings contributed a lot to the trustworthiness of the study.

### **3.6. Case Selection and Sampling Techniques**

This particular section of the paper presents how the four cases are selected and the sampling techniques for participants in the cases.

#### **3.6.1. Case Selection**

In this section, I discuss how I selected the cases for my study. I intentionally chose four cases from both private and public secondary schools based on their performance in the

Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination (EHEECE) results for the year 2020/2021. However, one of the low-performing private schools that I had selected was suddenly closed, and the staff was dismantled. Therefore, I replaced it with another private school that scored a low mark in the 2021/2022 EHEECE results. I collected this data from the Woreda Education Office (WEO), specifically from the examination coordinators. In Nekemete town, all secondary schools used to be ranked annually by the WEO based on their performances in the national examination. In the year 2020/2021, the schools were ranked based on a cutting score of at least 400 points due to a high inflation of matriculation results. However, in the year 2021/2022, the 'shocking' year, the passing mark of 50% set in the policy was used instead. Private and public schools are included in the research purposively to get an in-depth understanding of the subject under study. I selected four cases with varying academic achievements in the national examination to identify incoherencies and coherencies in learning. This helped me to better understand school accountability for learning outcomes.

Hence, for my analysis, I chose one high-performing and one low-performing secondary school from each school type, private and public. In the 2020/2021 EHEECE results, the high-performing private secondary school had 51 students (98.08%) who scored better ( $\geq 400$ ). Similarly, in a better-performing public secondary school, 377 students (52.73%) achieved the above score. However, in a low-performing public secondary school, only 15 students (6.15%) scored the same in the same academic year. In the 2021/2022 EHEECE results, only 5 students (9.52%) achieved a passing mark from a low-performing private secondary school.

Secondary schools were selected for this study because I worked closely with them as a teacher educator. In addition, the proportion of important educational inputs in secondary school (e.g., in the Oromia region) was better than in primary school. However, despite all these and many other efforts by the Regional Education Bureau (REB), the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and universities, learning in the region has been a problem (Ministry of Education, 2020).

To this end, the insights and experiences in these cases helped me recognize the problem of learning in secondary schools. I also identified the patterns and themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis, which helped me better understand the topic under investigation. Ersoy (2014), for example, took a similar approach to examine the difficulties of citizenship education

processes in social studies courses in Turkey. This author selected two extreme cases based on their socioeconomic background: a school with a low socioeconomic background and a school with a high socioeconomic background. He then selected information-rich research participants (including teachers and students) from the selected cases to achieve the purpose of his study. This implies that multiple data sources or participants within a case are important for a deep understanding of the topic under investigation. Likewise, identifying multiple data sources or participants from the selected cases was another task in the present study, as described in the next section.

### **3.6.2. *Sampling Techniques***

Research participants were selected from all educational actors at secondary school. Accordingly, teachers, school directors, students, parents, educational experts from district (Woreda Education Office) were included in the study. The inclusion criteria for teachers, directors and educational experts were having more than five years of work experience and position. Position is to mean the explanation of responsibilities of the research participants in the selected schools or the district like homeroom teacher, head of department, secondary school supervisor, etc. Similarly, students were selected based on their classroom achievements, which is associated with their classroom ranks. These criteria helped me to recruit potential participants in the study. But, we used availability sampling technique to select parents.

The interview was conducted with 26 teachers (T01 to T26) who were selected based on their experience and position (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Position is to mean the explanation of the responsibilities of the research participants in the selected school or the WEO (see Table 1) including homeroom teacher, head of department, etc. I encompassed 4 main school directors and three vice school directors, see Table 1 (SD01 to SD07), 2 educational experts (EE01 & EE02), and 8 parents of students (two from each school: PA1&PA2 to PD1&PD2). Note that PA1 means parent 1 from S-A. Furthermore, 20 academically good students, 5 from each school and all grades except grade 9, were involved in the discussion. I used a total of 63 research participants (43 for interviews and 20 for focus group discussions) in the research. However, I could not address other agents and principals as Pritchett's theoretical framework advocates because my focus was only on the management accountability relationship which is primarily practiced at the school level. The delimitation is because of my limited capacity in terms of

financial resources and time. In fact, I admitted that this is one of the limitations of the research as it influences the credibility of the results.

**Table 4: Background of participants**

Participants	School type	Position	Working experience in years
T01	S-A	Teacher	12
T02	S-A	Home Room Teacher	14
T03	S-A	Teacher	10
T04	S-A	Head department	17
T05	S-A	Teacher	25
T06	S-A	Home Room Teacher	17
T07	S-A	Head department	15
T08	S-B	Teacher	25
T09	S-B	Unit leader	7
T10	S-B	Teacher	8
T11	S-B	Teacher	12
T12	S-B	Unit leader	8
T13	S-B	Teacher	16
T14	S-B	Teacher	19
T15	S-B	Teacher	11
T16	S-B	Teacher	22
T17	S-C	Home Room Teacher	22
T18	S-C	Teacher	33
T19	S-C	Teacher	18
T20	S-C	Head department	37
T21	S-C	Teacher	16
T22	S-D	Home Room Teacher	10
T23	S-D	Head department	13
T24	S-D	Teacher	15
T25	S-D	Teacher	11

T26	S-D	Teacher	12
SD01	S-B	Main director	41
SD02	S-A	Main director	38
SD03	S-B	Academic vice director	17
SD04	S-B	Administrative vice director	22
SD05	S-C	Main director	28
SD06	S-D	Main director	18
SD07	S-D	Academic vice director	6
EE01	Woreda Education Office (WEO)	Head of the Education Office	21
EE02	Woreda Education Office (WEO)	Secondary school supervisor	19

**Note:** S-A: the high performing private secondary school; S-B: the low performing public secondary school; S-C: the high-performing public secondary school; S-D: the low-performing private secondary school

### ***3.7. Access and Permission***

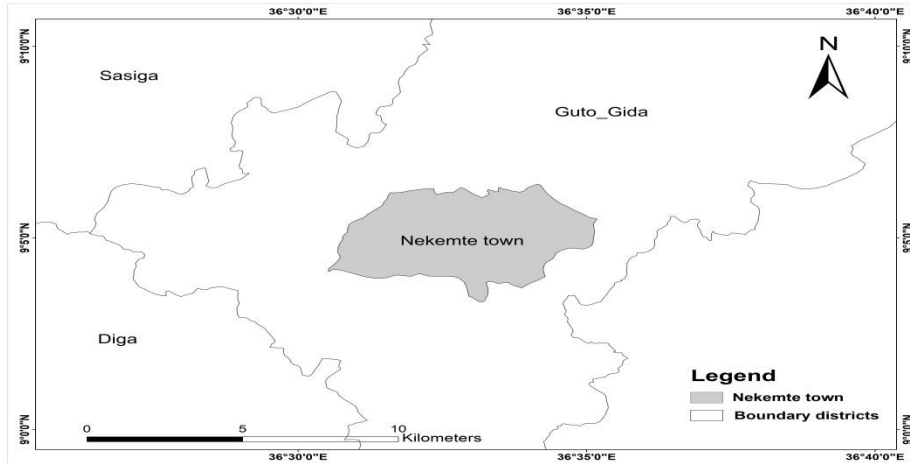
This section dealt with the access and permission activities during the research career. After defending my proposal (at the end of the year 2013 (EC) or 2020/2021), I had to wait for almost a year to begin data collection owing to the matriculation result delays caused by the COVID pandemic and security problems. Hence, at the end of the year 2014 (EC) or 2022, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Addis Ababa University wrote a formal letter of research clearance and cooperation for me. That was the beginning of my field research. Following that, I delivered a letter of cooperation from the Woreda Education Office (WEO) to the schools. I took all of the information from the centers, which helped me move on with the recruiting of research participants. The letter was crucial in permitting me to do the research with secondary schools in the Nekemete administrative town. After getting permission from the WEO, I took the 2020/2021 Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE) results of all secondary schools in the city. Before gaining access to the participants,

I identified four cases based on the purpose of the research. I focused on the two extremes of their accomplishments (high-performers and low-performers) from both private and public schools.

The letter performed three functions for me: first of all, it helped me obtain organizational consent and support for the study. As a result, each school responded positively to the study conducted in the school compound. Second, the letter assisted me in adhering to ethical processes. This was used as one of the preliminary techniques for gathering interview data for my multiple case studies in schools. In addition, I got approved to conduct interviews with educational experts from the office as well as parents. This approved permission assisted me in getting accepted into each school and at the office more officially and professionally. Third, it was crucial to build a good rapport and trust with the study participants. After their approval, the school directors assisted me while I was organizing students and teachers for focus group discussions and interviews respectively. Of course, this process (communication with the responsible bodies in the office and the schools) took me more than two weeks (excluding the interview process).

### **3.8. Context of the Study**

The research site is the administrative town of Nekemte in the Oromia region of western Ethiopia. The town is approximately 328 kilometers from the nation's capital, Addis Ababa. It is bounded by administrative woredas or districts such as Guto-Gide, Sasiga, and Diga. There are three main roads connecting Nekemte to the towns of Asosa, Jimma, and Bure. The main campus of Wollega University is also located in the town. In addition, there are also more than 10 secondary schools in the town.



**Figure 2:** Geographical location of Nekemte town with its boundary districts

The study location was chosen on purpose for a variety of reasons. The first reason is that this site was easily accessible and convenient for me because; I live and work in it. The study site was not only conveniently accessible to me but also allowed me to spend a significant amount of time in the research field (schools). In addition, I have prior experience working with the local schools, which was critical in qualitative multiple case research. I also have a strong awareness of the community or environment, which has helped me create an additional opportunity to get to know research participants easily. It is well understood in qualitative research, such as case studies, that data gathering and analysis go hand in hand, and that data collecting is not a one-time event (Merriam, 2009). Rather, it should be collected consistently throughout the study's analysis (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the sites' accessibility was critical in iteratively collecting exploratory data and then analyzing it simultaneously (Patton, 2002). It also allowed me to develop trusted relationships with the participants, which enabled me to meet with them regularly and collect a large amount of data for the study. The accessibility of these sites, at best, assisted in getting answers to research questions and had a significant part in the study's effectiveness. Second, I realized that the site was an education center, with many parents from nearby villages and towns sending their children to the town's schools. Despite the security concerns, majority of the community was concerned about the educational achievement of their kids, though many of them were not effective. This, I believe, contributed to the study's success. Third, the place is the location of my hosting university. This was helpful to me in obtaining the

resources or materials required for the study. In addition, whenever I was challenged, I could seek professional assistance from my peers (University lecturers and experienced researchers).

On the other hand, the place where I conducted the study had serious security problems. Political unrest was the main cause of this problem. During my data collection, I noticed that my research participants felt frustrated to have an interview with me. They also fear each other. Teachers lost their confidence in punishing their students. Parents worry about the future of their children because of the security problem. In addition, this unrest has made it take me a long time to complete my data collection process. But I think that I have overcome the situation since I live, work, and know the area well.

The aim of the study was to gain insights into the experiences of the high-performing and low-performing schools in the town, including both public and private schools. By collecting data from two extreme situations, researchers hoped to understand the range of possible outcomes and uncover trends that may not be evident if only one case is examined. This approach helped to identify common elements shared by multiple cases, as well as unique factors specific to each case (Shaheen, Pradhan, & Ranajee, 2019). The variation in cases deepened the understanding of the phenomenon that was shared by all participants. The findings could also serve as a starting point for further research into educational experiences.

I also, systematically reviewed and analyzed articles published in internationally reputable journals. Accordingly, I focused on detecting the distribution of published articles from January 22, 2022, to March 3, 2022. Besides, I attempted to assess the types of methods used by these articles and how school accountability is described in various articles. In addition, the practice of school accountability and its contribution to learning was scrutinized. The shortcomings of accountability in schools were also analyzed. Finally, conclusions and future agendas for future research, including the present research were suggested. Thus, this literature review helped me to understand the international context in relation to the relationship between school accountability and learning outcomes.

### **3.9. Method of Data Analysis**

In this sub-section, I will explain how the data collected through various data-gathering tools was analyzed. Analyzing this data was a critical part of the research process. I carefully

analyzed the vast amount of data collected from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and naturalistic observation to answer the research questions. Merriam & Tisdell (2016: 202).

Since there is no unified method of data analysis in qualitative research, I took a clear and convincing approach to my data analysis. The procedures followed the suggestions of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis techniques to analyze the data for each research question. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a good tool for exploring the viewpoints of different research participants, showing connections and distinctions, and providing unexpected findings (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). This is undoubtedly the most influential technique, at least in the social sciences, owing to its clear and accessible framework for doing thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). As a result, I employed this method because it provided a clear framework that allowed me to analyze the perspectives of participants in the cases in order to gain an understanding of the subject in line with the research questions. It helped me identify differences or similarities among themes in the cases to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied and draw more informed conclusions. In addition, the method was helpful to organize and summarize the large and complex data collected in the study in a meaningful way. I used a computer software program called NVivo 10 to manage the translated data partially. The software enabled me to store, categorize, retrieve, and associate data easily.

I collected data from sources using the local language, Afan Oromo, in order to communicate easily with the participants, even though the medium of instruction in secondary school is English. The interview and focus group discussion were recorded via audio, with the exception of a few participants. Additionally, a photo camera was used to capture pictures of buildings and activities in the school during observation. Furthermore, notes and a photo camera were used to collect data from documents.

However, since the data collected was huge in volume, the verbatim transcription and translation of all interview and focus group discussion data was difficult. As a result, the transcription and translation were selective based on the relevance of the data. Only those that are valuable data or materials were transcribed and translated into English. Those quoted voices of the participants were transcribed and translated into the same word or idea as used by the

individual participant, except for some modifications to the translated sentences or paragraphs so as not to make grammatical errors.

The analysis was carried out in two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. In the first stage, I read through the transcribed data multiple times to get familiar with it. Then, I inductively categorized the data into four categories for each case based on the research questions. The strategic questions driving our analysis were: (1) How do participants in each school describe their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes? (2) How do each school's financial resources support learning outcomes? (3) What kind of information is most frequently sought to assess each school's performance? (4) How do participants describe the alignment of the motivational activities with the learning outcomes at their respective schools? The questions were constructed based on the theoretical framework (Patton, 2002). Consequently, I reduced the raw data into codes based on their relevance to answering the particular research question and considered consistent codes to generate higher-order themes. To check coding consistency, the initial codes and raw data were sent to the supervisor for critical review. Besides, a colleague from a university has checked the codes to see whether they are pertinent to the aim of the study. I continuously reorganized and reviewed the data (codes) until common patterns emerged. In the process of developing the themes, I was looking at the relationships that might exist among these themes. The themes and raw data were shared with the supervisor, and a discussion was held to realize the accuracy and consistency of the raw data (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Then, the final themes were well described to indicate the findings. Finally, I organized and reviewed the report in an iterative way to ensure its comprehensiveness and coherence with the research aims in collaboration with my supervisor (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While analyzing the data, my personal experiences and opinions regarding school activities were inevitably important. The data collected through document analysis, observation, and focus group discussions were used to support the interview data. The data was analyzed together under each individual case. The themes identified in each case were then sorted into four broad categories: delegation, finance, information, and motivation. Finally, a four-by-four cross-case analysis was conducted to examine how these four design elements were coherent with learning outcomes and to develop a better understanding of school accountability for learning outcomes. In this analysis, the four cases or schools were aligned horizontally, while the four themes were aligned vertically.

### **3.10. Ethical Issues**

Ethical consideration is compulsory and an integral part of research work. It should be considered while collecting data from human and non-human sources (like documents). Accordingly, I took some known ethical issues and considerations into account to mainly care for and protect participants in the study discussed here below.

The fullest consent of the participants is needed to involve them in any of the research studies (Allen & Wiles, 2015, p. 3). Particularly, the subject of educational accountability is a sensitive and pressing issue at present (Levitas et al., 2007). Thus, before conducting the interviews for the main study, I requested consent from each participant to seek their oral permission to participate in my study. The informed consent was provided orally for each participant's agreement to participate in the research activities.

An ethical issue that arises in research is related to anonymity. Anonymity refers to how the research data should not be connected to any individual(s) or organization(s) identity. Anonymity was maintained throughout the current study by replacing the real names of the participants and study sites with codes, making it impossible to relate the research data to any personal identities of the participants or organizational identities of the target schools. This ensured that no identifying information was linked to the data obtained or to the report of the study. Different codes were assigned to describe each participant in the study. Teacher participants were identified by codes T01 to T26 (where T stands for teacher participant), while directors, parents, educational experts, and students were similarly identified with specific codes. To differentiate between schools, codes S-A, S-B, S-C, and S-D were used for the cases, with S representing school. These codes were used throughout the research process, including data analysis, to carefully maintain the anonymity of each institution and conceal any identifiable data.

It's important to note that all study participants made the decision to take part in the research voluntarily. As such, they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any consequences. Additionally, if they chose not to participate in the study at all, that was also their right. Throughout the data collection process, we made sure that all participants were comfortable with the conditions and felt at ease participating in the study. Fortunately, all participants agreed to engage in the lengthy and semi-structured interviews.

### **3.11. My Role in the Research Process**

This part of the chapter details my roles in the research process. I was active in every step of the research process to achieve the study's goal. For the sake of clarity, my important roles in the research can be divided into the following categories: selecting cases, facilitating the interview process, ensuring a healthy researcher-participant relationship, safeguarding and protecting participants' rights, enhancing the credibility of the study, and completing the work.

Case selection was the greatest challenge of my role in the research process. Initially, I selected four cases to achieve the study's objectives: two based on their performance in the national exam (categorized as high-performing and low-performing schools) and another two based on inspection results. The inspection result categorizes schools into four levels or groups. These are levels one, two, three, and four. Level one is below standard. At level two, most elements of the school are standardized but still lack some criteria that could qualify as a standard school. Level 3, on the other hand, is a type of school that meets the standards set by the Ministry of Education. The final level (Level 4) is a higher than standard type of school. The criteria used to level these schools are the input, process, and output model (Ministry of Education, 2013). Unfortunately, there are only Level Three and Level Two schools in the city of Nekemete, which are almost similar to each other. They are not significantly different from each other, making them meaningless for this study. I couldn't find the two extremes: level one and level four school types in the city that might fit the study. Unfortunately, after collecting the data and performing an iterative data analysis, I realized that the data from the cases identified as level two and level three were meaningless to the objective of this study. This is because the two levels were nearly identical in most experiences and contexts. Besides, the criteria used by the production model could not focus on student learning outcomes. The result is the sum of input (25%), process (35%) and output (40%) (Ministry of Education, 2013), which cannot exclusively tell us about the level of the learning outcome in the school, which is of great importance for the aim of the study. After a thorough discussion with my supervisor, I removed these two cases from my study and decided to add two more secondary schools (a high-performing public school and a low-performing private school) based on the matric result. I selected a high-performing public school based on the 2020/2021 EHEECE results, and a low-performing private school based on the 2021/2022 results. I couldn't consider the 2020/2021 results as the low-performing private school had already closed after the examination results were declared. Eventually, I

ended up with two high-performing schools, one private and one public, as well as two low-performing schools, one private and one public. This gave me a total of four cases or secondary schools to study, which would provide me with an in-depth and relevant data.

Of course, the number of schools is an essential research characteristic to increase the credibility of a study. And I acknowledged that this is one of the limitations of this study. However, my role in this case is that I used the triangulation method to minimize the influence of the small number of schools on the result of the study. Additionally, I collected enough data from each case to reduce the impact of the small sample size.

For the most part, I carefully acted as a moderator in the personal conversations with the participants. Through my facilitation role, I was able to easily access their perspectives (thoughts and feelings) on the phenomena under study. I made my personal experiences available (e.g. my name, my education, my work, etc.) and openly communicated the goal of my research to my research participants. Furthermore, I made every effort to put them at ease, for example by engaging in open discourse about the topic of study and engaging with them in the manner they preferred (i.e., through negotiation). And this has encouraged them to express their views and reflections freely. This helped me to convey their understanding of school accountability for learning outcomes in a simple way. My philosophical orientation (constructivism) influenced the way I interact with participants. The result of this thought was building a deeper understanding in collaboration with research participants. Additionally, I acknowledged all of their viewpoints and expressed my gratitude and genuine appreciation at every interview. Moreover, the interview data was collected in my presence. In this way I contacted them regularly and conducted a series of interviews. I primarily created a welcoming and accommodating environment where they could freely discuss their experiences. To achieve this, I gave them the space and time they needed to express themselves freely. Since I was part of the data collection process, there was close interaction with the participants depending on their willingness. I also asked probing questions to get them to answer interview questions, listened to them, and then repeatedly asked probing questions to gain a deeper knowledge of the phenomena being studied. Therefore, I was fully engaged in maintaining healthy relationships between researchers and participants. I worked closely with them to achieve this. This allowed me to explore their different perspectives on the topic under study. Regarding interactions between researchers and participants, authors

such as Raheim et al. (2016) stated that qualitative researchers should maintain anti-authoritarian relationships with their interviewees during the interview process. They argue that the relationship between researchers and their research participants or informants is crucial to the quality of the research product. As a result, there should be no hierarchical or subordinate-superior interactions (Raheim et al., 2016). With this in mind, I carried out the following exercises in order to develop positive or anti-hierarchical interactions with my participants: On the one hand, I established reciprocity in certain interaction styles, such as e.g. greeting with shaking hands and drinking coffee and tea together (occasionally) as our routines. This helped me to loosen their frustrations, which later led them feel free for the interview. Then I made sure to develop more friendly and family relationships with them. In general, I had close and cooperative relationships with them because we worked together to achieve the desired study goals. In this context, Cooper and White (2012) emphasized that there should be a close connection between the knower (researcher) and the research participants since the knowledge or reality in the study depends entirely on their interaction. Fourth, emphasis was placed on defending and protecting the rights of participants during the data collection process. I have strictly adhered to the ethical issues and considerations set out in the study.

As part of the research process, my role was to conduct a peer debriefing of the interview guidelines to ensure that no biases were present from the outset. My own beliefs, experiences or assumptions may influence the study. However, efforts have been made to address these biases. For example, peer-debriefing – discussing with other researchers and finding other perspectives – was one technique. In addition, I collected data over a longer period of time and used a combination of documentary evidence, interviews, and observations to minimize bias and establish credibility. After collecting the data, I checked the audio recordings and field notes to verify that the emerging themes were consistent with the original data. Finally, I discussed the findings with my supervisor and colleagues in detail.

To sum up, the purpose of this study was to understand school accountability for learning outcomes. To achieve this goal, I pose research questions that seek answers to the coherence of the four design elements with learning outcomes in schools. This study considered the constructivist philosophical assumption underlying the qualitative research approach I used. A holistic multiple-case study research design was adopted to explore the problem under study, as

it allows for a deep understanding of a particular contemporary phenomenon in its context. The design enabled me to better understand the topic under study by analyzing multiple cases using the theory (i.e., Pritchett's theoretical framework). The study employed semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and observation to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to examine the cases in line with the research questions. This approach helped in identifying common or different themes in the cases, thus providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied and drawing more informed conclusions. It also helped in organizing and summarizing the large and complex data collected in the study in a meaningful way. Furthermore, the iterative nature of data analysis in qualitative research helped in identifying limitations early in the research process. The next chapter will focus on the research findings related to case S-A, including the context of the case and a summary of the findings in line with the research questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4. Findings Related to School Accountability for Learning Outcomes in the Case of S-A (High Performing Private Secondary School)**

The objective of this chapter is to present the key results of the study in line with the research questions. This study examined school accountability for learning outcomes by trying to understand the experiences of four cases identified as 'high-performing' and 'low-performing' secondary schools based on EHEECE results. The context and findings in the first case: high-performing private secondary school (S-A) is presented in this section. Consequently, the emerging themes generated from the data are presented in this particular case.

#### **4.1. Context**

High-performing private secondary school (S-A) is one of the four private schools in Nekemte town. This school was established in 1993 (EC) by taking a small number of students in preschool and primary schools. Currently, the school has 314 pupils and 10–15 teachers only in the secondary school. The results of the national exam (EHEECE) for the academic year 2020/2021 showed that S-A outperformed all other schools in the town. Accordingly, 98% of students in the school scored more than 400 grade points. Most of the graduates from this school are highly disciplined, competent, and win scholarships for further education in different parts of the world. So, the community loves the school. Parents want to bring their children to this school at all costs.

#### **4.2. Findings Related to Delegation of the School**

The first set of questions aimed to understand the school's delegation. Accordingly, this section dealt with the findings of the study related to the delegation of S-A, as described by participants from the school. Three broad themes emerged from the analysis, and each is presented below.

##### **Learning outcome is a big agenda**

The result of the study shows that learning outcome is a big agenda in this particular school. This agenda is given a lot of attention not only by the school representatives but also by the parents. Parents need their children's learning to be better-quality, and they eagerly follow

their children's discipline and learning. The agents think that the students' academic performance is linked to the future of the school and their job. Therefore, the school does serious work on the students. Participants said that enhancing learners' national examination results is something the school focuses on. They added that their delegation is to produce good citizens. In other words, their aim is to increase student performance, and their delegation is to be instrumental in student learning. One of the teacher participants in the school said:

*The school focuses a lot on the quality of education. The students are well guided by the school administration in cooperation with teachers. Parents are also actively involved in improving student learning outcomes. For example, the school calls parents when their child gets a bad grade. In special cases, underperformers are supported by the school in cooperation with their parents. This means that parents are accountable for their children's academic performance. The focus is therefore on improving their learning outcomes. (T01)*

One of the participants from parents also said:

*--- The philosophy or motto of the school is improving the learning outcome of the students, there's no doubt about that. Their focus is on improving the learner's academic performance, regardless of some issues in the process. After all, they expect all learners to do well in school and they strive to achieve that goal. (PA2)*

Similarly, another teacher participant indicated:

*I know that too much prominence is devoted to learners' examination results. The school leaders encourage us to support the learners in our overtime. Thus, in this school, the issue of students' learning outcome is a big task as it is vital to the fate of the school. (T03)*

In supporting this, the school director said:

*Our mission is shaping citizens and making them develop the skills. This school is known as center of excellence, we focus on national exam scores. For instance, the previous year, many students in this school scored more than four hundred something grade point. (SD02)*

Hence, the results of the study show that the school's primary delegation is improving learning outcomes. Classroom activity was the focus of many of the participants in the research which is dealt under the next sub-theme.

### **Classroom activity is highly focused**

Participants of the research at the school noted that all actors in the school are aggressively involved in classroom activities. They give much emphasis on learning and teaching activities. For instance, learners' enthusiasm is always monitored, and stress is given by parents and teachers. Each learner should identify his or her vision with its action plan and bring them for discussion in the classroom. Learning tasks should be provided to learners recurrently by the teacher. Providing classwork and homework, commenting and giving feedback, and following progress are important tasks for all agents, including parents. Regarding this, one of the research participants noted:

*Parents follow their children's learning at school and at home. They see their children as a great asset at school. They sign the homework. They always see their children's notebook. Whenever they encounter an error in the teaching-learning process, they come to the school and tell us about it. They give feedback to the teacher. Parents' contribution to student learning is significant. They also follow the discipline of students at school and at home. (SD02)*

And parents have an obligation to come to the school whenever the school wants them for discuss about students' learning. One of the parent participants indicated:

*By the way, if you don't go to school when called, your child will be expelled from the school. Therefore, parents are forbidden to be absent when called from school. For example, if they call me, I will freeze everything there, including my work, and run to school. (PA1)*

This suggests that the school has a strict policy that urges parents to be actively involved in improving student learning, although this approach appears to be autocratic. I think the context of parents should be understood by school leaders. But the school does its homework and involves parents in improving the students' academic performance.

It is also indicated that the school is well known for its zero-tolerance on students' discipline and tough exam system. And cheating is a red line in the school. I think this culture needs to be appreciated as it has worked well in minimizing the overwhelming discipline problem in the school, especially in exams. Teachers are given different trainings on how to support students' learning and track their progress. For example, a teacher participant (T05) noted "*we are provided various trainings or workshops that enable us pinpoint our learners and offer support accordingly.*" Additionally, the school directors and teachers tried to create an academic atmosphere in the school. In supporting this, a teacher participant revealed:

*Look, we are doing the maximum we can with great commitment. We are not here only to get a salary or to fear the owner of the school. We are here just to support students. We center here on the student. The school has already established a system or environment where students are interested in their learning and committed. It also provides rewards and different training for the teachers. They provide this in the semester as well as at the end of the year. (T03)*

The school also placed emphasis on classroom management. Students and teachers have developed positive attitudes to classroom discipline. A student research participant reported:

*My history teacher said, if I ordered a student to leave the class (even without his or her problem), he or she would leave the class without any reaction.' We students at this school highly respect our teachers. By the way, we don't have such a significant problem with our teachers. Besides, since our number is manageable, the teacher can control disciplinary problems in the classroom. I also remember that the homeroom teacher of 10B class punished all classes by making them nil-- down. And all of them accepted the measure taken by the teacher without any complaint. I heard that students in other schools do not respect their teachers; this has made me astonished. But the opposite is true at this school.(A student)*

Moreover, teachers assume that they are creating citizens for the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work. In that respect the director of the school said:

*Our mission is to shape citizens and help them develop the necessary skills. This school is known as a center of excellence, and we focus on national exam scores. The previous*

*year, only one student scored four hundred or something; the rest scored more than that.*  
(SD02)

He added that they are committed to work hard on academic activities:

*We use our time effectively. We leave the school compound at 10:00 local time. Even we use our break time to motivate, support, and advise our students in school. The relationship between the teacher and students is very strong. We focus only on our task, improving the learning outcome. We want to change students. We focus highly on students.* (SD02)

In the same way the students are shaped to work hard. A student participant in the focus group discussion said that he works hard to achieve better.

*As a student, I also have to work hard on what I have been taught in the classroom. I have to follow carefully classroom teaching, and similar to my friend here, I want to be a historian. Hence, I have to read more related books and ask different people having knowledge of history; bit by bit, I am trying to have a base on what I want to be in the future. I believe that students of this school have the same attitude. Hence, our mission is working hard at this level.*(A student)

Similarly, most of the students in this school know why they are at school. And they work hard. In line with this, a student in the discussion said:

*Since the policy of this school is very strong, I can say that most of the students work hard. The school urges us to identify our future (what to study), and based on that, we have already set our future. I believe that most of the students (75% of the students) in this school know why they are here. For instance, I want to be a surgeon, and as a result, I work hard not only on what my teachers teach me but also on additional books and other sources of knowledge to make myself ready for what I want to be.*(A student)

In the same line, a teacher participant indicated that the school does a lot of activities to improve learning outcomes right from the beginning in collaboration with different actors in the school: He said:

*This school begins with selecting a qualified teacher. If a teacher is not effective even after an appointment, he or she will be fired. He or she will be appointed formally after being evaluated for two months. It depends much on the quality of education. Students are managed well by the school leaders in collaboration with teachers. Parents also actively participate in improving the learning outcomes of their children. For example, parents will be called by the school if their child has scored low. This implies that parents are also accountable for the LOs of their children. Low achievers will be supported in a special case by the school in collaboration with parents. So, the focus is on improving their learning outcomes.(T04)*

Hence, the results of the interview as well as the focus group discussion with the participants in the high performing private school reveal that academic activity is given emphasis. Besides, the document analysis on teacher evaluation checklist indicated that teacher classroom activity is highly emphasized. And they described the status learning outcome in the school as follows.

### **Learning outcome is better**

And, almost all of the research participants including parents assumed that the school has attained its delegation in improving learner academic achievement. In this regard one of them indicated:

*I think that this school is here to produce good citizens who can contribute to the development of self, family, country and the world. I think it is realizing that. We have produced outstanding students in the country and out of the country. In addition, in the national exam the school is still leading in the region and the country. The previous year the school is first among all students at the ministry level. So, the community loves the school. Parents want to bring their children to this school with all expense. (T04)*

One of the parents said again:

*The school is very good at making the children effective. It seems that they brought the required results in the children. For example, they work to ensure that the children do not develop dependency; at least they work independently on tests. It has already changed students into hard workers. If you compare the school relatively with the other*

*ones, we can say that it has fulfilled its mission. The majority of the children who graduated from this school are competitive in higher education institutions. They are really competent. I can say that almost 80% of them are competent. (PA2)*

Similarly, a teacher participant reported:

*When you compare it with the schools in this city, the school is really unique. I don't compare the students with university students at this time. I don't compare 9th grade students at this school to fourth-year university students. Why are they academically top-notch? The school worked on it; it worked on language and science areas. So far, the school has 16 specialists who graduated from different universities (medical doctors). Besides, there are so many students who have gotten scholarships around the world. (T07)*

This implies that the research participants feel that they are enhancing the learning outcomes of their students. I think their commitment and focus on supporting students is exemplary. But sanctions and rewards should be balanced at the school. Therefore, almost all participants from the high-performing private school believe that academic task is highly focused and learners' academic achievement is a prominent agenda item. Another topic raised among the research participants was about financial resources, which is presented in the next section.

### **4.3. Findings related to finance in the school**

In this section the results of the study related to finance are presented based on the views of the participants from the school. Accordingly, the findings of the study connected to the finance in high-performing private secondary school (S-A), are presented. Two themes are emerged from the analysis and each is described below.

#### **Financial resource is allocated to teaching learning activities**

The research participants showed that school fees are the only source of finance in the school. This inadequate financial resource expended primarily for salary, secondly for supporting students' learning. The school director of said:

*The money gathered from parents assists us to buying all necessary materials for the teaching and learning process, such as models, reference books, charts and text books,*

*chemicals, chalk, blackboards, computer papers, more desks, and other materials that directly support the classroom activities.(SD02)*

In the same line a teacher research participant noted:

*The main source of finance for this school is mainly school fees collected from parents. Most of this budget is spent on salaries. In addition, budget is spent for the teaching and learning materials. (T06)*

Similarly, another teacher research participant indicated:

*Most of the financial resources are spent on the salaries of teachers and other workers in the school. In addition, the school spends some amount of money on buying teaching aids like chalk, models, and blackboards (like globes and cylinders) that support student learning next to salary. (T04)*

Therefore, the results of this study show that financial resources are allotted to the learning and teaching process. This implies that though the majority of the budget is assigned to salaries, the next focus area of the school is supporting learning. Nevertheless, the school is still facing a deficit of financial resource in general.

### **Wrestling with the conundrum of lack of resource**

The front-line providers in the school and other research participants noted that the school has a significant problem with resources like library, and laboratory. Regarding this, a teacher research participant said:

*In this school, there is a shortage of libraries. We also have a shortage of textbooks for grades 9–10. Relatively speaking, reference books are better than text books. We also have laboratory-related problems. (T01)*

In the same way another research participant noted:

*We don't have any material that helps students learn practical things. But, in the theoretical aspect, there are ample numbers of good books that help students understand*

*the theoretical aspect of their education. We lack laboratory materials, and as a result, the practical aspect of our teaching and learning activities is challenged. (T02)*

Similarly, a student participant in the group discussion indicated, "Yes, we have been requesting many things so far; for example, there is no laboratory for chemistry, biology, physics, etc. However, the school is very well known by the community." Irrespective of that, a teacher participant (T03) indicated that there is no laboratory, but they use various mechanisms to make their teaching task practical and significant to the learners. However, laboratory activities are important to deepen understanding and contribute to students' overall development (beyond exam results). Therefore, this problem should be solved in school to further improve students' performance.

Another teacher research participant also indicated:

*---We use additional materials such as books, internet and videos in the classroom to improve student understanding. We know the status of our country's economy; it cannot afford to fulfill every learning material for schools. As a result, as a geography teacher, I use videos about plate tectonics and continental drift. Rather than simply lecturing from the textbook, I realized that this approach engages my students. (T01)*

This suggests that the agents in the school understood that lack of resources is common in the school, but they assume it is possible to use diverse mechanisms to enhance student learning. Another concern of the research was related information produce at schools. Accordingly, the next section presents the results to this element.

#### **4.4. Findings Related to Information in the School**

This section presents the findings connected to information in the school, as per the perception of the research participants. Generally, information exchange in this school (S-A) is robust. Four themes are developed from the analysis and each is described below.

##### **Students' Academic Performance**

Research participants from S-A noted that learners' academic performance is the predominantly produced and exchanged information in the school. From my observation, the

pictures of the top scorers in the national examinations are displayed on the school gate. Regarding this, a teacher research participant (T06) noted: "*Exam results are the important subject that we exchange with parents.*" In relation to this a teacher research participant indicated:

*The exchange of information among the school management, teachers, and parents is strong. We are close to each other. In addition, information exchange between teachers and students is highly close. Moreover, parents are always online; they are with us from day to day. They come and check the status of their students' learning. Therefore, the information exchange is strong. (T01)*

It is also noted that parents' feedback is welcomed to improve students' performance. In this regard, respondents indicated:

*We share information about student achievement with parents through test results, classroom activities, and homework activities. Parents must view and sign both the test sheet and the student's exercise book. If not, we will not sign and accept it. We will comment on the parents. Also, during the school assembly, they mainly tell us about our performance as well as the achievements of their students. (T03)*

Similarly, T01 reported: "*In addition, we write to the parents immediately if homework is not done by the student.*" It is also noted that parents' feedback is welcomed to improve students' performance. This implies that information related to students' academic performance is one of the crucial data shared among front-line providers in the school. In addition, classroom activities were the concern of the research participants which is described under the next theme.

### **Tracking of classroom activities**

Similarly, information related to the classroom activities is produced by the school agents and parents. For instance, activities like classwork, homework, class time, and portion are traced by these actors. Consistent classroom observation is conducted by the school leaders. Regarding this, a teacher research participant showed:

*School leaders follow information about teachers' planning, homework and classwork, teachers' classroom management, etc. They try to identify whether teachers regularly give and correct classwork and homework. Monitor students who are lingering here and*

*there in the school compound without any purpose or learning activities. Hence, by any means, they follow the teaching and learning process. (T07)*

Also, teachers and school leaders exchange information and work cooperatively to follow classroom activities. In the same line a teacher participant said:

*When our students show some disciplinary problems we will report to the administrative body. Then, they call for their parents. We understand with each other very well- with the school leaders. Besides, they will come to class room and take the student and punish him or her. They also come and observe us while we are teaching; this will have impact on our efficiency. In other words they evaluate us. The efficiency is important for our hierarchical improvement. We don't have laissez-faire teachers, all are active. Since the principal moves around and supervises our activity, no one misses a minute. (T03)*

Hence, the condition in the classroom is also another important piece of information produced by the school. Additionally, information associated with student discipline and attendance is followed by all actors in the school. The result is described in the next section.

### **Students' attendance and discipline are traced**

Research participants also indicated that students' attendance and discipline are useful pieces of information at S-A. A teacher research participant (T02) noted, "*If a learner is absent, we instantly exchange information parents through telephone.*" T04 also indicated: "*data associated with students' characteristics including the number of learners by gender and age, attendances are collected.*" Similarly, T07 showed: "*they trace absenteeism and attendance, and if there is any absenteeism the school will communicate the parent.*" From my observation, students are disciplined and cooperative for better improvement. Learner discipline is another important point of discussion. Actors in the school seriously exchange information about student behavior at home as well as in the classroom. And student discipline is another essential point used for the recognition of the school by the community.

Thus, student performance, classroom activities, discipline, and attendance are useful pieces of information produced in the school. Moreover, the relationship between parents and teachers was the concern of the research participants in the school, and the findings are described in the next theme.

### **Strong teacher-parent relationship to improve student performance:**

Research participants from the school indicated that parents work collaboratively with

teachers to enhance student performance. Regarding this, a teacher research participant reported:

*We share information about student achievement with parents through different mechanisms, including meetings. Parents must check and sign on both the test sheet and the student's exercise book. (T03)*

Similarly, a teacher research participant in the school reported:

*Exam or test results are important pieces of information that we share with parents, and their feedback is valued in order to improve students' performance. We also notify parents as soon as the student fails to complete his or her homework. (T01)*

In relation to this, a parent research participant said:

*My communication with teachers is formal. Test scores will be given to the students, and then I will check them. Eeeeeee—homework and classwork will be corrected, and then I will see them also. In addition, I will see projects and assignments as well. I will file the scores for my children. I give feedback on the exam papers of my child to the teacher. Teachers always ask us to give suggestions after homework or assignments. (PA1)*

In the same manner a teacher research participant noted:

*So, most of them [parents] have active engagement with us. I can say that they are committed enough to pay any cost for the sake of their children. They have an equal share in supporting their children with the teacher. They focus on supporting the academic activities of the students. In general, I can say that the role of parents in improving students learning outcomes is significant, and they are doing that in our school. (T01)*

The results of the study also revealed improved interaction with parents at both school and teacher level. In relation to this, a teacher research participant noted:

*Parents contribute much to the success of the students by providing food, clothing, transportation, and paying school fees. In addition, they support children academically at home. Students spend a few hours at school, but at home it is more than that. Their support in this case is crucial. We ask the student to bring his or her personal schedule. We need to know how he or she supports parents and how much time is spent doing homework, studying, and playing at home. Then the homeroom teacher will sign it. Then the parent's role here is to follow its accomplishment. Parents shouldn't order the student to shop while he or she is studying. Therefore, parents are very important for the*

*success of their children. (T03)*

Another research participant demonstrated that parents are committed enough to enhance their children's learning outcomes. He noted:

*Most of the parents are supportive, ----aaaaaaa-----to tell you the truth, they come to school at the time we need them, hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, --- related to any issue connected to students like test scores, or students' behavior, etc ----. So, most of them have active engagement with us. I can say that they are committed enough to pay any cost for the sake of their children's learning. They have an equal share in supporting their children to the teacher. They focus on the academic support of the students. They cooperate also with the school to work on the discipline of the students. By the way, this school is known for disciplining the students. You know, when the students discipline is okay in a school, their academic achievement also improves. This is my idea. In general, I can say that the role of parents in improving students learning outcomes is significant, and they are doing that in our school. (T01)*

Therefore, strong parent-teacher link for the purpose of cultivating learning outcomes is boldly described in the high performing private school (S-A). Besides, research participants have shared their feelings concerning motivational activities in the school which is revealed in the next section.

#### **4.5. Findings Related to Motivation in the School**

This part of the chapter describes the results of the study accompanying to motivational activities in S-A based on the research participants' testimony.

##### ***Parents 'Vote with Feet'***

According to the research participants, in the high performing private secondary school (S-A) parents might withdraw their children from the school if they perform poor on learners' academic achievement. One of the teacher research participants (T02) indicated: "if *the classroom task is weak and learners' performance is not better, parents will take away their children from the school.*" Moreover, they would contest teachers if learning experiences are not given to their children, for example, homework before taking their own actions. Regarding this one of the teacher research participant showed:

*You know in this school every subject teacher should give homework at least three times per week based on the type of the subject. And, if the teacher did not give homework or assignment, parents would come and challenge the teacher. They also report to the school administration. (T01).*

Another teacher research participant (T03) said “*the status learning outcomes is crucial for the future of the school.*” Besides, parents give acknowledgment to better teachers. They thank and reward good teachers. One of the parent research participants (PA1) said, “*If I’m very pleased with the work of a teacher, I will provide her or him some gift.*” Thus, parents are active in motivating agents in the school based on learning outcomes. In addition, research participants in the school demonstrated how learners’ interest to learning and the school system motivate front-line providers at school. The result is articulated in the next theme.

### **Students’ interest and strong school system as motivators**

Research participants in the school showed that learners’ interest encourages teachers in the school. One of the teacher research participants (T01) said, “*We do not have any backing or motivation from the school. What motivates us is the learners’ interest.*” The other interviewee (T07) noted, “*The core thing that creates such commitment in the teachers is neither from the school leaders nor the wages we earn, but it is from the strong enthusiasm of the learners in their learning.*” Again the other teacher research participant tells:

*I know that in other schools when the teacher teaches in the classroom, students do not latent to him or her, they talk to each other. But, in this school the opposite is true. They listen to the teacher carefully. This is a motivator for us- teachers. In other schools the teaching learning process is not conducive. Students disturb the class by moving in and out of classroom – even when the teacher in classroom. But, in this school the opposite is true. The source of motivation for the teacher is the students’ interest and commitment to learning. (T05)*

This implies that learners’ interest is considered as a motivator in the school, a kind of intrinsic motivation.

The other motivator is the system in school. Regarding this, a learner in the group discussion indicated, "*The school policy urges us to work hard. It encourages us to pinpoint what we desire to be in the future and work hard to attain it.*" The student research participants revealed that competition and discipline are the icons of our school. Besides, the school system urges front-line providers to be accountable for learners' performance. In the same way, one of the teacher research participants showed:

*The teacher is evaluated regularly by the school leaders. The teacher is valued on whether she or he has enhanced learning outcomes. If they are unsuccessful, the teacher will be answerable for that. If the teacher cannot do well, she or he will be fired immediately.* (T01)

Also, another teacher research participant reported:

*If classwork, homework, or both are not given and not commented on by the teacher; if the teacher fails to manage his or her classroom; or if he or she exhibits poor time management, the school will take immediate action, and they must leave with no excuse.* (T04).

This indicates that, the research participants assume that their tasks in the classroom might have their own consequences for the school leaders as well as parents. Therefore, such strong school system, that involves accountability, motivates agents and learners to work tough and inspire students' learning. The next theme shows how students and parents take part in the motivational activities, as reported by the research participants in S-A.

### **Parents and students recognize better teachers**

Students and Parents give appreciation for better teachers. Students reward their teachers. One of the parent research participants said:

*eeee,, yes I say thank you. If I'm very happy with the teacher, I will give him or her some gift. In addition, during X-mass Students prepare gifts for each other as well as their teachers. So, I also give the teacher a gift. I remember I did for instance last year.* (PA1)

Similarly, student research participants noted that they reward better teachers. Among the student discussants indicated,

*A few days ago, we rewarded our history teacher as he made us understand and love the subject he teaches. All the students in our class gave him a very beautiful agenda. Also, everybody has written his or her thanks on the front page of the agenda. (A student)*

The result of the study suggests that motivation by students and parents to the agents is based on the students' academic achievements.

#### **4.6. Summary of Important Findings Related to Case S-A**

The summary of major findings in this chapter is important for the readers to get answers to each research question easily and to prepare me for the cross-case analysis. And the cross-case analysis is important for the discussion part. Thus, the bullet list below highlights key findings of the study in line with the research questions.

- The analysis of research question 1 was mainly aimed at exploring the participants' thoughts or views about their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes. It has been found that participants think that academic activity is highly focused in the school and that learning outcomes are a big agenda item, and they think that it is improving or getting better.
- The analysis of research question 2 is principally intended to examine how the school's financial resources support learning outcomes. Then, it was found that financial resources are supporting the teaching and learning activities. And front-line providers are wrestling with the conundrum of a lack of resources.
- The analysis of research question 3 aimed at assessing the kind of information that is most frequently sought to assess each school's performance. It was identified that information related to students' academic performance, classroom activities, attendance, and discipline is produced in the school. Besides, a strong teacher-parent relationship to improve student learning outcomes was important.
- The analysis of the last research question attempted to explore how participants describe the motivational activities at their respective schools in relation to the learning outcomes.

Accordingly, the findings of the study indicated that parents and students are actively involved in the motivational activities on the basis of the learning outcomes, and parents vote with their feet. In addition, students' interest and a strong school system are the main motivators at the school.

Thus, this chapter presented the major findings of the study in relation to case S-A, the high-performing private secondary school in line with the four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation). Themes generated in line with these elements were described well by supporting them with the participants' voices. Next, Chapter 5 of the doctoral thesis consisted of a presentation of the findings of the study associated with the case of the low-performing public secondary school (S-B).

## **HAPTER FIVE**

### **5. Findings Related to School Accountability for Learning Outcomes in the Case of S-B (Low Performing Public Secondary School)**

The objective of this chapter is to present the key results of the study in line with the research questions. This study examined school accountability for learning outcomes by trying to understand the experiences of four cases identified as 'high-performing' and 'low-performing' secondary schools based on EHEECE results. The context and findings in the second case: low-performing public secondary school (S-B) is presented in this section. Consequently, the emerging themes generated from the data are presented in this particular case.

#### **5.1. Context**

This section outlines the results of the study in the low-performing public secondary school (S-B). S-B is a public secondary school found in Oromia region, Nekemte town. It was established in 2004 (EC) with 501 students (only in grade 9), 12 teachers, and one director after the surrounding community's pressure on the local government. The main reason for its establishment was a lack of access to secondary schools in the surrounding area. Other secondary schools were far from this community, and sometimes they couldn't get the opportunity to be admitted to these schools due to a lack of free space for more students. Currently S-B has 2,348 students (admitted in grades 9-12) and 43 teachers and three school leaders. It was considered as a low achiever based on the EHEECE result in this study. For instance, in the academic year 2020/21 EHEECE result, only 6.1% scored over 400 (presumably a better score) in this particular school. Also, students' discipline is not good in the school.

#### **5.2. Findings Related to Delegation of the School**

This section dealt with the result of the research regarding the delegation of the low-performing public secondary school (S-B), as described by research participants from the school. And, three themes emerged from the analysis and each is presented below.

## **Academic activity is over looked**

This theme shows the research participants' concern about the place given to the learning and teaching activities in the schools. A teacher research participant (T15) in this school noted: *"in my view, the school management has limitations in supporting academic task. They gave emphasis on the superficial aspects of the school. They overlooked the main task-ensuring student learning."* Likewise, another teacher research participant (T13) said: *"I think that more consideration is given to constructing extra buildings and generating internal revenue. Learning is secondary in the school. The school's attention is not on academic accomplishments."* Student research participants in the focus group discussion also indicated, *"it is none of their business whether or not we understand what we learn in class."* In the same line a teacher research participant said:

*The actors in the school, mainly the leaders, spend much of their time simply writing a report to the external body. They have forgotten addressing the main problem of student learning. (T10)*

In the same way a teacher research participant noted:

*The other challenge facing this school is related to the school leaders. The school leaders are highly loaded. This load has made them not focus on academic issues. They spent much of their time reacting to the orders coming from external bodies (like REB and WEO). They are too busy writing reports for these bodies. (T08).*

Similarly another teacher research participant said:

*I think that more attention is paid to the construction. Learning is secondary in this school. Generating income is their main focus. For example, I haven't received a single pen to this day. A larger part of the budget must be allocated to directly supporting academic activity. But the school's focus is not that, it is constructing additional buildings. You know you need many materials to support your teaching and student learning. We don't have that support. (T14)*

In the same line, one research participant said:

*The school's focus is on construction, not on teaching-learning activities. So, when we come to the actual teaching and learning process, it is overlooked. They couldn't do significant work or provide support, like working with NGOs to improve the teaching and learning activities. I think this is their main weakness. (T12)*

Another teacher research participant (T08) complains that parents need their students just to stay in school. They don't worry about their children's learning. In relation to this, another teacher research participant (T10) said: *"Parents do not trace their children's learning at school as well as at home. They don't bother about their children's learning."* A parent research participant added:

*Our students also lack discipline and interest in learning. They often quarrel with their teachers. They run away from the classroom and hide themselves in the forest. It is just chaos. It is difficult to manage them. The teachers are already tired of them. (PB1)*

Therefore, the research participants showed that academic activity did not given attention by the school agents. They contended that the teaching-learning task is overlooked. The school gave much emphasis on schooling. The result from document analysis also showed that 50% of teacher evaluation is related to other additional activities outside classroom like taking part in the anthem ceremony in the morning, and other additional routine activities. In addition, parents need their children to stay in school; they lack focus on following learning. Also, participants think that the students in the school are demonstrating low performance and lack discipline and interest in learning. Thus, academic activity is overlooked by almost all school actors. They also indicated their worry about additional tasks in school.

### **Learning outcome is muddled by numerous additional tasks**

The second theme addresses the existence many tasks unrelated to the learning experience in the school. The research participants' view reflects that many additional activities unrelated to the learning tasks are recognized in the school, such as income generation and construction. Also, there are more missions to be accomplished in the school, like ensuring increasing enrollment, access, grade attainment (promotion from grade to grade), equity, reducing dropouts, disciplining the school, staffing, and administrative tasks. And all these tasks make school agents too busy. A teacher interviewee said:

*Most of our staff, including the Heads of School, moves here and there without having the ultimate academic outcome or learning outcome in mind. They are not focused. That's what I feel. (T08)*

Many additional activities, like managing misbehavior, constructing additional classrooms, ensuring enrollment, and, income generation, were the main tasks that got emphasis in the school. Accordingly, the research participants described that constructing additional buildings, especially for classrooms, is one of the main tasks of the school. They also indicated that this task will continue in the future as long as there is scarcity of input at the school. According to my observations, the agents were busy discussing and managing the building works taking place in the school compound. Hence, their delegation is seen as enhancing input, particularly by increasing the number of classrooms. One of the teacher research participants (T11) said: "*We do have shortage of facilities, as you can see; therefore, constructing more buildings is underway to alleviate this issue.*" Another research participant also indicated that building takes much focus in the school. Another teacher research participant (T12) noted that they are constructing more buildings because they have scarcity of classrooms and other offices. Similarly, a teacher research participant, pointing at a block constructed recently in the school, said:

*This block is constructed with the money that comes from parents and the registration fee. So, according to our school, more money is allocated for constructing additional buildings. We use what we have for construction because there are more than 90 students in a classroom. (T15)*

Another teacher research participant (T13) noted, "If we get money, I wish to add more buildings in the future." This is astonishing because building is a big issue in the school.

Additionally, the other important task described by the research participants is managing misbehavior. They reported that many learners misbehave in the school. A teacher research participant (T15) noted: "*learners' misbehavior is the big issue in the school*" Another participant said:

*Our big task is maintaining discipline in the school. The school focuses heavily on students' ethics. Our students lack good discipline, so we work on managing and improving their misconducts related to wearing style and hair style. (T09)*

Moreover, another assignment that keeps agents busy is income generation. Generating internal revenue is considered as another big task at the school. The research participants also perceive that finding income is challenging for the school, and they assume that many activities are not accomplished because of a lack of budget. Therefore, the participants perceive that managerial activities like income generation are challenging for the school. The academic vice director indicated:

*Most of our internal revenue is from the community. However, the community couldn't continuously assist the school owing to the current inflationary situation, and it is a very big issue for us to generate income. Hence, we have to sell diverse natural resources like grass, wood, Eucalyptus, etc. (SD03)*

However, the main school director (SD01) showed that there are numerous things that are not finished, for instance, chairs, black boards, etc. because of lack of funds.

Finally, many respondents assume that ensuring enrollment is another task that is given emphasis in this school. The school is still trying to increase the number of learners in the classroom. But, their learning is not given attention. A teacher participant said:

*The focus on teaching and learning is weak. For example, there are 105 students in a classroom. And this has negatively affected our main task, which is teaching and evaluating students in the classroom. Students' learning quality is very low. Everybody is taking this for granted. They are still adding more students and having all these students in a classroom to enhance their income as well as to realize educational enrollment. (T10)*

In the same way, the other research participant (T15) said: “*there is a culture of admitting more students having a number of learners in a classroom, just to increase income and realize access.*” Another teacher respondent (T09) indicated: “*The school is delegated to ensure access to education.*” Also, the result of the observation revealed that the school was taking a greater

number of learners from different parts of the Woreda, while they were complaining about the large class size in the school. This suggests that the front-line providers are mainly working to ensure enrollment in the school. Besides, research participants expressed their opinion that students' learning outcome is not improving in S-B. The next theme is associated to this issue.

### **Learning outcomes is not improving**

The research participants in the school showed that they are there to produce productive citizens. However, almost all of the participants said that they couldn't realize improved learning outcomes. One of the agents in the school said:

*Yes, I feel that we are doing something to improve learning outcomes. We have a plan, and therefore we have goals. But there are many challenges between our plan and the goal we have. We couldn't get what we needed. Our goal was to create a confident student, but we didn't make it happen. An indicator can be my top student, who has an average classroom assessment result of 98% but chose to cheat during the exam. He lacked confidence and decided to cheat. (T09)*

He added:

*Let me give you another example; we said schools are here to produce confident, problem-solving, and independent students. But in exams, our students just pick the letters A or B or C or D --- they just answer without thinking, even with arithmetic questions, without working it out. The reason is that again they lack confidence in academic work. (T09)*

The other participant- T11 noted: *“The realization of the learning outcomes is a big issue. Students are killing their time in this school without learning. They suffer from a lack of quality learning.”*

Moreover, another chemistry teacher said:

*--- We talk a lot about the students' poor performance, but we don't see much change in what we could do better. Many of our students are really underachievers in the worst sense that you can imagine. The learning outcome is going down and down without*

*improving. Many of them have lost interest in coming to school; they don't want to work hard, and they sometimes only come into the classroom during exam time. To be honest, we are facing 12th grade students who can't write assignments properly; you can't understand what they are writing—poor writing skills—so I get confused at times and wonder how these students came in here in the 12th grade.(T16)*

This suggests that the school is not realizing enhanced students' learning outcomes. In my view the reason behind this learning crisis in the school is lack of attention on assisting students' learning. Many of the research participants maintained this view. For instance, the head of the Woreda Education Office indicated that most public schools emphasize on improving the inputs and the process. He assumes that to improve students' achievement, the school must first focus on improving these two useful points mentioned above. He said that schools are now improving the process, however still have not realized the learning outcomes and therefore have not yet met the needs of the community. In addition, the school focuses on helping learner with poor family backgrounds by purchasing uniforms, exercise books, and other educational materials. Moreover, the school encourages disabled learners to be admitted, though there are no promising conditions for them. Furthermore, the issue of gender equity is additional serious issue at the school. The school is accountable for enhancing female students' enrollment and reducing their dropout rate. Besides, from the documents (annual reports and plans), the school focuses on students' grade attainment, enrollment, and dropouts. Hence, the school lacks attention on supporting the students' learning. They attempt to realize schooling. And, the participants showed that the learning outcome was not improving in their school. Financial resources and how they support learning at school were another point of discussion among the participants, which is the focus of the next section.

### **5.3. Findings Related to Finance in the School**

In this section the findings of the study linked to finance are presented based on the opinions of the research participants from the school. Two themes emerged from the analysis and each is described below.

## **Finance is not supporting the learning activity**

The finding of the study shows that the type of activity that takes much budget allocation in the school is construction. The research participants said:

*The school's management focuses on the construction of buildings. Much attention is paid to this activity when allocating the budget. They know that there are many other issues related to the very purpose of the school, which is learning and teaching. But management lacks focus on such activities. I think it is important to support the teaching-learning process by spending more money on materials such as models, charts, and high-quality boards that have a direct and immediate impact on student learning. Unfortunately, that's not their focus. (T14)*

Similarly a teacher research participant T08 said “*I know that our leaders build buildings, but I doubt they have a similar emphasis on improving students' academic achievement.*” He added, “*We have financial problems. However, the majority of the funds raised are utilized to construct additional buildings.*” Similarly, a teacher research participant showed:

*The problem in this school is persistent; we have financial problems, so it is difficult for us to get a pen. You know that the teacher needs a pen, notebook, and other materials to accomplish his or her task in the classroom. However, most of the money we raise goes towards constructing buildings at the school. (T09)*

According to our observations, the blackboard is not suitable for writing because it is torn and rough, making it difficult for students to read. The financial policy on the other hand, is not concerned with resolving these issues. In the same way T12 said “*The financial resource is not enough! But, mostly it is allotted to the construction of buildings.*” In addition, T13 said: “*I think more attention is given to construction.*” This finding is triangulated from the data analyzed in the document. A similar finding was detected in the analysis.

*Hojjii waan hirmaannaa uumataan hojjetaman adda baasuun*

TL	Gusa Hojii Hojjetame	Sifirto	Baayina Hojii		Humna nama hirmat		Shallagii Humna Namaa		Meeshaa Naannoo/ Maallaqatti		Bosii Maallaqa calla		Ida'ama Waliigalaa	
			K	R	K	Ra	Kar	Ra.	Kar	Ra.	Kar	Ra.	Karo.	Ra.
1.	Ijaarsa mana Galme M'wardiy	Lak	1	1	5	5	500	300	450	400	9908.8	10108.	9908.8	10808.4
2.	Ijaarsaa daree dabalataa	Lak	2	2	0	0	0	0	5000	7000	453,000	453,00	460,044	460,044
3.	Teessumaa barattootaa hojjechisu	Lak	30	40	5	5	1500	1500	0	0	60000	64589	50650	66089
4.	Bitaa meeshaale barnootaa	Lak	1	1	47	23	5640	2760	100	100	3600	3000	9340	6132.5
5.	Suphaa daree barbnootaa	Lak	12	12	5	5	1500	1500	0	0	5000	9930.5	10000	11430.5
6.	Biqilaa kennuunsuu fi dhaabuu	Lak	4000	4000	47	47	3000	2200	0	0	2000	2000	5000	4200
7.	Ibsaa diriirsuu	M	200	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	2500	2500	2500	2500
8.	Mooraa ciruu	M	200	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4000	5200
9.	Mindaa hojjetootaa kaffaluu	Ji'a	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48,000	48,000
10.	Suphaa dallaa mana barumsaa	M	100	1509	3	3	360	360	350	350	9500	9500	10100	9500
11.	Deeskii barattootaa suphame	Lak	25	20	5	5	1500	1500	0	0	0	0	1000	1500
Ida'ama							1350	9820	5,90	7850	545508.8	55462	610542.8	559315.4

*Garaagarummaan galii hirmaannaa uummataa gararraatti ibsame 474,457 Dabalataan ijaarsa daree dabalataaf Q. 200,000 waan jiruuf*

**Figure 3:** Finance spent on activities in the low-performing school

This annual report (Figure 6 and Table 5) is written to the Woreda Education Office (WEO). It is written in Afan Oromo since it is the working language of the region. The report focuses on the activities accomplished and the budget they consumed in the academic year 2014 (EC). Since the photo taken is not clear, I tried to summarize it in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Annual report of the low-performing public school (S-B) of the 2014 Ethiopian Academic Year

No	Activities	Total cost in ETB
1	Construction of the record office and guards' house	10,808.4
2	Construction of additional classroom	460,044
3	Classroom maintenance	11,430.5
4	Maintenance/establishing of the electricity system	2,500
5	Maintenance for the fence	9,500
6	Buying teaching learning materials	6,132.5
7	Buying additional students' desk	66,089
8	Repairing of students' desk	1,500

9	Planting and afforestation (4000)	4,200
10	Cleaning the school compound	5,200
11	Salary for supportive staff	48,000

Table 5 shows the annual financial report of the school represented as case S-B, the low-performing school. Most of the budget comes from the parents, school fees, and selling some materials. This internal revenue is allocated for eleven items (see Table 5). Among these items, the budget allocated to buy materials that support the teaching and learning activities and additional related materials is very small. Construction took the majority of the budget, 79.03% (484, 282.9 ETB) of the internal revenue and budget. Only 11.79% (73,721.5 ETB) is spent on learning activities (like instructional materials and desks). This implies that the document analysis also indicated that financial support is highly focused on construction, as it takes up most of the school's budget.

As one interviewee (T15) said, *"the school is very poor. No computers, laboratories, libraries, etc. More of the finance goes to constructing buildings."* Talking about this issue, an interviewee said:

*Our source of income is the registration fee. A regular student pays 300 ETB for registration, and he or she will pay 350 with penalties. They also have to pay 450 ETB for the transcript. And we build additional classrooms from this source.* (T09)

Similarly, a participant said:

*More money is allocated for constructing additional buildings. We use what we have for construction because there are more than 90 students in a classroom. There is no library or laboratory, and so we are constructing more buildings from year to year.* (T14)

Similarly, participants revealed that finance was not supporting teachers' in-service training at school. Another informant (SD03) commented, *"We do not have adequate training so far. This is mainly caused by lack of finances and the leverage to do that."* One of the research participants (T10) said, *"There is no fund for organizing training for the skill gap. There is a skill gap among the teachers. However, the school doesn't have the money to fill this gap."* Also, another research participant (T12) in the interview about training in the school noted, *"No, there*

is not. They don't have a plan for organizing training on professional-related gaps." Similarly, another research participant noted:

*The school lacks focus on supporting teachers work. We are teaching traditionally through chalk and talk. The culture of utilizing different teaching materials is not common in our school. The main reason is a lack of attention. If there had been focus, the budget would have been sourced from different sources. The big problem is a lack of focus on supporting the teaching and learning activities. (T11)*

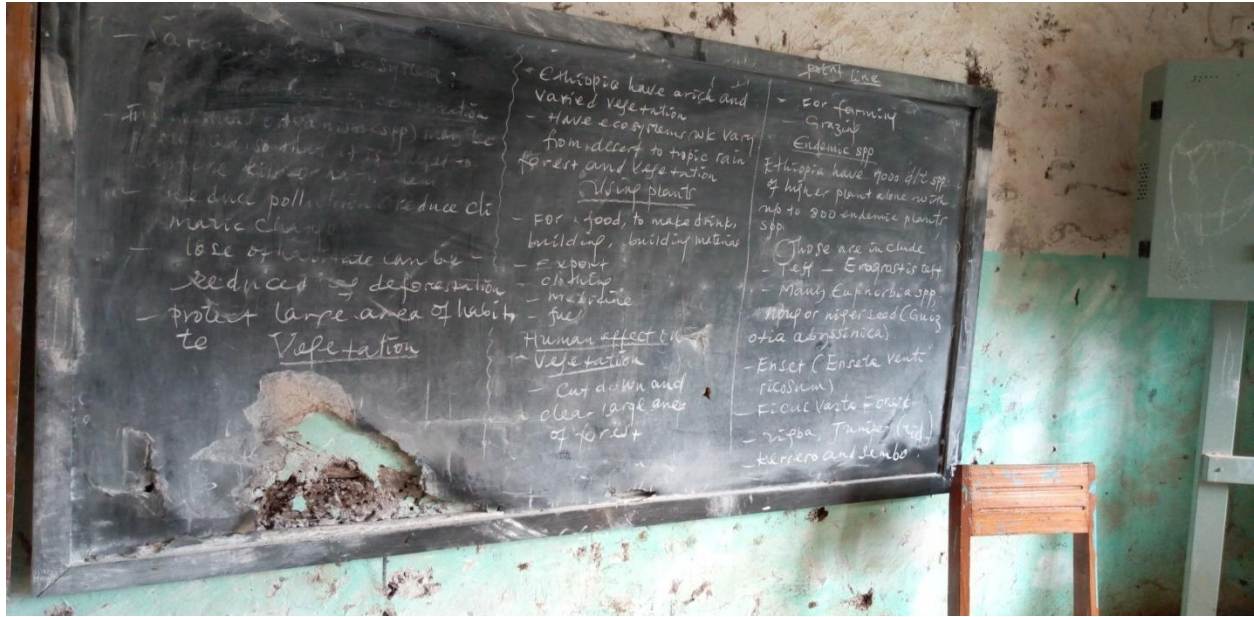
Thus, one can clearly note that the financial policy of the school couldn't give focus on supporting learning at school. The participants also raised issues related to lack of resources.

### **Lack of resource is a big agenda**

Almost all research participants stated a lack of resources at the school. For instance, a teacher participant (T08) showed: *"This school lacks resources; for example, we do not have a laboratory. Besides, there aren't enough classrooms. Furthermore, blackboards are of poor quality (some have holes in them)." The second director participant (SD03) said "we were unable to meet the goal due to a large classroom and other school resource shortages."* Another teacher participant (T14) added *"in our school, a lack of desks is common."* Similarly, T11 said *"Inputs like qualified teacher, library, laboratory, financial resource, classroom, are insufficient."* The other teacher research participant added:

*This school has a shortage of resources; for example, we do not have a laboratory (not working effectively). Besides, there are no important stationery items in the classroom, and most of the blackboards are not quality (some have holes in between), and all did not get attention. Temporarily, the library room (a 3x4 area) is arranged beside the staff room. As a result, it is difficult for students to read with focus because of the disturbance or noise from the next room (the teachers' staff room). (T08)*

From my observation, basic teaching materials (e.g. blackboards) needed to support student learning were not able to function properly. They couldn't get any emphasis. Figure 4 can be an example.



**Figure 4:** A blackboard used in the low-performing public school

Similarly, the head of the Woreda Education Office said:

*The main problem is the tight budget, especially in our city; therefore the schools are struggling to construct buildings that weren't their job. So enough budgets have to be allocated to schools, but that is not the reality. (EE01)*

A participant (T09) also said, "We have a serious financial problem. We have a very limited amount of money." Similarly, another respondent, the director of the school, said:

*The resources are not enough. Our classroom is cramped—100 students in a classroom; we don't have enough seats. There is no laboratory. We have computers provided by a university, but there is no room for ICT again. Students do not know how to use computers. This implies that we don't have enough resources that support the learning outcomes, and this will hinder the realization of learning at school. (SD01)*

Therefore, participants discuss the limited resources that are not coherently used to improve learning. Another focus area of this study was related to information at school and is presented in the next section.

#### **5.4. Findings Related to Information in the School**

The third focus of this study deals with the production and use of information in schools. Information is important to see the performance of the school. It helps also to identify the focused tasks of the school. Two themes emerged from the analysis and it is described below.

Therefore, sharing information between school and actors including parents is crucial to identify school gaps and solve them. The result of the study notes that information shared at school contains school attendance, student discipline, club activities, construction, test scores, financial issues, test types, percentage covered by classroom assessments, exam time, load distribution, portion coverage, school dropouts, shortage of instructional materials, class schedule etc. According to the participants, the recurring data is about school attendance, discipline and construction and are the focused issues in school.

##### **Efficiency, discipline and construction activities**

Efficiency (internal) in this section is taken as a general term that describes information related to dropouts, repetitions, or grade attainment of students in the school. The recurring information that is exchanged in the school is student discipline, school attendance (both students and teachers), and construction. Many research participants in the school specified that attendance is the most common data type in the school and it is reported to the woreda education office monthly, quarterly and annually. One of the research participants said:

*The other information exchanged dominantly is about school attendance to identify dropouts. We get it through our homeroom teachers. They report the number of students who are present and absent. (SD03)*

Similarly, T08 said information related to, for example, attendance is needed only at the end of a semester to identify students who can and cannot sit for the final examination. Moreover, another teacher participant said:

*We exchange information on, for example, what we did in the clubs (co-curricular activities)—this much is done and that much is left. In addition, students' attendance is another data point we exchange with school leaders. (T13)*

In the same line a vice director of the school said:

*The other information is related to student attendance. We get it through our homeroom teachers. They report the number of students who are present and absent. We mostly need attendance when we multiply papers during the mid-exam. This is to save our paper.* (SD03)

Furthermore, next to school attendance students discipline is another issue that takes much air time in the school. One of the teacher participants (T10) in the school said “*we share information with parents only when students cause disciplinary problems or when they are absent from school.*” This means that the parent-teacher relationship is not based on learning outcomes, which is one of the school's biggest challenges. A vice director said:

*We have a schedule for discussion with the teacher. We exchange information with the homeroom teacher about the student's discipline. But there is a gap with family. They don't come when we call, and when they do, they want to discuss student discipline but not school income problems. They don't want to earn money for the school.* SD03

A student in the focus group discussion also indicated: “*The school does not worry whether we really understand or not what we are learning in the classroom; they only come to us when they feel that we are out of discipline.*” Similarly, one of the participants said:

*The school leaders do not feel responsible for students' academic performance. The only thing they worry about is students' discipline (including cheating, and other observable behavior). But, they have already forgotten about the quality of learning.* (T08)

The research participants also pointed out that the information that is exchanged in the school is also related to the number of passes or failures. For instance, an interviewee (T11) said: “*The data exchanged between the teacher and school leaders is a number describing the passing or failing of the students. For instance, if a student scores less than 50 in a subject, he will fail.*” Another participant (T10) indicated: “*Data related to pass/fail is another number exchanged between the school and the Woreda Education Office.*” Similarly, a participant (T13) said: “*We discuss the number of passes and fails.*” Also, a vice director participant, SD01 also said: “*We discuss about the number of pass/fail.*”

Besides, one of the participants (T14) said, *"The issue raised for discussion is more about constructing buildings. Academic issues take up a small proportion of the discussion time."* Likewise, an expert from the Woreda Education Office (EE02) noted that it is common for construction-related information to be included in the report.

Moreover, information related to portion coverage, club activities, test scores, load distribution, financial issues, percentage covered by classroom assessments, test types, exam time, school dropouts, shortage of instructional materials, and class schedule are the main focus of the school. Generally, data related to efficiency, discipline and construction activities are frequently produced in the school. The research participants in S-B also raised issues related to parent-teacher relationship which is presented in the next sub-theme.

### **Loose parent - teacher relationship on learning**

The result of the study noted that the exchange of information between teachers and parents is absent in the school. Regarding this a teacher participant T08 said *"Since my day one at this school, I have not come across a parent who came and asked me about his or her children's learning."* Another teacher research participant (SD04) noted: *"we do not have any communication between parents and teachers. The link between parents and teachers is disconnected. Yes, I know this is a big issue at this school."* A research participant (T13) said: *"Parents need to come to school and supervise their children's learning. It would have been good if they could have requested the teachers how they are teaching. This was not the case in this school."* In this case, another research participant (SD03) said: *"We call parents to school when their children commit disciplinary problems. But, in relation to students' performance, there is no communication."* A research participant (T12) said: *"The school convinced the community to build more classrooms, but they could not convince them to build our children."* Another teacher participant (T11) noted that *"parents do not follow their children's learning. Some of them do not know whether their students are going to school with their exercise books or not."*

A research participant (PB1) said, *"As to my knowledge, the issue that brings us to school is only learners' lack of discipline. When the school calls upon us, for the same issue, we will instantly come and discuss with the school leaders."* Another teacher participant (T08) indicated:

*"Parents come only when the school dismisses their children from the school due to disciplinary issues, just to negotiate."* Also, a research participant (T12) reported: *"Parents come to school only when they are called by the leaders of the school."* Another teacher participant (T15) said, *"Parents come to school only when learners violate rules."* In supporting this, another teacher participant (T16), said: *"parent never come to school to see the learning of their children except when they violate school rules; that is all!"* Another teacher participant (T09) said: *"We see parents in school compound only when the students violate the school's rule; or, when they are absent from school for many days; or, to discuss about the income issue in the school."* A research participant (T14) argued: *"The parent-teacher link is not based on enhancing the quality of learning."*

This shows that when parents come to school twice or once a year (after they are invited by the school) they do not place emphasis on academic achievement. Information related to student learning outcomes is not the focus of discussion between school and parents as they do not find the right agent (teacher) to talk with. Thus, loose teacher-parent connection is demonstrated in the school concerning students' learning. The study also examined the last design element at S-B which is the focus of the next section.

## **5.5. Findings Related to Motivation in the School**

This section dealt with the result of the study related to motivation in the low-performing public secondary school (S-B), as described by research participants from the school. Four themes emerged from the analysis and each is presented below.

### **Unfocused and blurred motivational activity**

This particular theme tells us that motivational activity in the school is weak and not clear. Participants believe that it is not related to learning outcomes. The main rewarding activities in the school are those that are not directly related to learning, such as the construction of additional buildings, income generation, and teacher participation in administrative tasks. One of the educational experts in the Woreda Education Office (EE02) revealed that one of the main criteria used for rewarding schools is making buildings. He noted that S-B is rewarded as it has already constructed two more classrooms. In addition, a research participant (SD01) said that teachers who actively take part in administrative tasks like generating income might be

rewarded. Moreover, rewarding based on proximity to the school management is popular in the school.

A respondent (T13) said: "The teacher who will be awarded is the one who is active in participating in different managerial activities; doing more leadership work is rewarding." The other participant (SD01) said: "We reward those who have helped us with administrative work; we encourage such types of teachers. We mention their names in front of parents to motivate them." A participant (T14) said, "Being a member of a committee is a rewarding activity. Only those who are members of different committees and who support administrative activities are encouraged and motivated in this school." Another respondent said:

*Involving yourself in different managerial activities is rewarding. They give a certificate of recognition to someone who is close to the school leader. They appreciate someone who runs here and there and who does routine activities related to managerial activities. They never give a recognition letter to a teacher who focuses only on his or her teaching activities. They don't encourage individuals who are strong and tell them when they are wrong. (T11)*

A participant (SD03) also said: "generating a better income is a rewarding activity. For instance, last year they awarded us computers as a school since we have produced better internal revenue." Another respondent said:

*Rewarding is not based on changes in students. A teacher who has lesson plans, does not waste class time, and has social acceptance will be recognized. Moreover, someone who writes different reports and supports female students is accepted at this school. But it doesn't depend on the changes observed in the students. (T10)*

Besides, many participants complain that the criterion lacks transparency. Others were not sure about the presence of motivational activities in the school. For instance, participants reported that punishment is not common in the school. A teacher participant (T08) said, "There is no reward in this school, no motivation, and no follow-up to motivate teachers." A participant (T16) said, "I think that there is neither reward nor punishment in our school." A director participant (SD01) said, "The school has not sanctioned any teacher so far. We simply give a piece of guidance to correct her or him. Therefore, no punishment, but we do have the culture of

*rewarding.*" One of the head teacher (T09) participants noted, *"When a teacher commits mistakes, we secretly call up her or him at the office and give her or him piece of advice."* Covering mistakes committed by teachers or directors is common in the school. Hence, the school has a very weak motivation system for learning outcomes. The next sub-theme describes the relationship that students' lack of interest in learning has with agents' motivation in school.

### **Students' lack of interest in learning demotivates agents**

The second theme under 'motivation' is that students' lack of interest demotivates school agents. The result of the study showed that agents think that students perform poorly in school. They also have no interest in education. Many of the participants indicated that this type of student behavior is considered a demotivating factor for agents.

One of the teacher participants (T08) indicated, *"I think students' lack of interest in their learning is a big issue in our school. They don't know what is expected of them and why they are here."* The other teacher (T09) added *"students have low interest for learning. As a result many teachers are discouraged to teach such types of students."* Similarly, another teacher participant said:

*All staff members of the school think that students are not good enough in their academic performance. They call their students as simply "low achievers"; "poor performers" or "interest losers". As a result of this most of these teachers are demoralized and discouraged in teaching their students and they oftentimes use passive teaching method. They teach without preparation; they simply enter class just to cover the portion. (T08)*

A participant T15 said: *"Students' lack of interest is a demotivating activity. This is demotivating the teacher as well as the leaders."* Another participant indicated:

*Lack of interest to learning is a demotivating student behavior in this school. As to my understanding the student does not have the interest to learn. There are students who write on three to four subjects in an exercise book. This is the result of their disinterest in their education. (T12)*

Similarly, a respondent (T09) showed: *"The student is not moving forward; there is no interest, and it is the teacher who is running lonely."* Therefore, students' lack of interest in their learning at school is one of the demotivating factors in the school. The other point that was mentioned by the participants in this school (S-B) was related to the involvement of parents in the motivational activities, which are presented in the next sub-theme.

### **Parents' weak engagement in motivation**

The third theme indicates that parents' involvement in sanction and rewarding activities is very weak. Parents interviewed at this school stated that they wait for the school to summon them. They do not come to the school proactively and question the agents about the students' progress. One of the parent research participants reported, "*The school could not call up on us to discuss. They are not available to the community. Generally, they do not discuss with the surrounding community.*" An interviewee (T14) said, "*The teacher-parent link is very low.*" In addition, a teacher research participant (T08) said, "*We don't know our learners family. This is because; they didn't come and ask us about students' learning. We don't know whether our learners have parents or not.*" In supporting this parent, respondent 4 indicated: "*The family left his student at school and disappeared. They are not following their children's learning.*" In supporting this participant (T16), she said: "*The parent never comes to school to see the learning of the students except when they violate school rules; that is all.*" Thus, parents do not hold the school to account for learning of their children. Besides, participants raised issues about answerability in the school, which are explained in the next sub-theme.

### **No answerability**

The result of this study also suggested that agents externalize about students' under achievement in school. One of the teacher participants (T09) indicated: "*I did everything I could to teach them well in class, to give assignments; I don't want to curse myself because I did my best.*"

In relation to this, the other respondent said:

*School leaders are laissez-faire. They do not feel responsible for students' academic performance. The only thing they worry about is students' discipline (including cheating, and other observable behavior). But, they have already forgotten about the quality of learning.* (T08)

In addition, one of the participants in the focus group discussion- a student indicated:

*School agents do not want to answer any of our questions. They insult us when we ask them questions, looking for solutions to our problems at school. There is no culture of*

*accountability in our school. So we are afraid of asking questions of our school leader.  
(A student)*

Again, different stakeholders do not feel accountable for the students' learning. One of the teacher participants indicated:

*Many of our students attend school by selling local charcoal during their free time. They come from Komto (a very small village) that is found at a distance. I believe that many of the leaders in the town, including the Woreda Education Office, passed through a similar situation. I think they have already forgotten the hardship they have passed through, which is why they are not feeling responsible for students' learning. Hence, I think that unless a leader or woreda education experts feel accountable, it is again difficult to change the performance of our students. (T09)*

Hence, the agents in the school do not assume that they are accountable for the learners' academic achievement. Finally, the results in line with the research questions are summarized below in the next section.

## **5.6. Summary of Important Findings Related to Case S-B (low-performing public secondary school)**

The summary of important findings in this chapter is important to the readers to get answers to each research question easily and to prepare me for the cross-case analysis that is a base for the discussion part. Thus, the bullet list below highlights key findings of the study in line with the research questions.

- The analysis of research question 1 was mainly aimed at exploring the participants' thoughts or views about their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes. It has been found that participants think academic activity is overlooked in the school and that learning outcomes are muddled by numerous additional tasks; thus, learning outcomes are not improving.
- The analysis of research question 2 is principally intended to examine how the school's financial resources support learning outcomes. Then, it was found that finance is not supporting the learning activity, and lack of resources is a big agenda item in this school.

- The analysis of Research Question 3 aimed at assessing the kind of information that is most frequently used to assess each school's performance. It was identified that efficiency, discipline, and construction activities are the dominant types of information produced in the school. Besides, a loose parent-teacher relationship on exchanging information related to students' learning was noticed in the school.
- The analysis of the last research question attempted to explore how participants describe the motivational activities at their respective schools. Accordingly, the findings of the study indicated unfocused and blurred motivational activity in the school. Besides, the weak engagement of parents in motivation was noticed. Moreover, the study showed an attitude of no answerability for learning outcomes in the school.

Therefore, this chapter presented the major findings of the study in relation to case S-B, the low-performing school, in line with the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation). Themes generated in line with these elements were well described by supporting them with the participants' voices. The next chapter of the doctoral thesis consisted of a presentation of the findings of the study related to the high-performing public secondary school (S-C).

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. Findings Related to School Accountability for Learning Outcomes in the Case of S-C (High-Performing Public Secondary School)

The goal of this chapter is to present the key results of the study in line with the research questions. This study examined school accountability for learning outcomes by trying to understand the experiences of four cases identified as 'high-performing' and 'low-performing' secondary schools based on EHEECE results. The context and findings in the third case: high-performing public secondary school (S-C) is presented in this section. Consequently, the emerging themes generated from the data are presented in this particular case.

#### 6.1. Context

S-C is one of the seven public schools in Nekemte town. This school was established in 1963 (EC). Currently, the secondary school has totally 3,139 pupils, 100 teachers, and 17 supportive staff. The school has two school leaders (the main director and the academic vice director). The results of the national exam (EHEECE) for the academic year 2020/2021 showed that S-C performed better compared to other public schools in the town. Accordingly, 52.73% of students in the school scored better grade points ( $\geq 400$  score). Students and parents do choose to come to this school as it is well known for its discipline as well as its highest scores in the national examinations. As a result, the school was rewarded at the regional and federal levels.

#### 6.2. Findings Related to Delegation of the School

This section dealt with the result of the study related to the delegation of the high-performing public secondary school (S-C), as described by research participants from the school. And, the three themes emerged from the analysis are presented below.

##### **Emphasis on students' learning outcomes**

The result of the study showed that the school places more emphasis on students' academic performance. Many participants indicated that the school's main mission is to improve student learning outcomes. In relation to this a student participant (A student) in the focus group discussion described *“I think that the school is focusing on improving our skills”*. A teacher participant (T20) said *“Well, the school tries to shape children of the surrounding community to produce qualified and good generation. That is the main purpose of this school.”* In addition,

another teacher participant (T18) noted *“education is the basis for all things. So, the school is established to realize it.”* Another teacher participant (T19) also indicated that the school works for the generation. The main director (SD05) of the school indicated that the Woreda Education Office delegated us to assure quality education which is the main job of the school. And, the participants described that learning outcome is improving. A teacher participant reported:

*“The learning success of students can be measured by the results of the tests in the classroom. In addition, it can be assessed by the national exam results and their discipline. These put the school first among the public schools in this city. We have experienced teachers. The school is the first choice for both students and their parents. Students' scores are better. The school is leading in terms of academic performance, especially in terms of national examination results.”* (T17)

Similarly, a teacher participant indicated that compared to other public schools the school is performing better. He said:

*“We can evaluate a school based on the results students scored on national examinations and their promotion from grade to grade. So, when we evaluate it in this way currently, it is better compared to the previous years. But I think that we still have to work hard. The result of classroom assessment has improved in recent years. In general, compared to other public schools in the town, this school is performing better.”* (T18)

In the same way, a teacher participant noted:

*“We know that the learning outcome is an indicator of the success and failure of both the student and the teacher. This school is performing better compared to other public schools. Therefore I can say that the school is on the right track. It is the number of passes and the highest scores out of 700/600 that put the school first among public schools in the town. Similarly, the school is rewarded at the regional level.”* (T21)

The students' discipline is also assumed to be good in the school. A teacher participant (T17) said: *“Students respect their teachers in this school. This is one of the characteristics of the school. In general, students' discipline is good compared to other schools.”* Another participant (T21) noted that students' learning outcome is important for not only the students but also for the school's image.

Similarly, the result of the study showed that the school gives much emphasis for students' exam scores. A student participant from the school in the focus group discussion noted:

*“This time the school is offering tutorials for 12th grade students. I think it's good to begin the tutorial from 11th grade. We took tutorials during summer by paying fees to our teachers. We expect the tutorial to continue in the evening also. The focus is on improving students' exam results.”(A student)*

They also consider that the result of national exam is important for both students and the school.

A student participant in the focus group discussion said:

*Now, we don't want to score 100% only in the classroom assessments. We need to score a better grade in the national examination and make our school competent. So we need quality education. We don't need to waste our instructional time. (A student)*

Hence, students also expect the school to prepare them for the national exam. Supporting students through tutorial and make up sessions is clearly stated in teacher evaluation checklist.

The school tends to realize students' learning outcomes.

*The goal is to educate students from the surrounding community in this comfortable environment. It is intended to make it easier for them to study strictly according to the existing curriculum. The school works on children's learning. The main task is to make them learn; to facilitate their learning; when problems arise, we look for solutions. By checking the teacher's readiness against his plan and tracking the work in the classroom, we can see the student's learning outcomes. That is our focus. (T20)*

Thus, the school gave emphasis to improving student academic performance.

Similarly, the result of the study indicated that classroom activity is the basis for improving learning outcomes. Participants indicated that classroom activity is given focus. A teacher participant (T21) said: *“We place more emphasis on improving classroom activities by creating various stages for sharing experiences between our teachers and staff and consistently conducting classroom observations.”* They also stated that realizing teaching learning activity is the primary mission in the school. A teacher participant (T19) noted: *“The primary purpose of this school is to conduct teaching and learning. It is accountable for this mission; nothing else except realizing the teaching and learning activity.”* Actors commit themselves for the classroom activities. The same participant indicated:

*I think the classroom activity is improving. The school fulfills this with responsibility. The teacher carries out this important activity without wasting time. Most of our teachers are experienced and responsible. So if we compare this school with other schools, it is*

*performing better and developing better in this regard. Everyone at this school is dedicated to this task. (T19)*

Agents perform the activities with understanding and enthusiasm. The same teacher participant reported:

*In this school, the classroom activity is given attention. Most agents in the school are serious about it. They do it with focus. Therefore, in this school, the classroom activity is given attention by all agents in the class. They accomplish it with great enthusiasm and understanding. The school leaders also observe sessions consistently. (T19)*

Teachers' readiness is better in the school. A teacher participant (T21) said: *"We have enough experienced teachers. The willingness of these teachers is also good. They prepare well for class activities."*

Students also reported that the classroom activity is helping them. A student participant (S1) in the discussion indicated: *"The classroom activity is helping us in our preparation for the exam, though it is not enough. It shows us directions for further study."* It is making the contents they are learning clear and understandable. Another student said:

*It helps us a lot! It makes clear what we were confronted with while reading. We ask questions when we are confused. This makes the content we learn clearer and more understandable. We learn things from our teachers. (A student)*

Besides, the school leaders follow this activity seriously. In relation to this a teacher participant (T18) reported: *"we have a computer lab with sufficient number of computers. There are also some activities in chemistry and biology laboratories. Students are also motivated to use teaching materials from local sources"*.

Also teachers attempt to make the classroom activity practical. Teaching aids are available for supporting learning since classroom activity is given attention. In supporting this teacher participant said:

*As more attention is paid to the classroom activity, different materials, including teaching aids, are available. For example, we have enough computers at school. Internet is accessible; Reference books are purchased for the library to make learning easier for students. We encourage students to use the library and the school compound is attractive and conducive to learners. (T20)*

Besides teachers are making students' learning meaningful using different local materials. A teacher participant said:

*In addition, since we don't have a lab technician and the necessary laboratory instruments, we are trying our best to make students' learning meaningful using different local materials. We also try to support students by providing tutorials (T21).*

Hence, the research participants S-C provided emphasis to students' academic achievement. These participants also showed their view on the cooperation of actors in the school.

### **Cooperation among all stakeholders on academic activity**

The result of the study also showed that collaboration between all stakeholders is better to improve learning in the school. Participants indicated that parents and teachers worked together to improve student learning outcomes. Many parents work with the school to work on learning. In this regard, a teacher participant said:

*I can say that many parents support their children's learning in collaboration with the school or teacher. For example, if the teacher is absent from class for days, they call and inform to the homeroom teacher or the principal. Of course, there are also a few percent of parents who don't care about their children's learning. (T19)*

Parents are working actively with the school on supporting learning. A teacher participant said:

*When the school invites parents to a meeting, almost all parents come to attend the meeting. Compared to other schools, the parent-teacher relationship at this school is better. They work with the school to improve student academic performance and discipline. (T21)*

Parent and teachers cooperate to improve learning in the school. Another teacher participant said:

*Parents come when we need them. They are available at any time we ask them to come. Often, we exchange information about their children's academic performance and discipline. We prepare a report card and summarize their children's scores in different subjects (T18).*

Parents trace students' classroom activities. A teacher participant (T20) reported: *"There are parents who report about classroom activities like home work and feedback. If the students' exercise book is not corrected by the teacher, they call and complain to the teacher."*

In relation to this a parent participant indicated that the school encourages them to follow their children's learning: She said:

*The school prepares a document containing the role of parents and makes it available to parents at the beginning of the school year. Parents should read and understand the terms and conditions. We are expected to implement the principles throughout the academic year. The document explains our roles in tracking children's learning. For example, if parents are not educated, they are asked to track their children's actions and behaviors at home and at school. If they are educated, the document encourages them to play an additional role - looking at students' exercise books at home. It makes us aware of what is expected of us in the children's learning. (PC1)*

Besides, the result of the study showed that school leaders trace the classroom activities closely. Participants showed that school leaders are committed to minimize cheating during exams. A teacher participant said:

*The school leaders supervise the examination room and the examinees seriously. They want to see how the examination is going on according to the rules and regulations of the school. It is forbidden for students to have mobile phones in the exam room. If the student is found with such material, he or she will be rejected from the exam. (T18)*

Similarly, a parent participant noted that classroom activity is given more consideration. She said:

The teaching-learning process is not like other schools. This is being seriously considered and any reluctance on the part of students and teachers could have dire consequences. No compromise on lesson assessment results. If a student fails, he or she will fail, no score/mark will be added. In this school, students study hard and follow lessons seriously. (PC2)

School leaders conduct classroom observations. Students in the focus group discussion showed that the school works hard to improve the learning outcomes. Teacher participant (T19) noted that there is no additional activity that diverts the attention of agents from academic activities, except co-curricular activity.

*Yes, we do have additional tasks like working as a unit leader. But, we also actively participate in different clubs, though these are co-curricular activities. If you take Gada Club, they have tried to make the school compound attractive, as you see. They have*

*made 'Oda', which is the culture of Oromo; it has made the school beautiful. Therefore, we participate in different clubs. Of course, many of these activities are co-curricular (T19).*

The main director of the school (SD05) noted that the Woreda Education Office needs the teacher to accomplish tasks in the school on time. They also need students to be in the classroom on time. The Woreda Education Office needs the school time not to be wasted.

The result also showed that the school tries to improve agents' professional skills by promoting training between departments. Participants indicated that sharing experiences among the staff is used as a means for improving teachers' skills. A teacher participant indicated

*Our main training in this school is exchanging experiences among our staff. We exchange experience among departments. We exchange best experiences related to the teaching and learning activity, how to teach different contents, and how to improve the students' exam scores on the national examination (T21).*

Similarly another teacher participant noted that training in the form of staff experience sharing is held in the school. He reported:

*We do have different short trainings in the form of experience sharing. We took training on our subjects, and we have exchanged experiences among us on how to teach different contents in the classroom, how to plan our lessons, and how to prepare our students for the national examination (T20).*

This means that those involved in the school collaborate to improve their professional skills, which has a positive impact on student learning outcomes. According to the research participant student discipline was another topic they gave emphasis in the school.

### **Emphasis on student discipline**

The result of the study showed that student discipline is another mission of the school that is given great importance in the school. Participants noted that student discipline is a priority. A student in the focus group discussion noted:

*Students are disciplined; they stay in class reading even when the teacher is absent. This is good. If you see students in other schools, they linger here and there without purpose. This is not the culture of this school. In general, the discipline of students in this school is improving. (A student)*

This has enhanced the acceptance of the school. Another student in the same discussion said:

*As far as I'm concerned, if we compare with other schools, this school is better in many ways. It is recognized as equivalent to private schools and is not considered as an ordinary public school. I believe the main reason is that the discipline of both students and teachers is good. Student misbehavior is widespread at other public schools. They don't want to read or have academic discussions with each other in the classroom. The way they receive their teachers is not good. But at this school the opposite is true. (A student)*

Similarly, a parent participant (PC2) indicated that discipline is important in this school. She said “*The students of this school have good discipline. If they come from other schools, the adjustment to this culture takes place immediately after two months. Here in this school, discipline is very important to the community.*” They indicated that ensuring discipline is given attention (A student). A teacher participant (T17) said that they attempt to produce good citizens. Therefore, maintaining student discipline is a key goal of the school. The next topic of discussion is finance, which is another subject addressed in this study.

### **6.3. Findings Related to Finance in the School**

In this section the results of the study related to finance are presented based on the views of the participants from the school. Two themes emerged from the analysis and each is presented below.

#### **Finance for supporting learning**

The result of the study showed that finances support learning at the school. Participants indicated that financial resources facilitated classroom activities through the purchase of teaching materials. Budgets are allocated to support learning in the classroom. A teacher participant indicated:

*The school provides money for materials to support learning at the school when requested by teachers. The teaching activity is therefore financially supported in this school. If the teacher asks for financial support to facilitate learning, the school will not hesitate to provide money according to its capacity. (T19)*

Instructional materials are given emphasis in budget allocation in the school. Another teacher participant added:

*We purchase stationery for exams and other administrative activities. Additionally, budgets can be allocated to departments if they want to create instructional materials. For example, in my department we bought globes and the like. Educational materials that support the teacher's work can be allocated a budget. We also buy the best books to reward the best students at the end of the academic year. (T20)*

For instance, stationery, chalk and renewing the classroom environment are given emphasis in the budget allocation. This is triangulated by the observation result. This result indicated that classroom materials that support the teaching activities are given focus by the school. Quality blackboards, neat classroom, good desks are available in the classroom.



**Figure 5:** The classroom environment in the high-performing public school

In relation to this the main director (SD05) of the school said:

*We buy stationery for assessment activities. We also use the internal revenue to buy chalk and pens for teachers. In addition, we use it for repairing different services like light, water, fences, toilet rooms, supporting poor students, and cleaning purposes. The*

*Woreda Education Office couldn't support us except for salary. They provide us with only a few stationery papers. (SD05)*

Similarly a teacher participant indicated:

*Parents contribute money to the internal revenue of the school at the beginning of the year in the form of a registration fee. The internal revenue of the school is used to buy stationery, computer ink, and repair classrooms like blackboards and desks. This needs a huge budget as the number of students is large, especially considering the materials mentioned above (T19).*

The finance is also supporting researches conducted in the school. The main director of the school (SD05) noted: “*we support teachers who conduct research by providing different resources, including financial resources*” Hence, finance is supporting learning. In addition, a teacher participant stated:

*The finance system in this school has its own structure. It is spent more on supporting students' learning. For instance, we buy papers or stationeries that support the assessment activity. We produce different work sheets for students using these papers, we support the best research, and we also spend on other instructional materials that aid students' learning (T21).*

The result of the study also showed that finance is supporting to improve the learning environment in the school compound. The director of the school (SD05) indicated that finance is allocated for the road (cobblestones) inside the school compound that connects classrooms, offices laboratories and libraries. Similarly, a teacher participant (T20) noted that different pictures, drawings, charts and graphs are supported by the finance to draw them on the walls of the classrooms. This is evidenced by the observation result. Hence, budget is also allocated for improving the school environment. Besides, the sources of income were the next point of discussion by the research participants.

## Diversified sources of income

The result also showed that the school has diversified sources of income. Participants noted that diversified sources of income are explored in the school. The main director of the school said:

*We collect cost sharing from the student, and we use it economically. Secondly, we now collect donations from various NGOs and government organizations for different purposes. For example, Telecommunication Company supported us in establishing e-learning and buying computers, which cost around 2 million birr. Moreover, we have a school grant provided by the government, and we use it properly. It is given based on the number of students in the school (SD05).*

In addition, the documents analysis showed that the sources of internal revenue include selling different natural resources, registration fee, house rent, student transcript, different services like auditorium and a mill house. This income is spent mainly for renewing the school environment and buying different educational materials.

10. Galii keesso gabbisuu ilaachiisee  
10. 1. Galii fi Maddaa isaa

Lak	Madda isaa	Qarshii	Yaada
1	Gurgurtaa adda addaa	126095.00	
2	Galmee barattota	848115.00	
3	Gurgurtaa Qoraan	550.00	
4	Kiraayii mana	8600.00	
5	Ragaa barataa	238750.00	
6	Kiraayii Baburaa	7500.00	
7	Kiraayii Galmaa Hundegaleessa	7500.00	
	Ida'ama	1237110	

10.2 . Baasii Gurguddoo  
Kolonii balblaa fi Taapeela dhaabsisuufi Meeshaalee barnootaa adda addaaf

## **Figure 6:** Sources of income and the expenditures in the high-performing public school

The document analysis also shows that this report includes both the financial and the activity report. The financial report mainly focuses on the use of internal revenue. For example, the 2014 (EC) annual report states that the money is mainly spent on improving the physical environment in the classroom, including renewing ceilings, windows, desks, blackboards and electric lights in classrooms. The activity report includes the number of students enrolled and completed, club activities, assessment results at various intervals, and income generation.

A teacher participant noted:

*We have limitations in producing income for the school. One source of income is the registration fee. For instance, a newcomer pays 600 ETB, while regular students pay 500 ETB for registration. We have coffee trees and large and aged trees. So we use them as an additional source of income (T20).*

The school's principal (SD05) explained that the Woreda Education Office provides the budget only for salaries. The school's main activities are supported by internal revenue from various sources, though, the resource is still limited. The next point of discussion in this study was about information.

### **6.4. Findings Related to Information in the School**

The third focus area of the report of this study deals with the production and use of information in the school. Information is necessary to see the performance of the school. It helps also to identify the focused activities of the school. Four themes emerged from the analysis and they are presented below.

#### **Students' academic achievement and discipline are closely monitored**

The result of this study showed that students' academic performance and discipline are the dominant type of information exchanged in school. The participants showed that parent-teacher discussions focused on students' academic performance and discipline. A teacher participant indicated “*the school calls them for meetings at least three times a year. The point of discussion includes students' academic performance, discipline, attendance, and the school's income.*” Similarly another teacher participant (T20) noted: “*they discuss mainly on student*

*discipline*” In addition, another teacher participant added that the school community frequently raises issues related to improving students’ skills, exam scores, and discipline. He said:

*Most frequently, information exchanged among actors and stakeholders in this school is on how to improve students’ skills, school improvement, income generation, discipline. Information related to students’ assessment results, portion coverage, student discipline, and exam preparation is also discussed with the teacher. We are also open to the feedback coming from parents. (T21)*

Additionally, data from student assessments in the classroom is frequently shared among school actors. A teacher participant (T17) said “*We also prepare report card on students’ classroom assessment results and discipline to parents. It helps them to know the status of their students’ academic performance and discipline.*” Moreover, a parent participant said that she uses different mechanisms to follow her children’s learning and discipline. She said:

*I track my children's learning through various mechanisms. I advise them regularly. My daughter attended her education at a private school in the city. However, due to financial constraints, I withdrew her and brought her to this school. This school was good for my child because discipline is best among the public schools in the city. But my daughter points out the school's shortcomings. And I always advise her to work independently. She must study hard regardless of school restrictions. I try to encourage her to focus on her learning activities. (PC1)*

Similarly, another teacher participant (T18) indicated that report card on student classroom academic performance and discipline is prepared by the homeroom teachers every end of semester for the parents as well as the students. In general the main director of the school (SD05) noted that the formal written report on the school performance and discipline is also presented to the Woreda Education Office monthly, quarterly and annually. Besides, from my observation students’ academic performance in the national examination was displayed publicly. The number of high scorers and the score were posted in the director’s office. This implies that information related to students’ academic performance is important data in the school. Another of the research participants' points of view on information was linked to attendance and classroom tasks.

## **Attendance and classroom activities**

In addition, the result of the research noted that attendance, classroom activities and income generation are information exchanged among stakeholders in the school. Participants showed that reporting attendance on time is an important activity (T17). Besides, participants reported that parents seek information about the classroom activities in the school. A teacher participant indicated:

*There are parents who actively follow about classroom activities like home work and the feedbacks from the teacher. If the students' exercise book is not corrected regularly by the teacher, they call and report to the home room teacher or the school leaders. (T20)*

In addition, information related to the number of registered, promoted, detained students, classroom attendance, and types of students based on their abilities are exchanged among actors in this school.

Moreover, participants showed that portion coverage, school improvement, and income generation are among the information exchanged in the school. The next topic focused by the research participants was related to the cooperation among school actors.

## **Cooperation among stakeholders in producing information on learning**

Similarly the result of the study showed a strong parent-teacher relationship on improving students' learning and discipline in the school. Participants indicated that parent-teacher relationship is better in the school. A teacher participant noted:

*Parents come immediately when called by the school or teachers. When they come, we discuss how to follow up on their children's school activities and how to improve their discipline. They also have better relationships with home room teachers. (T17)*

Many parents track their children's learning. The main director of the school reported:

*There are many parents who follow their children's academic performance. They monitor the assessment results of their children. They sometimes ask the school management why their child is not looked after when he or she is absent from school. They want their children to be traced seriously by the school (SD05).*

Parents cooperate with teachers to improve learning. A teacher participant said:

*Parents come when we need them. They are available any time we ask them to come. We often exchange information about their children's academic performance and discipline. We prepare a card and summarize the children's academic results in various subjects. (T18)*

Similarly another teacher participant said:

*I can say that many parents do support children's learning in collaboration with the school or the teacher. For instance, if the teacher is absent for days from class, they call the homeroom teacher or the main director of the school. Of course, there are also a few percent of parents who don't care about their children's learning (T19).*

Participants reported that teachers and principals advise parents on how to support their children's learning at home. Some of the participants revealed that the school works closely with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and meets all parents by organizing various meetings on the school premises (T20). Another teacher participant assured that parents are working actively with the school on supporting learning. He said:

*If the school calls parents for a meeting, almost all parents will come to participate in the meeting. When we compare this with other schools, the parent-teacher relationship is better at this school. They work with the school to improve students' academic performance as well as discipline (T21).*

Hence a strong parent-teacher relationship on producing and utilizing information related to students' learning is noted in this school.

The result also indicated that there is positive relationship among agents and students. Participants showed that the relationship between school leaders and teachers is positive. A teacher participant (T17) said: *"in addition, teachers and school leaders have a positive and strong relationship. They usually discuss on student discipline, and the effective utilization of instructional time."* Another teacher participant (T19) added *"the relationship we have with the management is positive."* Participants also indicated that agents have also smooth relationship with students.

This implies that positive relationship between agents and students is identified in the school. Hence, cooperation among the school actors on improving learning was better. Another important topic in this study was linked to motivation.

## **6.5. Findings Related to Motivation in the School**

This section dealt with the result of the study related to motivation in the high-performing public secondary school (S-C), as described by participants from the school. Two themes emerged from the analysis and each is presented below.

### **Motivational activities based on student academic performance and discipline**

The result of the study indicated that student score on national exams and discipline are the main rewarding activities. Participants reported that students' score on national exam is a rewarding activity. The main director of the school (SD05) reported: *“the first is the result of our students in the national examination. We are leading all public secondary schools in west Oromia in what we have scored in the national examinations. This is one of the major criteria.”* Managing students' misbehavior is another rewarding activity in the school. Working diligently on discipline and students exam results are rewarding activities. A teacher participant (T17) indicated: *“the school rewards certificates to very few teachers who work diligently on discipline, students' exam results, and reporting attendance on time.”* Other participants reported that improving students' academic performance and discipline is a rewarding activity. In supporting this teacher participant indicated:

*At the end of each school year, the school issues certificates to a small number of teachers. They issue the certificate to those who teach well in the classroom and improve students' academic performance and discipline. Another criterion for the reward is the activity as a unit leader. This is because it is an additional work that focuses on following students' discipline. In addition, classroom teachers are candidates for the award, especially those who have improved students' discipline and academic performance.*  
(T18)

Another teacher participant (T19) noted that the school received rewards from various levels of government, including the federal level, because students' test results were better. From my observation, there are many rewards (like certificates and medals) in the principal's office from

parents, WEO, NGOs and other stakeholders. Similarly, a teacher participant (T20) noted that teachers who contribute to improving students' academic performance could be rewarded. In addition, improving the school environment, drawing various pictures and diagrams related to the content in the classroom, improving students' learning outcomes, and providing tutorials are worthwhile activities for teachers in this school. Finally, a participating teacher (T19) demonstrated that improved student learning outcomes are more than just an incentive for agents in the school. The next point of discussion among the research participants was related to the school context as a motivator.

### **The school context as a motivator**

The result of the study also indicated that teachers' professional autonomy, the attractive school environment and being accepted by the students are also considered as motivators. Participants indicated that teachers do not have financial incentives. Only few teachers are given a certificate from the school at the end of the year. Many of them complain such kind of motivational activity and reported a weak motivational activity in the school. However, they indicated that the school respects teacher's professional autonomy. In this regard a teacher participant (T21) reported: *“One thing that enhances our motivation is that the leaders recognize and respect your professional autonomy.”* Besides, the school compound is attractive. The same participant said: *“the school environment is really conducive and attractive. We have the necessary facilities like water, latrine, electric power, computers, and discipline, and we work with experienced teachers.”* In addition, students nominate teachers who can teach tutorial (is paid). In this regard, a teacher participant (T20) said: *“teachers who can teach tutorial classes are those who are nominated by the students.”* Hence, teachers' professional autonomy, conducive school environment and student acceptance are considered as other motivators for many teachers in the school. Moreover, it is aforementioned under 'delegation' that parents' involvement in reporting to the school leaders or homeroom teachers about the classroom activities is another motivator in the school. Of course, parents do nothing in S-C without reporting to the school leaders and homeroom teachers. But, such involvement by parents is another factor in motivating agents in the school. The study's findings in case S-C are summarized below.

## 6.6. Summary of Important Findings Related to Case S-C

The summary of important findings in this chapter is important to the readers to get answers to each research question easily and to prepare me for the cross-case analysis which is important for the discussion part. Thus, the bullet list below highlights key findings of the study in line with the research questions.

- The analysis of research question 1 was mainly aimed at exploring the participants' views about their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes. It has been found that the school stakeholders gave emphasis on improving students' learning outcomes. They described that classroom activity is the basis for improving learning outcomes.
- The analysis of research question 2 is principally intended to examine how the school's financial resources support learning outcomes. Then, it was found that finance is supporting the learning activity, and the school has diversified sources of income, though finance is tight.
- The analysis of research question 3 aimed at assessing the kind of information that is most frequently used to assess each school's performance. It was identified that students' academic achievement and discipline are the dominant types of information produced in the school. Besides, attendance, classroom activities and income generation are other types of data exchanged. Moreover, parent-teacher relation on improving learning was very strong.
- The analysis of the last research question attempted to explore how participants describe the motivational activities at their respective schools. Accordingly, the findings of the study indicated that student performance on national exams and discipline are the primary rewarding activities in the school. Besides, teachers' professional autonomy, the attractive school environment and acceptance by the students are also considered as motivators.

To sum up, this chapter presented the major findings of the study in relation to case S-C, a high-performing public secondary school, in line with the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation). The next chapter of the doctoral thesis consisted of a presentation of the result of the study in case S-D, the low-performing private secondary school.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7. Findings Related to School Accountability for Learning Outcomes in the Case of S-D (Low Performing Private Secondary School)

The objective of this chapter is to present the key results of the study in line with the research questions. This study examined school accountability for learning outcomes by trying to understand the experiences of four cases identified as 'high-performing' and 'low-performing' secondary schools based on EHEECE results. The context and findings in the third case: low-performing private secondary school (S-D) is presented in this section. Consequently, the emerging themes generated from the data are presented next.

#### 7.1. Context

This section outlines the results of the study in S-D (low performing private secondary school). S-D is one of the four private schools in Nekemte town. This school was established in 2000 (EC) by taking a small number of students in preschool and primary schools. Currently, the school has 297 pupils, 16 teachers and 9 supportive staff only in the secondary school. The results of the national exam (EHEECE) for the academic year 2021/2022 showed that S-D performed less compared to other private schools in the town. Accordingly, only 7 (9.59%) students in the school scored better grade points. Students and parents do not strictly obey the school's order. They think that nothing will happen to them as long as they pay the school fee. Therefore, the community thinks that accountability is weak and discipline is loose in the school.

#### 7.2. Findings Related to Delegation of the School

This section dealt with the result of the study related to the delegation of the low-performing private secondary school (S-D), as described by participants from the school. And, two themes emerged from the analysis and each is presented below.

##### **Agents are carrying alone the weight of the world on their shoulders**

The result of the study shows that learning outcome is not a big agenda for every actor in this particular school. According to the participants of the study academic activity is not given enough attention by parents and students. Parents do not courageously follow their children's learning. Students lack interest to learning in the school. On the other hand, agents in the school strive to realize the learning outcomes alone. Participants said that parent-teacher relationship

can improve students' academic achievement. But, parents are reluctant in working with the teacher in improving learning in the school. In relation to this a teacher participant (T22) said:

*In this school students are usually encouraged to have a better academic performance but not achieved. I believe that if the relationship between parents and the teacher or school is strengthened the learning outcomes can improve.(T22)*

In the same line the main director (SD06) of the school indicated that parents come to school when the students' exam result is low for criticism. A parent participant also noted that parents are not active in this school. He reported:

*I am the leader of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of this school this time. I have been working for the last 4 years. But, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is not active in this school. It is only its name which is present, no activity. In profession I work on the well-being of children, spiritually. Therefore, I joined this association with my interest. As to me the relationship between schools and parents should be strengthened to improve learning outcome. (PD1)*

The same participant added that parents never come back to school once they bring their children to the school. He said:

*Parents in the school send their children to school, but do not follow their learning. They do not ask their children about the place where they spent the whole day. They don't come to school for their child's learning. Unless parents work with the school we can't bring change on students' learning outcomes. I think that the school couldn't accomplish its responsibility in this case. (PD1)*

Similarly, students lack interest for learning. They are not committed to the learning activities in the classroom as well as at home. One of the participants (T23) indicated that students lack interest and commitment for learning. Another teacher participant reported:

*"We advise them every morning before beginning class. Additional advises are given by the unit leaders in their classrooms. But, still a number of students do not have the interest and commitment to their learning."(T22)*

The same teacher participant (T22) added that teachers are always ready to teach but the reaction from the students is not encouraging. They don't have the interest to engage themselves to the learning activities actively. It seems that many of them do not read at home. They don't have notes written on the exercise books. This has affected the teaching learning process negatively. In supporting this student participant in the focus group discussion said

*The relationship we have with our teachers is good. They are committed to support us. But to our side we are not motivated. We lost interest. Many of our teachers want to help us academically. But, the problem is with us. Our elders who graduated from universities in different fields are sitting idle, no job. (A student)*

Similarly, another student participant in the focus group discussion said “*we students are not interested in our learning. Many of us have lost hope.*”(A student)

On the other hand, the result of the study indicated that agents (teachers and directors) are committed enough to support students. A teacher participant in the school showed that teachers and school leaders are committed. He said:

*“Teachers and school leaders are committed to the success of their students. But, students’ interest to learning is very low. They want to pass freely from class to class. They are not committed. They lack focus. They copy assignments from each other; this is common.” (T23)*

In addition a student participant (A student) noted “*the relationship we have with our teachers is good. They attempt their best to support us academically.*” Similarly, a teacher participant (T24) said “*we as teachers are always alert to teach in the classroom. However, there is a big problem related to lack of interest on the part of the students.*”

Another point raised by the participants of this study was related to training for teachers. Many of the participants indicated that teachers do not get in-service trainings, short professional trainings that enhance their skill and approaches to their teaching activities. A teacher participant (T23) indicated “Training for teachers is not given attention. I haven't seen such training since the last two years.” The main director of the school (SD06) said “Training is not enough. We know that teachers have to update themselves professionally, but this is not the case in this

school.” Similarly, a teacher participant (T24) noted *“I can say that there is no training for agents. Because the training needs some amount of money/ budget. Therefore, they don’t want to facilitate it for us.”* In the same line another teacher participant (T22) noted that the training given in this school has no consistency. For instance, only two short trainings are arranged for teachers in the last four years. The vice director (SD07) of the school also indicated that the training in this school is not effective. Hence, agents are running alone; other stakeholders seem to act like spectators.

### **Learning outcome is not improving**

The result of this study indicated that participants believe that learning outcome is lower in the school. A parent participant in the study noted that compared to other private schools, learning outcome in this school is lower. He said:

*“As compared to other private schools in the town, students’ academic achievement is very low. I don’t think that they do have the necessary knowledge. They spent at school without learning. The school is in the state of academic failure. It should be improved. Students are not learning well. To the maximum 10% of the students perform better. The rest are not good academically. Hence, we expect a huge effort to improve.”* (PD1)

A teacher participant (T22) noted that there are many students scoring low grades in the school. Academic performance is not improving. Another teacher participant (T25) said *“our students are lagging behind academically.”* The vice director indicated *“the learning outcome in this school is not good. The national exam result in the previous year indicated that only 7 teachers got better score.”* In addition, the main director of the school said

*Of course, the result in the previous year was not good. But, we are planning to reverse it. For example, we are working on their psychology. We are trying to minimize their anxiety. We are also searching for the probable areas for the questions.* (SD06)

Despite all these irregularities in learning outcomes, many participants in the school reported that the school’s mission is to serve the society. One of the teacher participants said:

*“This school is established to serve the society. For example, there is no wastage of time in this school. We start and end our work on time, every time. The purpose of the student*

*is to learn. The purpose of the teacher is to teach. The important thing is to serve this society. The school fee is not excessive; it is fair to the economical level of the community. Therefore, its purpose is to serve the people.” (T24)*

*Another teacher participant indicated:*

*“The mission of this school is not only academic but also discipline. The school tries to realize creating disciplined citizens and good people. Students should have good behavior in their family as well as country. Since, our school is established with the help of religious organization, it is influenced by this group. We are not teaching religion. But, we use the bible teaching to discipline our students. The mission of this school is related to socially, academy and discipline.” (T25)*

*Similarly a teacher participant revealed:*

*“Another mission of the school is to make children behave well. To realize this, we usually pray to God in the morning with the school community. The purpose is to achieve biblical purpose. We know that when it comes to religion, there are different types of taught. But, we are not saying here that you should accept this or that belief. We pray for them every morning that they will have the right character to serve this people. Therefore, another mission of the school is to work on children to develop positive behavior.”(T24)*

*In the same way a teacher participant (T22) indicated that discipline is a big agenda in the school. The participant said: “Discipline is the big agenda in this school. The school works much on student discipline. But, students are not responsible.”*

Hence learning outcome is not focused by all stakeholders in a balanced manner. Some actors have better focus while others not. Students’ behavior should be expected to be good which another mission that the school is delegated for. However, the school is not realizing improved students’ learning outcomes. In my view the reason behind this learning crisis in the school is lack of coherence among stakeholders on supporting students’ learning. The school focused on schooling. The document analysis showed that 50% of teacher evaluation is related to other additional activities outside the classroom, like taking part in the morning anthem

ceremony and other additional routine activities. This might be because; the school wants this time to deliver important messages to the community. In general, the school lacks focus on supporting students' learning. And, the participants indicated that the learning outcome was not improving in their school. Financial resources and how they support learning at school were another topic of discussion among the participants, which is the focus of the next section.

### **7.3. Findings Related to Finance in the School**

In this section the results of the study related to finance are presented based on the views of the participants from the school. Two themes emerged from the analysis and each is presented below.

#### **Lack of attention on allocating budget for supporting the learning activity**

The findings of the study indicated that it is challenging to allocate budget for supporting learning in the school. A teacher participant said that finance is not focused in supporting learning. He reported:

*Often, the subject of mathematics requires different models. But, the school is not focused on buying this stuff. So, we order students to do what they can do. But, instruments such as dies, maps, etc., cannot be made by the students; we teachers do not have the ability to buy them as well. And, the school had to buy such ones, but we never asked them because the school does not have such culture. The school has a problem with spending money. They don't want to spend money because; they are not sure about the fate of the school, they afraid that the school might phase out. But, I don't think they have a shortage of money. It is very difficult for them to provide financial support for classroom teaching and learning. We don't have any reference books for many subjects. I asked several times a year ago by letter but there was no reply. They don't like to spend money at this school. They have no attention or knowledge. (T25)*

Similarly, the main director of the school (SD06) indicated that they couldn't buy instructional materials because of lack of focus in allocating budget on such types of activities in the school. He indicated:

*This time our source of income is only school fee. The owner of the school gives emphasis on paying salary. The finance is not supporting the teaching learning process directly. For instance, we couldn't fill skill gap of our teachers by providing trainings frequently. In addition, we couldn't buy important materials including technology that make our teaching learning activity meaningful and practical. (SD06)*

In addition, another teacher participant noted that there is no quick response to allocating budgets for supporting learning from the school management. He reported:

*“They have no problem with salary; they pay the teachers on time. But, there is a serious problem with purchasing materials to support student learning. There is no quick response or attention for allocating budget for supporting learning. For example, we asked to buy volt meters etc. but, no answer was given. The people who run the school have no experience in educational issues, so they don't pay attention. If individuals who ran this house were educated people, it would have been competent school. They have no financial problems but lack of interest and attention. Many of them are priests. And they don't know about education in detail but about the gospel.” (T24)*

Moreover, the vice director assured that it is difficult to get money for buying materials that support students' learning. He noted:

*They pay salary in time and buy stationery. But, they are not responsive to materials that support students' learning by making the learning activity practical and meaningful. They are not active enough to buy such material essential for students' learning. (SD07)*

In the same way a parent participant (PD1) indicated that the school lacks focus on supporting class activities. He reported: *“the problem of the school is lack of focus on allocating budget to the school activity by the administration body. The school leaders do not know about education. Their background is not related to education.*

This implies that the school lacks attention on allocating budget for buying materials that support learning.

From the observations I conducted, the classrooms and blackboards are not to the standard. They are smaller in size.



**Figure 7:** The classroom environment in the low performing private school

In addition, the black boards are not smooth enough to write on easily by the teacher. As a result, it might cause problems on students’ learning activities. Similarly, most of the laboratory rooms are without the necessary chemicals and tools. They don’t have laboratory technicians that facilitate the activities in the room. Only ICT room is better in its composition. A number of desktop computers are available for the students to practice, though most of them are not functional. Hence, the school does not have a serious problem with buildings and number of classrooms and laboratory rooms, though it lacks the necessary instructional resources that enhance learning in these rooms. In relation to this a teacher participant indicated

*We do have shortage of technology for instruction. Only little laboratory equipment is available in the school. Many of them are not functioning well. Therefore, it is challenging for teachers to make the teaching learning process meaningful and effective.” (T26)*

Therefore, participants from the interview indicated that the leaders do not support financially the learning activities in the school. They do not want to spend money on renewing the school and classroom environment consistently. But, the world of education is dynamic, it needs updating the school in its physical as well as its learning activity. Hence, they lost attention on supporting the students’ learning financially. The next subject dealt in the study is related to the element information.

#### 7.4. Findings Related to Information in the School

The third focus of this study was related to the production and use of information in schools. Information is necessary to see the performance of the school. It helps also to identify the focused activities of the school. The themes emerged from the analysis are presented below.

##### The exam results and teaching learning activities

The result of this study showed that students' exam results and teaching learning activities are the main information collected and produced in the school. In relation to this, one of the participants (T23) said that they sometimes discuss on how to administer examination during exam times. Similarly, a teacher participant indicated:

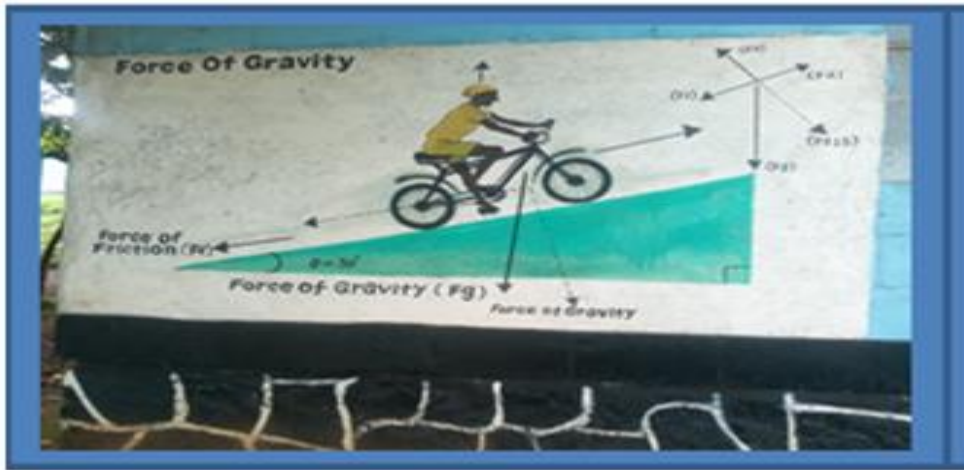
*We collect information about how the teacher is teaching well or not from the students. We exchange also information about the status of the continuous assessment at the end of the semester. Occasionally, the overall process of the teaching and learning activity is discussed in the school. This includes wastage of instructional time, any conflict between the teacher and students. In addition, we seek information about portion coverage in comparison with the plan we have. (T22)*

In addition, students' exam results are important information produced in the school. In relation to this one of the participants (T24) indicated "we also report continuous assessment results to the vice director through the head of the department." In the same way, a teacher participant reported "at the end of each month, we report the percentage of continuous assessment results completed or covered. We also, prepare student grade report at the end of the semester and academic year." Moreover, from my observation students' national exam results were posted in the director's office with the pictures of the scorers.



**Figure 8:** Students' exam results posted in the directors' office

In addition, some curricular contents are also part of the information produced in the school. The buildings have different attractive pictures that are related to students' learning. For instance, I have seen a picture related to contents in physics, specifically, force of gravity. Students can access such information that can support their learning in the school compound.



**Figure 9:** A type of information on the walls of the low-performing private classrooms

Hence, students' academic performance, learning and teaching activities are the other focus area of information produced in the school. Another focus area of this study was related to information at school and is presented in the next section.

### **Student discipline, attendance and school fee**

Many participants indicated that students' discipline is the other type of information produced in the school. Many stakeholders in the school gave emphasis on students' discipline. For example, one of the participants (SD07) in the school indicated that students' discipline and securing peace in the school compound are given attention by many actors in the school. According to the main director (SD06) of the school showed that information on school and regulation is exchanged to students. One of the teacher participants indicated

*The other issue that we exchange with parents is mainly about students' discipline. Most importantly, we believe that if there is discipline, the improvement of students' grades will be realized. (T22)*

Similarly, another teacher participant (T26) indicated that they discuss with parents about student discipline.

Besides, school attendance was another data exchanged among actors in the school. Participants indicated that it is mandatory to include the number of absentees based on their gender. For instance, a teacher participant (T23) showed “*in our formal report we include the number of male and female absentees in the school.*” From the document analysis it is noted that the focus of the school report is mainly on attendance and classroom assessment results per subject, similarly another teacher participant said:

*We need to answer questions like how many students are absent, and why they are absent. This is held daily. When a student is absent for two consecutive days, we immediately report to the unit leader. Then, the unit leaders call for the students’ parents.* (T24)

In the same way, the vice director of the school (SD07) indicated that they frequently collect information about the reason behind students’ absenteeism from their parents and this will be reported to the school management body. Hence, the result of this study indicated that discipline and student’s attendance was among the types of data produced in the school.

Another point focused in the school was about information related to financial activities. In relation to this a teacher participant noted

*Besides, data will come to us from the school management about the names of parents or students who couldn’t complete the payment, school fee. We in turn, deliver it through the student to the family.* (T24)

Similarly, another teacher participant (T23) indicated that financial issue (school fee) is one of the points of discussion with parents. In the same line, a teacher participant said:

*“Parents and the school exchange information mainly on school fee. For instance, this discussion will be held when the school wants to increase the amount of school fee. And, many parents come to school to defend on the increment.”* (T26)

Hence, student discipline, attendance and financial activities are additional information produced in the school. The next theme is related to the link between parents and teachers.

### **Parent-teacher relation on improving learning is very weak**

The result of the study showed that the exchange of information related to students' learning between parents and teachers is loose in the school. A participant (the vice director, SD07) from the school reported that parents do not focus on following students' learning. He said: *“parents are not cooperative. We are not working with them to the required level as they are not interested to work with the school on students' learning.”* A parent participant said:

*“Parents in the school send their children to school, but do not follow their learning. They do not ask their children about the place where they spent the whole day. They don't come to school for their children are learning. Unless parents work with the school we can't bring change on students' learning outcomes. I think that the school couldn't accomplish its responsibility in this case. Parents come only when children are expelled from the school due to disciplinary problems.”*(PD1)

Similarly, a student (S5) in the focus group discussion indicated:

*Parents never come to school to ask any think like our learning progress. They are too busy. So they never come frequently, we don't have that culture. They have already fulfilled the material we want so that they need not to come to school. The next is our role. But, we are not successful.* (A student)

In addition, a teacher participant noted that many parents abandon at school. He reported:

*We have a big problem in relation to family – teacher relationship. Parents come to school and get angry at the end of the semester or year, when their children's grade becomes very low. Many of them abandon their children at school and never come back to school to monitor their students' learning. Others do not have the know-how of tutorial session provided at school. Parents consider their students to be efficient and independent on their academic career when they reach secondary school. Therefore, they do not follow up on their education.* (T24)

Moreover, the vice director indicated that parents are not active in working with the school on improving learning. He noted:

*In this school parents do not come when called for meetings. We send letter of invitation to them through their children but they do not accept it. They are not active in working with the school on students' learning. This is one of our challenges and it is discouraging our agents at school. (SD07)*

In the same way a parent participant (PD1) indicated that parents come to school only when their children are expelled from the school due to disciplinary issues. This implies that parents do not trace their children's learning at school and have loose relationship with the school or teachers in such cases. The study also explored the last element, motivation, at the schools which is the concern of the next section.

## **7.5. Findings Related to Motivation in the School**

This section dealt with the result of the study related to motivation in the low-performing private secondary school (S-D), as described by participants from the school. Four themes emerged from the analysis and each is described next.

### **Inconsistent and unconvincing motivational activity**

This particular theme tells us that motivational activities in the school vary in its form and criteria. It is also unconvincing for many participants in the school. Almost all of the participants indicated that motivational activities are not significantly visible in the school. For instance, one of the teacher participants said:

*No rewarding activity. They want to motivate students than teachers. I think they do like that since they frustrate parents. They want to attract the attention of parents to the school. But, this couldn't bring change on the students' learning outcomes. Of course, they reward one or two teachers at the end of each academic year. But, this is not motivating the teacher. We have already raised this issue in the school. We have reflected our disappointment. They reward each other. I think that if teachers are motivated this school will become competent not only at Nekemte town but also at regional level. By the way, I don't know the criteria they use to reward. (T23)*

Similarly, another teacher participant indicated:

*To tell the truth, there is no motivational activity in the school. They could sometimes motivate a teacher based on their acceptance by the students and his or her behavior in the school. But, currently this is not the case in our school. I think this is one the weaknesses of the school. The teacher works here fearing God. They sometimes reward those who have a positive relationship with them. We have told the problem several times. But, they ignored that. Also, there is no punishment so far. On the other hand, parent do not involve in motivation. (T24)*

Moreover, the participants reported that the owners of the school do not come and discuss with us. They never come physically to motivate them. One of the participants (T25) said: *“The owner of this school never came in person and said welcome and good luck. They only pay us salaries in distance.”*

### **Carrying out various routine activities is a rewarding activity**

Participants indicated that carrying out various routine activities is a rewarding activity in this school. For instance, the main director of the school indicated that individuals who reduce conflict in the school, plant seedlings, work hard on the overall process of their activities are rewarded (SD06). Similarly, a teacher participant said that efficiency and securing school compound, and being available at the queue every morning are the rewarding activities (T20). Besides, rewarding individuals who have positive relationship with leaders is common in this school. In addition, another teacher participant indicated *“no wasting time, respecting school’s principles, portion coverage, student’s ratings, are rewarding criteria.”* (T24)

On the contrary other participants indicated that the criteria used to reward agents at school are not clear for them. And, these unclear criteria created disappointment among the teachers. For example one of the participants indicated:

*Of course, the school rewards one or two teachers at the end of the academic year. But, this is not motivating the teacher because; we don’t know the criteria they use. We have already raised this issue and reflected our disappointment in the school. They reward each other. I think, if teachers are motivated based on the result of their work, the school will become competent not only at Nekemte but also at the regional level. (T23)*

Similarly, another teacher participant (T22) said: “Sorry, I don’t know the criteria they use”

Hence, the school has a very weak motivation system for learning outcomes. The next sub-theme describes the relationship that students’ lack of interest in learning has with agents’ motivation in school.

### **Parents’ weak engagement in motivation**

The third theme indicates that parents’ weak engagement in supporting children’s learning demotivated agents in the school. One of the participants, the vice director, indicated that parents do not focus on following activities of learning. He said

*In this school parents do not come when called for meetings. We send letter of invitation to them through their children but they do not accept it. They are not active in working with the school on students’ learning. This is one of our challenges and it is discouraging our agents at school. (SD07)*

Another parent participant reported that parents do not care about their children’s learning at school. Once they bring their children to school at the beginning of the year, they rarely come back to see their children’s learning. Similarly, a teacher participant said “zero follow up by parents about their children’s learning” (T25). In the same line, a teacher participant (T22) noted “parents do not trace their children’s learning. The relationship we have with parents on working together in improving learning is very weak.” The vice director, SD07, added that the reason behind their being inactive in following their children is that they do not feel that they are responsible for their children’s learning at school. They throw their children and never come back to school.

### **Students' lack of interest in learning demotivates agents**

Another theme emerged in this study is that students’ lack of interest demotivates school agents. Many of the participants in the school showed that students’ interest for learning is very low. This has affected the motivation of agents in the school. One of the participants indicated

*“Teachers and the school leaders are committed to the success of their students. But, students’ interest to learning is very low. They want to pass freely from class to class. They are not committed. They lack focus. They copy assignments from each other, which is common in our school.” (T23)*

Similarly, another teacher participant indicated

*“We advise students every morning before beginning class. Additional advises are given by the unit leaders in the classrooms. But, still a number of students do not have the interest and commitment to their learning. The teacher is always ready but the students are not. No interest. This has affected the classroom activity and teachers’ motivation.”*  
(T22)

In addition, a teacher participant showed that they are always alert to teach in the classroom. However, there is a problem of lack of interest on the part of the students. In supporting many students in the focus discussion said that they are not interested in their learning. Many of them had lost hope. One of them noted:

*“The relationship we have with our teachers is good. They are committed to guide us. But to our side we are not motivated. We lost interest. Many of our teachers want to help us academically. But, the problem is with us. Our elders who graduated from universities in different fields are sitting idle, no job.”*(A student)

Therefore, students' lack of interest in their learning at school is one of the demotivating factors in the school. Finally, a summary of the findings in line with the research questions is presented below in the next section.

## **7.6. Summary of Important Findings Related to Case S-D (Low Performing Private Secondary School)**

The summary of important findings in this chapter is important to the readers to get answers to each research question easily and to prepare me for the next stages of the research process. Thus, the bullet list below highlights key findings of the study in line with the research questions.

- The analysis of research question 1 was mainly aimed at exploring the participants’ views about their delegation in relation to the learning outcomes. It has been found that the school lacks coherence among the key stakeholders in focusing on improving learning. Thus, learning outcomes are not improving.
- The analysis of research question 2 is principally intended to examine how the school's financial resources support learning outcomes. Then, it was found that finance is not supporting the learning activity, or lack attention in allocating budget for supporting learning is demonstrated.

- The analysis of research question 3 aimed at assessing the kind of information that is most frequently used to assess each school's performance. It was identified that student exam results and learning activities are the dominant types of information produced in the school. Besides, discipline, attendance, and financial activities related to school fee are additional information produced in the school. However, parent-teacher relation on improving learning outcomes was very weak.
- The analysis of the last research question attempted to explore how participants describe the motivational activities at their respective schools. Accordingly, the findings of the study indicated inconsistent and unconvincing motivational activity is noticed in the school. Besides, Carrying out various routine activities is a rewarding activity. Parents' weak engagement in motivation and students' lack of interest in learning are demotivating agents.

Finally, this chapter presented the major findings of the study in relation to case S-D, a low-performing private secondary school, in line with the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation). Themes generated in line with these elements were well described by supporting them with the participants' voices. The next chapter of the doctoral thesis consisted of a presentation of the cross-case analysis of the findings of the study from the four cases (case S-A, case S-B, case S-C and case S-D).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8. Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, we present the four-by-four matrix cross-case analysis. The purpose of this analysis method is to gain a deep understanding of the issue under study by using each case, which makes the study more robust in its findings and conclusion (Yin, 2017). The term cross-case analysis is sometimes used as a general umbrella term for the analysis of two or more case studies to produce a synthesized outcome (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). The analysis revolves around four broad themes: delegation coherence, finance coherence, information coherence, and motivation coherence, which constitute the center of the analysis. The coherence is depicted as a matrix of four themes in four cases (schools) in Table 6.

**Table 6:** A matrix representing the cross case analysis on coherence with learning outcomes

Themes	S-A	S-B	S-C	S-D
High Delegation Coherence	X	----	X	----
High Finance Coherence	X	----	X	----
High Information Coherence	X	----	X	X
High Motivation Coherence	X	----	X	----

**Note:** X indicates that the themes are observed in the cases.

#### **Delegation**

The first question of the study aimed to explore how participants in each case described their delegation in school. According to Table 6, S-A and S-C showed high delegation coherence for the learning outcomes. However, S-B and S-D failed to exhibit high delegation coherence for the learning outcomes. The results of the study revealed that the low-performing public secondary school (S-B) focused more on input and enrollment, while the high-performing private secondary school (S-A) focused more on learning outcomes and classroom activities. In addition, numerous other tasks impaired the academic performance in the low-performing public

secondary school (S-B). It is noteworthy that the high-performing private school (S-A) places great emphasis on learning outcomes, while the low performing public school (S-B) does not prioritize this important aspect due to the numerous additional activities it engages in. In S-A, there are no other competing tasks that distract teachers from focusing on supporting learning. They have clear direction and can easily concentrate on enhancing the students' academic performance. The low performing private school (S-D) that is performing poorly lacks coherence among its key stakeholders when it comes to focusing on improving learning outcomes. Agents are running alone. Learning outcomes are not improving in the school. On the other hand, the high-performing public secondary school (S-C) places a strong emphasis on students' academic performance. Participants believe that classroom activity is the foundation for improving learning outcomes, and stakeholders collaborate to improve student learning and discipline. The significance of this result is that in S-C, all stakeholders prioritize learning outcomes, whereas in S-D, this essential area is not the main focus, thus resulting in no improvement in learning outcomes. Overall, this study shows that delegation in low-performing secondary schools is linked to schooling, whereas in the high-performing secondary schools, it is associated with improving the students' academic performance. This means that only the high-performing secondary schools (S-A and S-C) exhibit high delegation coherence with learning outcomes. The financial resources available to these schools will be discussed next.

## **Finance**

The second research question of the study aimed to investigate the coherence of financial resources for learning outcomes in each secondary school. According to Table 6, both S-A and S-C (high performing schools) demonstrated better financial coherence. However, S-B and S-D (low performing schools) did not exhibit financial coherence in this regard. The study revealed that all the schools faced financial deficits. Participants from the low performing schools noted that these limited finances did not prioritize learning support, while participants from the high performing schools believed that financial resources supported learning and teaching activities. The majority of internal revenue was used to construct additional buildings in S-B, while more money was spent on teaching materials in S-A to directly support student learning in the classroom. Research participants from the low performing schools reported that finances did not support learning due to lack of attention, while participants from S-C believed that finances

supported learning and teaching activities. This means that the financial allocation in the low performing schools was consistent with schooling, while in the high performing schools it was consistent with supporting learning. Given the same policies and budget as the other schools, the main challenge for low-performing schools is the lack of attention in allocating the limited resources to support teaching and learning activities. They are not using their resources wisely. Hence, the financial allocation in the low-performing secondary schools was not consistent with the improvement of learning outcomes, while the reverse is true in the high-performing secondary schools. The next section of the analysis focuses on the topic of information.

### **Information**

The study had a third research question that aimed to find out the type of information most commonly used in schools that can help us understand the schools' focus on accountability. Table 6 revealed that there is high coherence of information in the high performing schools (S-A & S-C), and low performing private school (S-D) but not in low performing public school (S-B). The study showed that attendance and student discipline are common types of data for all schools, including the high-performing private secondary school (S-A), high-performing public secondary school (S-C), the low-performing public secondary school (S-B), and the low-performing private secondary school (S-D). However, student performance and classroom activities are the main focus of S-A, S-C and S-D. Furthermore, the study observed a strong parent-teacher relationship in improving learning in S-A and S-C, the two high-performing secondary schools. On the other hand, the study found that the low-performing public secondary school (S-B) places more value on input data, particularly those related to construction and income-generation activities. Moreover, grade attainment or pass/fail, enrollment, gender parity, number of disabled and female students are given attention in this school. The study also found that the parent-teacher relationship to improve learning outcomes was weak in S-B and S-D, where the focus is more on financial activities related to construction and school fees, respectively. This implies that, there is a noticeable misalignment among stakeholders in working towards learning goals at these two low-performing secondary schools. However, in the three cases S-A, S-C and S-D, more information linked to students' academic performance is produced, although S-D lags behind in communicating it to concerned bodies in the school, including parents. Therefore, there is no evidence of high information coherence in the low-

performing public secondary schools. The study will also analyze motivational activities in the next section.

### **Motivation**

The fourth research question in the study aimed to investigate how participants described the connection between the motivational activities and the learning outcomes at their respective schools. According to Table 6, high coherence in motivation was observed in the high performing schools, but not in the low performing schools. The study found that lack of student interest in learning and poor parental oversight demotivated agents in the low-performing public secondary school. On the other hand, the high-performing private secondary school had students with a greater interest in learning and strong parental oversight, which motivated agents positively. It was surprising to note that in S-B, insufficient attention was given to the issue of answerability based on learning outcomes. The study found that participants in the two high-performing schools were more motivated by their students' learning outcomes. In these schools, there was a strong connection between student performance and the future of the school and its teachers. For example, parents could withdraw their children from the school if their academic performance was very low. In contrast, in the low-performing private secondary school, students' lack of interest in learning and poor parental oversight demotivated teachers. In the high-performing public secondary school, the school environment, student acceptance, and professional autonomy were motivating factors. In the low performing private school, routine activities were the primary source of motivation, while in the high performing public school, student performance on national exams and discipline were the main rewarding activities.

In this chapter, the findings of a cross-case analysis of four cases were presented. The study found that the high-performing schools were coherent with learning outcomes in terms of delegation, finance, information, and motivation. However, in the low-performing schools, all four design elements were not consistent with learning outcomes. The next step in the study is to present a discussion and conclusion of the core findings. This includes relevant literature, evidence from previous research studies, and the author's own personal and professional reflections.

## CHAPTER NINE

### 9. Discussion and Conclusion of the Study

The purpose of this chapter was to interpret the findings presented in chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 and draw a conclusion. It has four sub-sections that deal with the coherence of the four design elements with learning outcomes. The chapter focuses on explaining and interpreting the findings, showing how they relate to the literature review and the thesis topic, and making an argument for the overall conclusion.

#### 9.1. Discussion of the Core Findings

It is difficult for a school system that stands for schooling—a display of buildings, teachers, and students—but not for learning to enhance learning outcomes (Tirussew et al. 2018). According to Pritchett (2015), the cause for the unsatisfactory outcome in learning is that education systems have long been designed to realize enrollment goals rather than learning and lack coherence for learning all through elements of the systems. This study tried to gain more understanding of school accountability for learning outcomes using four secondary schools. The schools are nominated based on their performance in the Ethiopian national examination (EHEECE). Two are high-performing (one from private and another from public secondary schools) and the other two are low-performing schools (one from private and another from public secondary schools). Accordingly, the schools are given codes as follows: high-performing private secondary school as S-A, low-performing public secondary school as S-B, high-performing public secondary school as S-C, and low-performing private secondary school as S-D.

The study employed Pritchett's theoretical framework to explore the phenomena under study. I'm interested in comprehending how the school system is in sync with the learning outcomes of the four schools by using the four design elements (delegation, finance, information and motivation) in the accountability relationship. These elements are deemed crucial in enhancing learning outcomes, according to Pritchett's research in 2015. According to Pritchett, educational systems have been presented to have actors and relationships between them that are referred to as accountability relationships. Accordingly, the framework illustrated a school system as a relationship between educational organizations and authorities (as principals) and teachers and school directors or frontline providers (FLP) (as agents). Pritchett hypothesized that

educational systems are fruitful when there is a proper flow of accountability in the system, which he defined as coherence between, within, and between the links of accountability. Therefore, this study tried to scrutinize the coherence of the four elements with learning outcomes, which has implications for school accountability for learning outcomes.

To realize the purpose of this study, teachers, school leaders, the Woreda Education Officers, parents, and learners are used as data sources. Accordingly, interview, focus group discussion, natural observation, and document analysis were used to gather the data.

This part of the thesis work discusses the study's core results to conclude. Specifically, the coherence of each design element with the learning outcomes is discussed in this particular section. For example, in the section "School Delegation and its Coherence to Learning Outcomes," I stated how actors in the school describe the delegation in the selected schools. The study has attempted to identify the actual delegations that are demonstrated in each school. Besides, it attempted to explore their coherence with learning outcomes. In the section "The Coherence of Financial Resource to Learning Outcomes in Schools," I discussed the most important activity of the schools that took more financial resources. In other words, the research dealt with identifying the activities in the schools that are supported more by financial resources. In the Section "The Coherence of School Information to Learning Outcomes," I attempted to explore the types of information collected and utilized in school and assessed whether they are coherent with learning outcomes or not. In the last section, "Coherence of Motivational Activities with Learning Outcomes in Schools," I tried to scrutinize the types of activities that are rewarding or sanctioning and identified whether they are aligned with learning outcomes or not. The study considered both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

According to Pritchett (2015), the coherence of the four key elements is essential for improved learning outcomes. Effective learning takes place in a coherent school system, as noted by Robinson et al. (2017) and Reiersen and Becker (2021). This approach enables school stakeholders to focus on a sustainable and shared agenda, rather than one that is broad and shallow. Additionally, it provides students with close support that can enhance their learning outcomes (Robinson et al., 2017).

### **9.1.1. School Delegation and its Coherence to Learning Outcomes**

As mentioned in the literature review, delegation is one of the elements of the relationship of accountability in school. It is a task specified to the agents by the principal. The first question in this research sought to understand participants' feelings towards their delegation in their schools.

Then, it is found that academic activity is overlooked, and ensuring access is the focus of the low-performing public secondary schools (S-B). Along the same line, the lack of coherence among the key stakeholders, like parents and students, with improving learning is an issue in the low-performing private secondary schools (S-D). In addition, academic activity is muddled up by many additional tasks in S-B. On the other hand, high-performing secondary schools, both S-A (the high-performing private secondary school) and S-C (the high-performing public secondary school), focus more on teaching and learning activities and improving students' learning outcomes. Participants in S-C believed that focusing on classroom activity and student discipline is a basis for improving students' academic performance. According to Dobbins, Brooks, Scott, Rawlinson, and Norman (2016), learning outcomes urge agents to implement focused learning activities that characterize better academic practice. What is curious about this result is that in low-performing schools, this important delegation is overlooked due to the fact that it is obscured by many additional activities or a lack of coherence among stakeholders. Learners benefit less or not at all from such a type of school system in which learning is not focused. And the participants in these schools described that they couldn't improve the learning outcome in their schools. This finding coincides with the finding of Ramalepe (2023) that there was no evidence of academic optimism, particularly academic emphasis, in underperforming schools. Allais (2012) contends that focusing on learning outcomes draws attention in the school to the clear and detailed descriptions of what learners are learning and what they have to learn, which is important to enhancing student academic performance. Consequently, this time the global education community has converted its conversation of enrollment to learning outcomes (Custer, King, Atinc, Read, and Sethi, 2018). The reason for this shift in focus lies in the learning crisis in many nations around the globe. Schools should play their roles in preparing students for this challenging and dynamic time. On the other hand, the participants in the high-performing schools indicated that academic activity is the primary task and learning outcome is a big agenda

item in the schools. In accordance with these findings, Ebbeler et al. (2016) and Kim (2018) demonstrated that the recent trend in the school system around the globe is making schools accountable for learning outcomes aimed at improving the learners' academic performance. Policies of high-performing schools such as zero tolerance for student discipline and cheating, looking to the future, sanctions against ineffective teachers, a student support system, and a strong parent-teacher relationship are among the strengths of these schools. On the other hand, schools should consider involving learners in extracurricular activities and using various active learning methods such as peer teaching, cooperative learning, etc. However, the low-performing schools placed emphasis on ensuring access. I think that the presence of many additional tasks or lack of cooperation among stakeholders, including parents and students, at these schools, has made the front-line providers or agents not realize the learning outcomes. And, this has confronted the interaction between these agents and the student.

By and large, this study discovered that most of the delegations focused on in the low-performing schools are linked to schooling. However, a school system that stands for schooling but not for learning cannot advance learning outcomes (Tirussew et al. 2018). Education should prepare students with the necessary skills for this century. However, it turns out that many education systems in many countries have not yet been able to achieve this mission. Many reasons may give rise to this, but the main problem is that education systems in a number of countries provide an emphasis on attainment and enrollment rather than quality (or learning) (Mibiti, 2016; Tirussew et al. 2018). It is argued that effective learning takes place within a coherent school system (Robinson et al. 2017 & Reiersen and Becker, 2021). Hence, it is possible to imply that delegation in the low performing secondary schools is not coherent with improving students' academic achievement. This finding coincides with the result of the Ethiopian education development roadmap [2018–30] (Tirussew et al. 2018). A possible explanation for this could be that too many missions to schools can make front-line providers pointless and divert their attention from focusing on academic activities. Besides, the lack of coherence among all actors in improving learning can be another cause for lower students' academic performance in these secondary schools. Normore (2004) stated that without distinct delegations and their understandings by all actors, it is challenging to assure school accountability for learning outcomes. But the experience of the high-performing secondary schools tells us a different story. In these schools, delegation is aligned to improving students'

performance. Learning outcome is a big agenda. There is no additional competing task that diverts the attention agents' from focusing on supporting learning. They have a clear direction, and it is easy for them to emphasize on improving learning outcomes. Almost all the research participants, including teachers, parents, students, and principals, indicated that the principal agenda of the school is improving learners' academic achievement. Literature shows that outcome-based education provides more emphasis on the desired results of education expressed in outcomes. And clear standards are set, and efforts are made to ensure students' learning at the highest possible level before leaving school (Killen, 2000). In line with this, all of the research participants from the high-performing secondary school, including the community, as well as their results on the national examinations, showed that these schools have achieved their delegation: improving learners' academic achievement. This finding coincides with the result of a study by Gordon (2022), which revealed that schools are service providers dedicated to facilitating students' learning. Hence, it is not surprising that these schools have better academic performance compared to the aforementioned low-performing secondary schools. According to Pritchett (2015), accountability must be coherent with learning outcomes to foster student learning in school.

According to WDR (2018), the education system in many nations around the world suffers from a misalignment of overarching learning goals. There are other goals that intervene and challenge efforts to improve learning outcomes in the countries. In addition, the different parts of the education system do not work together and involve many stakeholders with multiple, often conflicting, interests. Compared to the high-performing secondary schools, incoherence in the delegation with learning outcomes is common in the low-performing schools. Therefore, unlike the high-performing schools, delegation in the low-performing schools is coherent with schooling, such as constructing buildings, generating income, and enrolling students. In addition, the low-performing schools lack collaboration among stakeholders, including parents and students, to improve learning. According to Iyer, Rolleston, Rose, and Woldhanna (2020), while the school enrollment rate has increased alarmingly in Ethiopia, the education system is known for its learning crises, in which many children go through schools with a lack of basic numeracy and reading skills. For example, many students in national examinations achieved less than 50% in all subjects (Woldetsadik, 2013).

Finally, most of the issues facing the low-performing schools are related to tasks that are not related to academics. These tasks have been a distraction for the agents and have rendered them ineffective in focusing on academic activities. For example, mobilizing the community to generate income and construct additional buildings has increased the burden on the schools. I suggest that this task should be delegated to someone who is not among the frontline service providers as it is not related to their profession. In addition, the construction of additional buildings in the underperforming school has come to the fore as some teaching materials such as blackboards are deficient and of poor quality. This is because they are rated by buildings. As a result, they spent much of the discussion with the community or parents talking about the problems related to construction, putting aside the issue related to students' learning. Moreover, they were accepting more students into the school, which has more than 90 students in a classroom. This means their focus is on building more classrooms and accommodating more students. Besides, in the low-performing schools cooperation of all stakeholders to improve learning is very weak. Therefore, one can understand that their delegation is mainly related to enrollment and input. Rather, in the high-performing school, there is no other competing task that diverts the agent's attention from focusing on improving learning outcomes. Almost all stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers and school leaders, indicated that the main task of the school is to improve students' academic performance. All of the school's research participants (including the community), as well as their performances on the national exam, showed that the school has achieved the academic achievements of its students. According to this study, the school system in the high-performing school is coherent with learning outcomes.

An implication of this finding is the possibility that schools require clear delegations and collaboration between all stakeholders to improve learning outcomes. Therefore, I suggest that immediate action be taken to make school delegation clear and targeted and establish a direct connection to improving learning outcomes. In addition, responsibilities need to be shared by all actors for improving school learning. This is mainly because the schools are discharging unprepared citizens into the world of work in this dynamic era. However, focusing on academic activities alone cannot assure improved learning outcomes unless financial resource allocation is coherent with such activities (Pritchett, 2015). Therefore, the financial resources need to support the learning activity more than any other activity in school, which is the focus of the subsequent section.

### **9.1.2. The Coherence of Financial Resource to Learning Outcomes in schools**

Finance, as noted in the literature review, is an important element of the accountability relationship in school. It is defined in the theoretical framework as the resource that the principal assigns to the agent to fulfill their delegation. According to Hurley, Caitlin, Chassy, and Lee (2019), finance is a useful input to the education system since it affects educational quality. Hence, the second objective of this study was to understand how finance supports learning in schools. Accordingly, this section attempted to understand finance coherence with learning outcomes.

With respect to the second research question, it was found that the participants in the low-performing schools described that finance is not supporting learning. Only respondents in the high-performing schools noted that finance is supporting the learning and teaching activities. Another important finding was that the research participants in all cases indicated that the schools are characterized by financial resource deficiencies. But, in the low-performing schools, lack of attention is an additional issue. Participants in the low-performing schools indicated that these limited financial resource in the schools didn't give focus on supporting students' learning. This implies that attention to supporting learning is as important as the availability of sufficient financial resources in schools. Hence, lack of attention to supporting learning is a serious problem in the low-performing schools. The way schools utilize the budget matters to improve learning. In our view, in poor countries like Ethiopia, being selective in allocating budgets in schools is crucial. In addition, accountability systems need to be institutionalized in the schools to enable actors to communicate how resources are being utilized to achieve the goals (Ricci, 2018). The result of the study showed that constructing additional buildings took most of the budget in the low-performing schools (e.g., S-B). But, from our observation, many blackboards are not suitable for writing on because they are rough, torn, will not take the chalk, and are not noticeable to the students. But finance couldn't focus on solving these problems at the source, implying that the construction of buildings takes precedence over supporting teaching and learning activities in the classroom. This is mainly because the schools are evaluated by constructing additional buildings. But, it is suggested that school accountability should be based on student learning outcomes and not on inputs like school buildings or equipment (Willis and Kissane, 1997). Ricci (2018) noted that accountability is a system that entails communicating

how resources are used to achieve initial goals, such as improving learning outcomes, but this does not appear to be the case in the schools. In this context, WDR (2018) found that education funds are often spent in a way that is incompatible with effective learning. In other words, financial resources are used for activities unrelated to student learning. Attention is not given for supporting learning in these schools. Besides, finance in schools is used in a way that is inconsistent with the responsibilities of frontline providers (Pritchett, 2015). Therefore, the limited financial resources could not support the students' learning at the underperforming schools.

However, this scenario is not reflected in the high-performing schools. At these schools, more attention is given to allocating money (internal revenue) to teaching materials that directly support the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. In addition, parents spend more money to support students' learning (for example, for additional sessions or tutorials in part-time and additional materials that support learning), and no other school activity is focused other than supporting teaching and learning in the classroom. This implies that, finance is coherent to learning in the high-performing schools. Mohamad and Ibrahim (2017) argued that financial and other resources should be spent cautiously, with no waste, and used to improve teaching and learning at schools. It is necessary to ensure that these resources are spent in an orderly manner by focusing on the goals of the schools because they are limited compared to the demands. This means that these tight financial resources must be used in line with schools' objectives, particularly to improve learning outcomes.

From my point of view, the problem in low-performing schools is not only lack of financial resources but also lack of attention to supporting learning. The financial resources are loosely allocated to support learning in these schools. They mainly focus on ensuring access and increasing the number of buildings (i.e. input). But if learning is not realized in these buildings, it is meaningless. According to Bush et al. (2006), cited in Xaba & Nugbane (2010), incoherent financial resources for learning are the main challenges in the school system. In addition, WDR (2018) stated that almost 80% of the budget is spent only on teacher salaries, especially in low-income countries (such as Ethiopia), leaving little or no room for other learning-related activities. Schefelbech (1983) recommended that adequate funding for education is required to improve the quality of the education system. However, allotting sufficient resources alone doesn't support

enhancing students' learning outcomes unless different actors at school work coherently to use them for improving learning (Neymotin, 2010). In the same vein, Baker (2012) indicated that adequate financial resources with more accountability for their use are crucial for improving student learning outcomes. Consistent with this, Chung (2015) noted that coherent financing of learning outcomes is important to address these challenges and that information about students' academic achievement should be collected and used to measure academic achievement. Therefore, financial allocation in the low-performing schools is inconsistent with improving learning outcomes.

Hence, both lack of funds and lack of attention to support learning are among the challenges in low-performing secondary schools. I think that more budgets should be allocated to schools, but they should be utilized coherently with learning outcomes. According to Hurley, Caitlin, Chassy, and Lee (2019), there are two important issues in school finance: the first is the number of resources, and the second is the effective use of these resources. And both are important to improving learning outcomes in school. Therefore, agents at schools need to identify which types of activities in schools should be given priority to get financial allocation and work to focus more on improving learning outcomes. The reason is that if financial allocation and utilization are not coherent with what the schools are delegated for, it is difficult to achieve them. In addition, the flow of information in the school used to assess agent performance should be reviewed.

### **9.1.3. The Coherence of School Information to Learning Outcomes**

As noted in the literature review, information is important to assess agent performance in school. It also serves to increase transparency in the relationship of accountability. Thus, the third research question in this study sought to identify the type of data most commonly used in schools that can help us understand the schools' focus on accountability.

The result of the study indicated that data related to attendance and the status of students' discipline is important information exchanged among actors in the four schools. The findings of the study showed that resemblance was also noticed among the four cases in producing information related to lesson observation, administering tests, and utilization of instructional time. But input data including construction, income generation, teacher qualification, instructional resources, and enrollment are dominantly produced in the low-performing public

secondary school (S-B). Besides, from the document analysis it was noticed that data types related to input and process are predominantly produced in this school. The Woreda Education Office receives a written report from the school throughout the academic year. However, no evidence was found for the use of the report to improve school accountability for learning outcomes. On the other hand, in the low-performing private secondary school (S-D), information related to classroom activities and student exam results is given attention by the school agents, but the flow of information between parents and schools has nothing to do with this information. When parents come to school once or twice a year (for meetings), the big issue dealt with them is not about their children's learning outcomes. Rather it is concerned with the shortage of input in the school, including finance and or school fees. Hence, the study found that the parent-teacher relationship to improve learning outcomes was weak in S-B and S-D, where the focus is more on financial activities related to construction and school fees, respectively.

Participants at the high-performing private secondary school, on the other hand, stated that their relationship with the Woreda Education Office in reporting this type of data is not as strong as their contact with parents (S-A). Similarly, parent-teacher relationship was strong in the high-performing public secondary school (S-C). Data linked to student learning is important for making informed decisions in education, as it helps policymakers and other stakeholders make informed decisions (WDR, 2018; Hoogland et al., 2016; Ebbeler et al., 2016; Schildkamp et al., 2014).

Another important finding is that the low-performing public secondary school utilized output data related to grade attainment (promoting students from one grade to the next), while the high-performing private secondary school (S-A) was aligned with students' academic achievement in the national examinations. This implies that the output data that is produced in the low-performing public secondary school is mainly linked to grade attainment, and much attention is given to information related to classroom assessment results and the number of pass/fail per semester and academic year without giving attention to the quality of education (learning). But I argue that the output data produced in the school should go beyond that, like national examination results, students' behavior, and other abilities.

On the other hand, information produced at school should be exchanged among stakeholders, including parents, to improve learning outcomes. In line with this, Jacob (2017) and UNESCO (2013) outlined that one of the ultimate goals of evidence-based education is to

assure stronger and more coherent accountability relationships among different actors (like parents, policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and students) in the education system. It helps improving the quality of decisions made and by creating strong mechanisms for monitoring progress and motivating responsiveness. However, the most striking finding of this study was the substantial difference between the two types of cases in parent-teacher relationships. Learning-based parent-teacher relationship is stronger in the high-performing schools than in the low-performing schools. In the low-performing secondary schools, the big issue discussed with parents is about inputs, including financial issues, not learning outcomes. But data mainly related to students' learning is needed for all stakeholders, including parents, to diagnose existing problems in student learning and seek strategies (Custer et al. 2018). Moreover, data exchange will improve transparency and trust, which is one of the features of an accountability system (Smith & Benavot, 2019). In the same way, it is pointed out that lack of access to quality data for different educational actors and lack of coherence in data use in school pose a challenge (Schildkamp et al., 2014; Dyson, 2020). This finding implies that the focus of the type of data used in the underperforming public secondary schools is not on learning outcomes.

The result showed that information related to attendance and discipline is common in all cases. The research reviewed by Gates and Lichtenberg (2005) also comes to the same conclusion that attendance and discipline are among the data commonly used in schools. In my view, the tendency to utilize the produced data matters in improving learning outcomes in schools. The school, which has a better practice of using the produced data, identifies gaps in student learning. According to Knapp, Swinnerton, Copland, and Monpas-Huber (2006), the effective use of data in education develops coherent instructional programs with standards and is a powerful tool to improve academic outcomes for all students. This is because information helps teachers and other actors (including parents) know what students are learning and how they are achieving their goals. Similarly, Malena, Forster, and Singh (2013) noted that such practice provides information on training needs for agents that can prepare them to fill those gaps, revise their classroom practices to improve student performance, and measure ongoing academic activity. Moreover, it is understood that utilizing the data produced at school as evidence is used to hold stakeholders accountable, and this process is a critical dimension of educational accountability.

To sum up, in the two high performing schools and the low performing private school,

more information related to students' academic performance is produced, although the latter school lags behind in communicating this information to concerned actors in the school, including parents. And the study found no evidence of high information coherence in the low-performing public secondary school. However, in the two low-performing secondary schools there is a noticeable discrepancy among stakeholders in working towards achieving learning goals. I strongly believe that schools must focus on obtaining more useful data for learning and promote a culture of using reports to enhance students' academic performance. Moreover, they should establish channels for parents to share up-to-date information; especially regarding their children's learning progress. This is because, in today's era of accountability, the use of data in schools is crucial for increasing transparency and improving learning outcomes (Smith & Benavot, 2019; Wayman & Jimerson, 2014). The next section will cover motivational activities, which is also an essential aspect of the accountability relationship in schools.

#### **9.1.4. Coherence of Motivational Activities with Learning Outcomes in Schools**

Several reports have shown that motivation is an essential element of school accountability. Accountability helps boost employee motivation (Ricci, 2018). In relation to this, Finnigan and Gross (2007) noted that it is based on the theoretical assumption that consequences motivate school agents to perform better and to focus their attention on student outcomes. Based on the Pritchett's theoretical framework, motivation is about how the principal motivates agents on the basis of their performance. It is the reward or sanction granted to frontline providers following the outcome of their action. Agents in the school must be rewarded for positive behavior and positive performance. On the contrary, they have to be sanctioned in order to minimize the weaknesses or poor performance. This is the fourth aim of the study, which aims to understand how motivational activities in schools are linked to academic achievement. That means the practical aspects of motivational activities in school need to be carefully examined for their coherence with learning outcomes. This allows us to gain insight into their attention to learning outcomes.

The result of this study showed that motivational activity in low-performing schools is an unfocused and blurry or inconsistent and unconvincing task. Parental commitment to motivation is also very low in these schools. On the other hand, strong school systems that include accountability or professional autonomy motivate staff at high-performing schools. Parents provide schools with feedback on classroom activities. They also punish schools by pulling their

children out when the schools don't do well in student performance ("voting with your feet"). However, the latter activity is not well known in low-performing schools. Loh and Hu (2014) noted that school accountability is characterized by motivating agents based on their performance. They will be judged effective or ineffective based on the academic performance of students (Ebbeler et al. 2016). For instance, if schools are not effective, sanctions like school closures, external intervention of programs, or deprivation of autonomy in using resources are common in many education systems around the world (Munoz-Chereau et al., 2022). But rewards and penalties given to schools or teachers based on student test scores might have a negative impact on academic performance if not well managed. It is argued that tests need to be carefully handled so that it is in line with the standards or goals. Besides, motivation in school is sometimes linked to activities that are unrelated to learning outcomes. Focus needs to be given to students' learning to reward or sanction agents which consistently make positive impacts on achievement and to advance education. Hence, true accountability needs both higher standards and stronger supports for teachers, students, and school learning (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

The findings of this study also indicate that levels of student misbehavior (e.g., lack of interest in learning) and parental oversight of learning and teaching activities are related to the motivation of agents in the low-performing schools. In these schools, student misbehavior or disinterest demotivates agents. Only in the high-performing schools does students' greater interest in learning motivate them positively. A similar finding was reported by Aweke (2015), who noted that students' misbehavior was one of the factors that demotivated teachers in school. It is also understood that strong parental oversight motivates agents in the high-performing schools. In relation to this, Iliya (2015) said that teachers' accountability is generally weak where there is low support. And according to Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2015), increased accountability can function as a strong complement to other methods of improving teacher motivation. For example, improving the resource and the school environment, increasing parental involvement, and improving student attitudes toward learning and discipline should be improved to motivate and support agents and improve learning outcomes in school.

Besides, what is surprising is that in the low-performing schools, participants feel that nothing will happen to them, whatever the result of student academics. On the contrary, in the high-performing schools they feel that the learning outcomes of their students determine their

future. Finally, the most important activity that leads to a serious consequence is absence or wasting instructional time in the high-performing schools. Sanction is missed in the low-performing schools. On the other hand, the most rewarding activities in the high-performing schools are student performance on national exams and discipline. But, participating in many routine or administrative activities is a rewarding activity in the low-performing schools. In relation to this, Loh and Hu (2014) and Ebbeler et al. (2016) argued that school accountability should be characterized by motivating agents based on the academic performance of their students.

In some low-performing schools, teachers are rewarded with certificates, but the qualifications for receiving these awards are often unclear. In many cases, even teachers who do receive rewards are dissatisfied because they know their students are not performing well. The criteria used for selecting teachers are not closely related to learning outcomes. For example, rewarding activities may include building more school facilities by engaging the community or participating in management committees, and proximity to the management body, which means doing more managerial activities and participating in additional activities or committees. Hence, motivation in the schools is linked to activities that are unrelated to learning outcomes.

On the other hand, the results of the study indicated that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are noticed in the high-performing schools. Teachers are highly committed to helping students' learning. They are intrinsically motivated to support their students during break time, including lunch time. In addition, parents and students recognize better teachers by giving them gifts. They are also empowered to nominate their teachers for tutorial sessions. Students' interest in learning is assumed to be a motivator in these schools. Moreover, the community wants to bring its children to these schools since students' learning outcomes are better compared to other schools in the town, which is an extrinsic motivator for the agents. The school also fires teachers who are not performing well in the schools. Besides, students are accountable for their academic achievement. If they do not meet the standards of the school, they will lose the chance of learning there. They can be forced to leave the school. These are the major deriving forces that are motivating agents in the high-performing schools. Thus, motivation is coherent with learning outcomes in the high-performing schools.

It seems possible that these varied results are due to the lack of a clear policy related to accountability in the education system. Therefore, I suggest a variety of motivational activities be designed in the Ethiopian education system to encourage the achievement of high learning outcomes. In addition, accountability should be complemented with support to improve agent motivation and learner performance. There should be a better and clearer policy for motivational activities in school, based on student performance, and awareness should be raised among frontline providers in the school.

## **9.2. Conclusion**

The last section of this chapter presents the conclusion based on the discussions made. The purpose of the conclusion section is to provide a clear and concise summary of the study, highlight the key points, and explain what they mean in the context of the research question.

This study set out to understand school accountability for learning outcomes. To this end, the study examined the coherence of the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) with learning outcomes in four secondary schools. Private and public schools are included in the research purposively to get a comprehensive understanding of school accountability for learning outcomes in the secondary schools. A four by four matrix was used to conduct a cross-case analysis among the four cases. The study revealed that most of the delegations in the low-performing schools are related to schooling. Too many tasks in the schools have rendered the agents pointless and distracted their attention from focusing on academic activities. The construction of additional buildings in the underperforming schools has come to the fore as some teaching materials, such as blackboards, are deficient and of poor quality. As a result, they spent much of the discussion with the community or parents about the problems related to construction, putting aside the issue related to students' learning. In addition, they admitted more students into the school, having more than 90 students in a classroom. That means their focus is on building more classrooms and accommodating more students. Therefore, one can conclude that their delegation is mainly related to enrollment and input. Moreover, in low-performing schools, the collaboration of all stakeholders to enhance learning is not strong. Agents are running alone. On the contrary, in the high-performing schools, the study couldn't find any other competing task that diverts the agent's attention from focusing on improving learning outcomes. The main task of the school was to improve students' academic performance.

The evidence from this study indicates that the school system in the high-performing school is coherent with learning outcomes. Thus, high delegation coherence manifested in the high-performing secondary schools. The current findings highlight the importance of delegation coherence for learning outcomes.

The research has also shown that tight finance is the problem of all cases in the study. However, lack of attention to support learning is another challenge in low-performing schools. They mainly focus on ensuring enrollment and increasing the number of buildings. But if learning isn't realized in those buildings, it will become meaningless. The high-performing secondary schools spent money to support students' learning, and there is much focus on supporting learning in the schools—no other activity other than supporting learning by all stakeholders. Hence, finance is coherent with learning in high-performing schools. However, low or no finance coherence is noticed in the low-performing schools. The findings of this study provide insights into the importance of the alignment of financial support for learning outcomes.

The other important finding was that the dominant type of information produced in the two high-performing secondary schools, and the low-performing private secondary school, was related to students' academic performance. On the other hand, in the low-performing public secondary school it was related to input and process rather than learning outcomes. However, the parent-teacher link on improving learning was loose in the low-performing secondary schools. This implies that there is a noticeable discrepancy among stakeholders in working towards achieving learning goals in these schools. Therefore, in-depth follow-up of classroom teacher activity and student performance by both parents and agents is demonstrated in high-performing secondary schools. But, this study couldn't find concrete evidence for information coherence in the low-performing public secondary school. In general, this result showed that most of the cases in the study showed information coherence. They gave emphasis on producing information related to students' academic performance. But, I think only producing more information related to learning outcomes doesn't guarantee to improve unless the other elements are also coherent with the learning outcomes. On the other hand, agents in the low-performing public secondary school need a paradigm shift in their attitude and practice from making themselves busy reporting too much input and process-focused information to being selective and outcome-focused.

One of the significant findings to emerge from this study is that the culture of rewarding is common in all schools, though the criteria are different. The criteria used by the school leaders in the low-performing secondary to select individuals are not clear. Certificate is the known reward in these schools. Many rewarded teachers in the low-performing secondary schools are unhappy because they know their students are performing poorly. The result of the study showed that increasing income by mobilizing the community or constructing more buildings or proximity to the management body (i.e., doing more managerial activities and participating in additional activities or committees) are rewarding activities in the low-performing schools. I believe building classrooms should be changed to building students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in school. Perhaps the other compelling finding of this study is that attitudes towards answerability were reprehensible in the low-performing schools. Agents didn't think they could be accountable for students' academic performance. Hence, learning outcomes are not related to the motivational activities in the schools. These imply that the motivational activities in the low-performing secondary schools aligned with schooling.

But, evidence in this study showed that in high-performing schools, students' academic performance outshines rewarding agents or the school. For example, parents and students recognize better teachers by giving them gifts. Students are also empowered to nominate their teachers for tutorial sessions. Students' interest in learning is assumed to be a motivator in these schools. Moreover, the community wants to bring its children to these schools since students' learning outcomes are better than other schools in the town, which is the most important motivator for the agents. Teachers are highly motivated to help students' learning. They are intrinsically motivated to support their students during break time, including lunchtime. Agents feel that they are accountable for learning outcomes in the high-performing schools. Besides, students feel accountable for their academic achievement in these schools. If they do not meet the standards, they will lose the chance of learning there. These are the major deriving forces that motivate agents in the high-performing schools. Thus, motivation is coherent with learning outcomes in the high-performing schools.

By and large, school accountability is strong in the high-performing secondary schools. On the contrary, it is weak in the low-performing secondary schools. Hence, this study revealed that the accountability relationship in the low-performing schools was not coherent with learning

outcomes; schooling was the most essential activity in these schools. On the contrary, the focus was placed more on learning outcomes in the high-performing schools, which manifested in the four design elements (delegation, finance, information, and motivation). This implies that the coherence of the four design elements was important to enhance learning outcomes in the schools. Thus, based on the result of this study, one can understand that the findings are consistent with Pritchett's theoretical assumption. Pritchett noted that educational systems are successful when there is an appropriate flow of accountability through the feedback loop in the system, which he defined as coherence between, within, or across accountability connections. The feedback loop resembles an electric circuit through which accountability flows. The system deteriorates when the circuit breaks at some point or when there is incoherence between these elements and the learning outcomes at some level of the system (Pritchett, 2015). Based on the evidence from the four secondary schools, we may conclude the presence or absence of accountability for learning outcomes may explain the performance gap between the two extremes of schools (high-performing and low-performing). Since the research framework is new, future testing in more schools may result in a good theory.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the findings of the paper. Through analysis of existing literature and my own professional experience, I have been able to draw some conclusions about the study. As a result, the next chapter will focus on the implications of these conclusions.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **10. Implications, Strengths and Contribution of the Study, and Limitations of the Study**

The final chapter of this research paper presents a summary of the main findings of the thesis and their implications. The purpose of the conclusion section is to provide a clear and concise summary of the study, highlighting the key points and explaining their significance in the context of the research question. In contrast, this chapter discusses the wider implications of the study and proposes areas for future research, policy, and practice.

#### **10.1. Implications of the Study**

This study aimed to investigate school accountability for learning outcomes in secondary schools using a qualitative case study methodology. Four secondary schools, categorized as high-performing and low-performing based on the EHEECE results, were used to achieve the purpose of the study. Pritchett's model of coherence between learning outcomes and design elements of accountability (delegation, finance, information, and motivation) was used as a guiding framework in this research to realize this purpose. The findings of this study may help address the current pressing issue of learning outcomes in the Ethiopian education system. I believe these findings can have significant implications for our understanding of the importance of accountability to improving learning outcomes in schools. In addition, they can contribute to uncovering the trend in Ethiopian schools regarding accountability. I acknowledge the small sample size in the study. As a result, the findings could not extrapolate to all secondary schools in the city of Nekemte, the Oromia region, or Ethiopia. Despite that, the study contributes to understanding school accountability for learning outcomes in Ethiopia. The following points are some of the implications of this study.

First, the study implies the need for ensuring accountability mechanisms that can improve the participation of parents in the delivery of instructional services at school. Literature indicates that a clear accountability relationship would help address various bottlenecks that impede students' learning outcomes. A clear accountability framework involves, for example, identifying the principal and agents, assigning responsibilities to key stakeholders, and ensuring

the provision of appropriate funding and motivation based on information about learning outcomes.

Besides, ensuring appropriate school systems coherent for learning outcomes can be a priority. Working on the design elements like delegation, finance, information, and motivation as core educational elements to improve learning outcomes in school is important. Schools need setting learning-focused delegations, providing financial support, including more qualitative and quantitative learning data, and engaging in motivational activities to improve learning outcomes. Hence, the study implies a clear policy about accountability for learning outcomes in the school system to mitigate the nation's learning problem.

This study implies also creating awareness for parents, students, front-line providers, and educational experts at the Woreda level on school accountability for learning outcomes. It will help strengthen the short route to accountability. More importantly, this study implies consistent awareness raising activities for school actors and the community about their engagement in their children's learning. Similarly, professional support for front-line providers based on performance is crucial. Addressing the performance gap between schools need to be considered. A platform for experience sharing is necessary among schools, particularly when high achievers need to share their experiences with low achievers.

Moreover, opening schools without the equipment and learning materials is making the agents to focus on finding them, implying more focus on improving the resources in the current active schools and assuring coherence for learning outcomes. Besides, the study implies for strengthening financial accountability for learning outcomes. Establishing mechanisms that help identify whether the schools' expenditure of financial resources aligned with the actual students' learning activities is crucial.

Therefore this study implies for an accountability-focused model to be considered in the education system. However, the current understanding and practice of accountability in schools in Africa, especially in Ethiopia, is unclear. Therefore, it is important to communicate the following agendas to researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders working in schools. First, future research should explore on autonomy and accountability in schools. Second, the views of educational stakeholders on the contribution of school accountability to learning need to be

assessed. Thirdly, an accountability model for school accountability needs to be developed that recognizes the complexity of the school system in the 21st century. For instance, more research needs to be conducted to determine whether other elements added to the four dimensions of accountability used in this research. But considerably more research work will need to be done to determine the overall picture of Ethiopian schools and their challenges and opportunities in this area.

## **10.2. Strengths and Contribution of the Study**

The current study has the following two strengths: The first strength is that this study has well-documented the perspectives or voices of stakeholders working closely with schools. Besides, it has involved a variety of actors with different experiences and levels. Therefore, the understanding and feelings of these participants would lead to a deeper understanding of the reality in the schools regarding the relationship of accountability in school. Besides, the strength of this study is not only having a number of sources but also employing different types of data collection methods to enrich the data. In addition, the similarities and differences between the two extremes helped to get a deep understanding that helped to think about some interventions.

On the other hand, the following ideas are my reflections on the contributions of the study to the field of knowledge: Primarily, it has generated evidence or empirical data toward understanding school accountability for learning outcomes in high-performing and low-performing schools based on the participants' perspectives. In this vein, it may fill the gap demonstrated in the local research literature concerning this phenomenon. Yet again, it has provided local knowledge (perspective) about the phenomena investigated for the educational authorities, school directors, teachers, parents, researchers, and policymakers. Also, this study attempted to show the positive aspects than shortcomings of school accountability.

This study has the potential to make a significant contribution to the literature on school accountability and its impact on student learning outcomes. Additionally, the study's detailed description of how multiple case study processes are implemented can provide valuable insights for future researchers, reviewers, and anyone interested in case study research. The study can therefore serve as a helpful resource for methodological knowledge in the field.

### **10.3. Limitations of the Study**

While this study provides valuable insights there are some limitations that should be considered. Accordingly, two limitations are taken into account in this study. The first is that many schools were not included in the study. It is suggested that future researchers should examine these phenomena using a larger sample size and more variables in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding. Besides, there is a limitation in this study due to the imbalanced amount of data from documents and in the cases. For instance, the documents in the case of S-A were limited compared to the other cases. This was because the school did not provide me with their annual report. To resolve this issue, I included questions in the semi-structured interview about documents and the data that could be collected from them. Therefore, other researchers should consider this limitation and aim to obtain more balanced data from cases to complement other data sources.

As a result, other researchers, practitioners, and policymakers should keep these limitations in mind when applying the study's findings to their own research and practice. Besides, these limitations can motivate researchers to conduct further studies in this area. However, the study findings have been made rigorous and trustworthy through the use of various strategies, as outlined in the methodology section.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Letter of Research Permission and Cooperation

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Addis Ababa University  
College of Education  
Department of Curriculum  
and Instruction

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# 251 11 123 97 16      SS 1176      Fax: 00251(11) 242719      e-mail: ctpd@asu.edu.et

Date: April 18, 2022  
Ref. No. C&I/31/22

To: \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject: Cooperation**


Mr. Begna Ordofa (ID. No. GSR/2600/11) is a PhD Student at Addis Ababa University, College of Educational Behavioral Studies in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. He is working on a research project titled **"School Accountability for Learning Outcomes the Case of Secondary Schools"**.


He is now collecting data on his dissertation title by visiting different organizations.

I would be most grateful if you extend to him all the necessary assistance regarding this matter.

Thank you for your kindness

Sincerely,





Tesfome Tola (PhD)  
Chairperson, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

## **Appendix B: Consent Form**

**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Graduate studies**  
**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**  
**Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

**Title of Research Project: School Accountability for learning outcomes: A multiple case study of secondary schools in Ethiopia**

**Researcher:** Begna Ordofa Kajela

*Dear participants,*

I am a Ph.D. student at Addis Ababa University, Department of Curriculum and Instruction. As part of the requirements for my doctoral study, I'm doing a research study on the title provided above. The study will be conducted based on the data given by school actors like you. However, your participation in this research is totally voluntary. I need to know whether you like to participate through providing the following information. Before that you are politely requested to participate in this study since you are the right sources of data I need for my study. Thus, it would be my desire if I get your consent. I would like to read the following consent statements and describe each loud to you, too. Again, I will answer any questions, or reflect on any of the doubts or comments you may have about the study in general and each consent statements in particular.

The information obtained will be used only to achieve the purpose of the study. I need to guarantee that no risks are put in a situation where you may be harmed physically or psychologically as a result of your participation. No information given in the interviews or discussion will be made public in any form that could identify you and your school, and pseudonyms or codes will be used to protect your identity. Again, participation in the study is strictly voluntary and your confidentiality is assured. The answers, views or particular experiences obtained from you will be explained anonymously in that the results of the study will be reported without divulging any identifying characteristics and information. Nevertheless, the results of the study will be reported to the public honestly. Again, the information obtained in this study may be published in academic journals, used for further research works or it may be presented at scientific meetings or research conferences. Additionally, I will keep the data in a secure place such as protecting it in my personal computer. As research participants, your rights

will be safeguarded. Specifically, participation in the study will be completely voluntary. You have the right not to take part in the study at all. If you want to stop or withdraw during the interview or focus group discussion, you can do that at any time you wish without any negative consequence such as penalty. In addition, I may also need to conduct a follow-up interview (most likely by telephone) in order to check on any issues that may arise over the research period.

My research is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Amare Asgedom (Addis Ababa University; emails: asgedomamare@gmail.com).

Thank you for considering my request!

Yours sincerely,

Begna Ordofa

PhD student at Addis Ababa University,

Ethiopia Telephone: +251924460856

Email: begnahordofa@gmail.com.

## Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide (English)

**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Graduate studies**  
**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**  
**Department of Curriculum and Instruction**  
**Interview Questions for teachers and school directors**

### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this study is to understand whether accountability in school is aligned to learning outcomes or not. Specifically, it attempts to examine the extent to which the delegation, finance, information produced and motivational activities in school are aligned to learning outcomes.

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. The information you share with me will be helpful to my research. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Your participation is voluntary. If you begin to participate and then change your mind, you may stop at any time and notify me. You are also free not to respond to any questions during the interview. Your name, your school, and any other persons you refer to will not be identified. Thanks!

### *Section A: Background Information*

- Gender of the interviewee:-----
- Subject: -----
- Educational level:-----
- Position:-----
- Experience:-----
- Place of interview:-----
- Time (LT):-----

## **Section 2: The Main Questions**

### **Delegation/Mission**

- How do you describe the focus given to learning outcomes as a mission in your school?
- How do you feel about ensuring learning outcomes as the center of school activity?
- Tell me your experience in making student learning as the motto for the school.
- Tell me other goals that intervene and challenge efforts to improve learning outcomes.
- Tell me about your engagement in any activity other than curricular and co-curricular activities
- What do you say about the focus given to academic activity in your school?
- What do you think is the big agenda in this school?
- What do you say about your schools' position in preparing training manuals, awareness creation, and training on teachers' profession?

### **Finance**

- What do you say about the experience of resource allocation in supporting improving learning outcomes in your school?
- Tell me about your feeling on how learning outcomes in school is supported well by financial resource.
- Tell me the types of activities in schools that are financed more.

### **Information**

- What is the dominant information exchanged among actors in your schools?
- What is the main issue discussed among actors in the school?
- What type of data is dominantly exchanged among school agents?
- How do you work with parents in improving learning?
- Can you give few examples of data that are included in reports?
- Can you tell me the types of data that are mainly needed in your school?
- How do you utilize the data produced in your school?

## **Motivation**

- Tell me about the motivational activity in your school?
- Can you give me few examples of the types of activities in school that are more rewarding?
- Can you tell me your experience of motivation in your school? On what basis you are rewarded as an actor?
- What type of teacher/director is rewarded in school?
- Can you tell as an example of the types of rewards/sanctions given to actors in schools?
- What are the motivating and demotivating factors in your school?
- What do you say about parents' engagement in motivational activities?

## **Interview Guide for Parents**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to understand whether accountability in school is aligned to learning outcomes or not. Specifically, it attempts to examine the extent to which the delegation, finance, information produced and motivational activities in school are aligned to learning outcomes.

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview/discussion today. The information you share with me will be helpful to my research. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Your participation is voluntary. If you begin to participate and then change your mind, you may stop at any time and notify me. You are also free not to respond to any questions during the interview.

### **I. Delegation**

- What types of services do you expect from schools?
- What do you do, if you do not get them?
- What do you think is the focused mission of the school?
- Can you tell us your experience of working with this school?
- What is your part in the school activities?

### **II. Finance**

- How do you support schools financially or in resource?

- How do you explain whether it is supporting your children's learning or not?

### **III. Information**

- How do you track your children's learning?
- When do you go to school? To do what?
- How do you get information from the school?
- What type of information comes to you frequently?
- How do you give feedback to schools?

### **IV. Motivation**

- What is your experience of motivating teachers at schools?
- How do you punish or reward, or put pressure on schools?

## **Interview Guide for Students (Group Interview)**

### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this study is to understand whether accountability in school is aligned to learning outcomes or not. Specifically, it attempts to examine the extent to which the accountability relationships in school are aligned to learning outcomes. It tries to identify the feelings, views or the meanings given by the **students** in the schools about these issues.

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. The information you share with me will be helpful to my research. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Your participation is voluntary. If you begin to participate and then change your mind, you may stop at any time and notify me. You are also free not to respond to any questions during the interview. Your name, your school, and any other persons you refer to will not be identified. Thanks!

- ❖ What do you say about the focus given to your learning in the school?
- ❖ What do you say about your role in improving the learning outcomes?
- ❖ How do you see the focus given to classroom activities?
- ❖ Can you tell us your relationship with your school?
- ❖ How does your school react to your problems?
- ❖ What do you do if you are not getting the right service from your school?

- ❖ How do you express teachers' interest to account to you?

## **Interview Guide for woreda education experts (WEO)**

### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this study is to understand whether accountability in school is aligned to learning outcomes or not. Specifically, it attempts to examine the extent to which the mission, financial resources, information utilized and motivational activities in school are aligned to learning outcomes. It tries to identify the feelings, views or the meanings given by the Woreda Education Office in the schools about the aforementioned elements.

I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. The information you share with me will be helpful to my research. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Your participation is voluntary. If you begin to participate and then change your mind, you may stop at any time and notify me. You are also free not to respond to any questions during the interview. Your name and any other persons you refer to will not be identified. Thanks!

### **Mission**

- What are the missions that are needed from schools to accomplish?
- How do you support schools to achieve the mission given to them?
- How do you feel about ensuring learning outcomes as the center of school activity?
- Tell me other goals and activities that intervene and challenge efforts to improve learning outcomes in schools.
- What do you say about your Office's position in preparing training manuals, awareness creation, and training on some methods?

### **Finance**

- What do you say about the experience of resource allocation in supporting improving learning outcomes in school?
- Tell me about your feeling on how the finance/resource is supporting learning at school?
- Tell me the types of activities in schools that are financed more.

- Which school activities take the highest proportion of the finance allocation?

### **Information**

- What do you say about the data/information system at schools?
- Tell me the most important information that is included in reports from schools?
- Can you give me the type of data that you need from schools?
- Can you tell me which of these types of data you need more? Why?

### **Motivation**

- Tell me about your view about the incentive system at school?
- Can you give me few examples of the types of activities in school that are more rewarding?
- Can you tell me on what basis you reward schools?
- What type of teacher/director is rewarded in school?
- Can you tell me an example of the types of rewards/sanctions given to actors so far at school?

## Appendix D: Qualitative Document Review

### Focus Areas

1. How do the allocations of financial resources aligned to supporting students' learning in schools?
2. What types of activities are dominantly allocated budget in the schools?
3. What are the major sources of finance in the schools?
4. What types of information are dominantly produced at schools?
5. To what entities information is coherent with in the school?

## Appendix E: Sample Transcription

### Case: S-B

**Participant CODE: T08**

**Position: teacher; Subject: English; Educational level= 1<sup>st</sup> degree; Experience= 25 years;  
Place: school compound; Time: 4:00 (LT)**

**Moderator:** The purpose of this research is to understand school accountability for learning outcomes. The study attempts to identify if the accountability relationship in your school is coherent to learning outcomes or not. To this end, we will use the following leading questions to discuss with you. I believe that I will get an insight about the issue under investigation as you are one of the actors in this school. **Can you tell me about your mission in this school? Why you are here?**

**T08:** Oh.... Oh..... Yea... this is well known – eee — my mission is making my students confident and independent in their academic works and in doing their exams at different levels. To do that, I am implementing the student centered method of teaching. In other words, my task is realizing quality of education in the school and helping students to be independent in their academic works.

On the other hand, there is a nick name given to this school. They call it “laissez-faire and Careless.” This is because the whole school structure beginning from the principal to students including teachers are all passive and careless. In addition, teachers have negative attitude towards their students. They think that students in this school are not productive, do not have interest to learn, they don't have the necessary basic skills and knowledge, they are low academic achievers. They concluded that no need of spending more time and effort to change them.

**Moderator: So, who is accountable for that?**

**T08:** you know when I joined this school, some staff members were against my teaching approach (i.e., interactive or active method). My purpose was to improve students' academic

performance. I was trying to contact each and every student in the class to check whether the lesson's objective is attained or not. However, the comment from senior teachers in the school was that I don't have to waste my time to improve the students' academic result. They said "why you lose your precious time and energy? Here in our school students are not attentive to their lessons; they do not understand what you teach, they are not interested....." But, I didn't accept such idea, because I know the outcome of my teaching approach.

Therefore, as to my understanding the following are some of the challenges I noticed in the school that can hinder the improvement of students' learning outcomes.

The first is teacher's attitudes- generalization about students. All staff members of the school think that students are not good enough in their academic performance. They call their students as simply "low achievers"; "poor performers" or "interest losers". As a result of this most of these teachers are demoralized and discouraged in teaching their students and they oftentimes use passive teaching method. They teach without preparation; they simply enter class just to cover the portion.

The second is students' lack of interest. Of course, there are many reasons for the students to have low motivation. Among them is free promotion that was allowed after the COVID-19 pandemic. It had negative impact on students. It made students to be discouraged.

Eeee, mmmi, thirdly, private colleges has affected our students negatively. I said private college, not school. Many students say that if they are not successful to join government higher institutions, they will join the private colleges or universities. They say "if I cannot succeed, I will join Rift Valley University, what comes." I know that private schools are better than government schools. I appreciate their commitment and the teaching approach they use at classroom. I had the experience of teaching in private schools. It would have been good, if it had been similar in private higher institutions. But, private colleges are not good at teaching and learning process. In general, this has contributed to creating bad attitude in our students. Many students have lost their commitment towards their school learning.

The problem I noticed in the fourth place is the low participation of parents. Since my first day of joining this school, I haven't encountered any parent that came and asked me about his/her children's learning. This implies that parents do not follow up their children's learning at school.

Of course, they sometimes come to school to participate in the meeting organized by the school. But, the issue raised for discussion is more of constructing buildings. I know our leaders build buildings, but I doubt they have a similar focus on improving students' academic performance. We have financial issues. However, the majority of the funds raised are used to construct additional buildings. Academic issues take a few proportion of the discussion time. Besides, they do not use this opportunity to challenge the school related to their children's poor academic performance.

Fifthly, school leaders are laissez-faire. They do not feel responsible for students' academic performance. The only thing they worry about is students' discipline (including cheating, and other observable behavior). But, they have already forgotten about the quality of education.

The sixth one is related to resource. This school has shortage of resources, for example, we do not have laboratory (not working effectively). Besides, there is no important stationeries, classroom, most of the blackboards are not quality (some have holes in between), and all did not get attention. Temporarily, library room (a 3x4 area) is arranged beside the staff room. As a result, it is difficult for students to read with focus, because of the disturbance/noise from the next room (teachers' staff room). The library is very narrow that can handle only few students. Most of our teachers use the direct teaching method because of large class. There are 30 to 90 students in a classroom.

In addition, unnecessary words demoralize teachers in the school. The school leaders bother about self-business; they sit idle, if there is no any meeting at Ambo. They have no plan to observe class. Of course, I know that they construct buildings.

Information/data related to for example attendance is needed only at the end of a semester for identifying students who can and cannot sit for final examination. Besides, classroom test results are needed by the department /subject wise.

Most of our staff, including the Heads of School, moves here and there without having the ultimate academic outcome or learning outcome in mind. They are not focused. That's what I feel.

A teacher in Betel academy and our school both are teachers what makes them different. I think the difference between these two schools is on the system they have. There is no attention and encouragement as well as follow up at all on academic issue (LOs) and there is no follow up by the leaders in this school.

**Moderator:** Thank you very much! We raised many important points. But, what can you tell us about the resource allocation in your school?

**T08:** These resources are collected from parents and school grant which is used for building some blocks and repair the fence of the school.

**Moderator:** Is there any training for teachers important for capacity building?

**T08:** No..... No, still I haven't seen anything.

**Moderator:** Is there any reward for teachers who are responsible and hard workers? What about for who are not responsible for their action?

**T08:** Some of the activities used as criteria to reward teachers can include these points; having good plan for weekly, monthly and annually work consequently; CPD development; but the trend of rewarding teachers is not common, it is occasional. Similarly, there is no punishment so far though there are some mistakes by few teachers, sometimes there are informal advice by the school management. But, let me ask you a question, "without any continuous follow up, how can an actor be identified and motivated?"

**Moderator:** Thank you very much!

### Coding in the case of S-C

#### Delegation

##### • Emphasis on students' Learning Outcomes

- Emphasis on Improving Students' Academic Performance
  - Improving our skills is focused
  - The primary mission is creating skilled and good generation
  - The school is established to educate people
  - We do for generation
  - The school works hard to enhance students' academic performance
  - The WEO wants us to assure quality education which is our job
  - The learning outcome is better
  - Compared to other public schools performing better
  - The school is leading in the students' academic performance
  - Good student discipline
  - Working on students' attitude
  - Learning outcomes indicate both students' and teachers' performance
  - No additional activities. Only co-curricular activities
- The school Emphasis on Exam Scores
  - Improving students' examination scores
  - The result of the national exam is important for both students and the school
  - Students expect the school to prepare them for the national exam
  - Focusing on exams
- Classroom Activity is the basis for improving learning outcomes
  - Students believe that the classroom activity is helping them
  - The classroom activity is making clear and understand contents for students
  - Teachers' readiness for the classroom activity is better
  - A better attempt to make the classroom activities practical
  - Teaching aids are available for supporting learning since classroom activity is given attention
  - Actors commit themselves for the teaching learning activity

- Agents work on classroom activities with understanding and enthusiasm
- Emphasis on improving classroom activity
- Making learning meaningful using different local materials
- Realizing teaching learning activity is the primary mission

• **Cooperation among all stakeholders to improve Academic activity**

- Parents and teachers are cooperating to realize improved LOs
  - Most parents collaborate with the school to work on learning
  - Parents are working actively with the school on supporting learning
  - We tend to realize students' learning outcomes
  - Parent-teacher cooperate to improve learning
  - Parents trace students' classroom activities
- Follow-up by actors on classroom activities
  - Avoiding cheating during exams for improving students' performance
  - The school leaders follow up classroom activity
  - The LOs need to improve more
  - They conduct classroom observations
  - The WEO needs the student to be in school on time
  - The WEO needs the teacher to accomplish task in the school on time
  - The WEO needs the school time not to be wasted
  - The WEO needs to work hard on school improvement
- Experience exchange among departments as training activity
  - No professional training, but experience exchanges
  - Experience exchanging as training
  - Training in the form of staff experience exchanges

• **Emphasis on Student Discipline**

- Emphasis on Improving Student Discipline
  - Student discipline is focused
  - Discipline and focus on academic activities enhanced the acceptance of the school
  - Ensuring discipline is given attention
  - Discipline is very important in this school
  - Producing good citizens is the mission

## **Finance**

- **Finance for supporting learning**

- Finance for supporting classroom activities
  - Budget allocation for buying instructional materials
  - Money is allocated for classroom learning
  - Financial support for research
  - Finance for supporting learning
- Finance for supporting the classroom or the school environment
  - Finance for stationery, chalk and repairing classrooms
  - Finance for desks and cobbles
  - Money is spent for buying stationery, repairing classrooms

- **Diversified sources of income**

- Diversified sources of income
- Enhancing internal revenue for school improvement
- The school has better budget compared to other schools
- Many sources of income
- The WEO pays our salaries and assign teachers

## **Information**

- **Students' academic achievement and discipline are closely monitored**

- Parents' meeting with school focuses on students' academic performance, discipline
- Parents discuss on students' academic performance and discipline
- Information is exchanged on improving skills, exam scores, discipline,
- Student classroom assessment results are part of report
- Reporting is one method to see school performance
- Including mark list in the report every semester

- **Attendance and classroom activities**

- Reporting attendance on time are rewarding activities
- Parents trace students' classroom activities

- Information about the number of registered students, detained students, promoted students, the number of students in the classroom, student discipline, and types of students based on their ability
- The WEO follows our weekly and annual lesson plans
- The WEO follows accomplishments according to our plan
- **Cooperation among stakeholders in producing information on learning**
  - Strong Parent-Teacher relationship to improve learning
    - Parent-teacher relationship is better
    - Many parents track their children's learning
    - Parent-teacher cooperate to improve learning
    - Tips for parents on how to support their children's learning
    - Most parents collaborate with the school to work on learning
    - Communicating parents through PTA and meetings with the whole parents is astonishing
    - Parents are working actively with the school on supporting learning
  - Positive relationship among agents and students
    - Positive relationship between leaders and teachers
    - Positive relationship between teachers and students
    - Positive leaders-teachers relationship

### **Motivation**

- **Motivational activities based on Student academic performance and discipline**
  - Student national exam results are the primary rewarding activity
    - Students' score on national exams is a rewarding activity
    - Working diligently on discipline, students' exam results, and reporting attendance on time are rewarding activities
    - Improving students' academic performance and discipline is a rewarding activity
    - Better scores on national exam is rewarding for the school
    - Improving of the school environment, drawing different pictures and diagrams that are related to contents in the classroom are rewarding

- Improving students' learning outcomes, and providing tutorials are rewarding activities for teachers at this school
- Learning Outcome is more than an incentive for the school community
- Student discipline as a rewarding activity
  - Managing students' misbehavior is a rewarding activity
  - Working diligently on discipline, students' exam results, and reporting attendance on time are rewarding activities
  - Improving students' academic performance and discipline is a rewarding activity
- The school Context as a motivator
  - Professional autonomy as a motivator
  - The conducive/attractive environment as a motivator
  - To teach tutorials teachers need to be nominated by the students
  - Improving the school environment as a rewarding activity
  - No financial incentive for teachers
  - Rewards for teachers is certificate while for students is reference books