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***Ethiopia Pilot Study of Teacher  
Professional Development***

***Quality in Education, Teaching, and Learning:  
Perceptions and Practice***



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***ETHIOPIA PILOT STUDY OF TEACHER  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

***QUALITY IN EDUCATION, TEACHING, AND LEARNING:  
PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICE***

by

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Ethiopia has expanded access to primary education (grades 1-8) dramatically in the last 15 years, with gross enrolment rates rising from 20 percent to 80 percent. Despite this achievement, expanding enrolments have contributed to stagnating or declining quality, especially in the context of severely limited resources. The government is actively seeking strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. National student assessments carried out in 2000 and 2004 at the grades 4 and 8 levels indicated serious problems with quality, although the 2004 assessment identified a positive correlation between teacher attitudes and professional development and improved student achievement. This study examines important aspects of this relationship, focusing on teachers' perceptions and practice of quality and the influence of professional development on improving practice within the context of Ethiopia's active-learning policies.

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) in cooperation with the Institute of Educational Research (IER) of Addis Ababa University carried out the Ethiopia Pilot Study of Teacher professional development, funded through the USAID Educational Quality Improvement Program 1 (EQUIP1) Leader Award. The research took place in four of Ethiopia's regional states – Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's, and Tigray. The study is primarily qualitative, exploring in depth the experiences, perceptions, and practices of a small group of grade 4 teachers and principals in each of the regional states. The study also includes a quantitative survey of over 100 grade 4 teachers in each regional state which is used to illuminate the qualitative data. The sample size of the interviews and focus groups is small and the survey cannot be considered representative because the sampling was not random. The results therefore are not statistically significant, although they are internally highly consistent, indicating validity as interpreted in qualitative research.

The findings of the study are organized as regional state case studies on each of the focal points of the study: 1) teachers' and principals' perceptions of education quality; 2) teachers' classroom practices; and 3) teachers' and principals' perceptions of the influence of professional development programs. Each focal point includes an inter-case analysis that compares results across the regional states and explores critical issues that emerge from the data.

The results, which are highly consistent across the regional states, include the following: 1) Teachers and principals defined and discussed education quality around issues of educational inputs, processes, and outputs. Discussions of inputs largely focused on inadequate resources; process was seen in terms of students' participation and activities in the classroom; and outputs were discussed in terms of learning outcomes, but more prominently in terms of students' personal and inter-personal characteristics. 2) Despite the fact that many classrooms were arranged in groups, classroom observations revealed very little real active learning, in the cognitive sense of encouraging conceptual learning or the use of higher-order thinking skills. The observations revealed many examples of exemplary supportive relationships between teachers and students. 3) Both teachers and principals highly value the continuous professional development (CPD) programs which take place at the school and cluster levels. Teachers and principals, however, spoke primarily about how the programs support the affective rather than the cognitive dimensions of active teaching and learning.

The study suggests the need to clarify policies and practice in relation to active-learning. Teachers appear to have embraced its affective dimensions and many excellent and supportive relationships are seen in the classrooms. However, there seems to be limited understanding of active learning's cognitive dimensions outside of some of its limited forms such as group work and student discussions. Since the curriculum, textbooks, and examinations are crowded and rigid, they send messages counter to active learning and force teachers into a teacher-centered, rote-learning mode.

This possible misalignment of policies and programs suggests strengthening the understanding and practice of the cognitive aspects of active learning (i.e. analytical and conceptual learning) within the system rather than re-embracing reliance on rote learning. However, an important base appears to have been established through the changes in teachers' attitudes and their positive approaches to many aspects of active and student-centered learning. This may be the link that was identified in the 2004 student assessment in which two important variables correlated to student achievement were teacher professional development and teachers' positive attitudes about students and their learning abilities.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Focus of the Study**

Ethiopia has placed education at the center of its strategies for development and democratization, with strong policies promoting equity and quality of educational provision and rapid expansion of educational opportunity to previously underserved populations (African Union Commission 2005; Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1994). Ethiopia's rapidly expanding gross enrollment rates (GERs), 20 percent in the early 1990s to nearly 80 percent in 2004/2005, indicate that Ethiopia has made great strides in increasing the quantity of education available, although gender imbalances remain a serious problem (Ministry of Education 2005a). Despite these achievements, expanding enrolments have compromised quality, especially in the context of severely limited resources. The government, therefore, has made a priority of addressing issues of quality of teaching and learning (Ministry of Education 2005b). National student assessments carried out in 2000 and 2004 at the grades 4 and 8 levels indicated serious problems with quality, with overall low achievement in basic academic skills (National Organization of Examinations 2000a; 2000b; 2004a; 2004b). The 2004 student assessment, however, indicated a positive correlation between student achievement and teachers' professional development and their positive attitudes towards students, although the assessment data do not explain the nature of the relationship.

This study examines important aspects of the relationship identified in the student assessment by focusing on teachers' perceptions and practice of education quality and the influence of professional development on improving practice. The following questions guide the study:

- How do teachers perceive quality of education, quality of teaching, and quality of learning?
- What is the relationship between teachers' perceptions of quality and their practice?
- What is the influence of teacher professional development programs in promoting teacher learning, change, and improvement of practice?

### **1.2 Study Approach**

This study was carried out under the USAID Educational Quality Improvement Program 1 (EQUIP1) Leader Award by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) in cooperation with the Institute of Educational Research of Addis Ababa University. With the approval of the Ministry of Education, the research took place in four of Ethiopia's regional states - Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's (SNNP), and Tigray. Four senior researchers from the Institute of Educational Research led the study; one researcher collected data in each of the regional states and conducted interviews in regional languages.

The study is primarily qualitative, but uses a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach. In the qualitative components, the researchers interviewed and observed the teaching of six core teachers in each regional state, two in each of three focus schools – one urban, one peri-urban, and one rural. The researchers also interviewed principals<sup>1</sup> of these schools and conducted focus-group discussions with about eight grade 4 teachers in each school. The total sample of informants across the four regional states in the qualitative components was made up of 24 core

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<sup>1</sup> Principals in Ethiopia are usually called School Directors, although this paper uses the term principal.

teachers, 12 principals, and approximately 89 teachers in focus groups. A quantitative component was used to illuminate the qualitative data. In this component, a survey questionnaire was completed by 439 grade 4 teachers from the four regional states. The study, therefore, has both depth from the qualitative interviews and observations and breadth from the quantitative survey.

Due to the small sample sizes, the results of the in-depth interviews, observations, and focus-group discussions are not representative or statistically significant which is the case for most qualitative research. The quantitative survey was large enough to be statistically significant under some circumstances, but since the sample was not randomly selected the survey results are not regarded as representative. The results of the study, however, have a high degree of internal consistency, indicating validity as interpreted in qualitative research (Creswell 2003, pp 195-197; Hopkins 2002, pp. 133-137). This pilot study, as most qualitative research, is exploratory and focused on understanding participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell 2005, p. 44).

In the selection process for the qualitative part of the study, two schools were chosen in each regional state that had some level of participation in professional development activities organized through the USAID Basic Education Program (BEP)<sup>2</sup> which has supported the government's policies and programs to improve quality of education in Ethiopia since 1995.

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<sup>2</sup> The USAID Basic Education Program (BEP) was formerly called Basic Education System Overhaul Program (BESO I, 1995-2002) and Basic Education Strategic Objective Program (BESO II, 2002-2007, renamed BEP in early 2006).

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE<sup>3</sup>

This review briefly summarizes literature on issues of education quality, teacher quality, and teacher learning, setting Ethiopia's policies and programs in a wider context.

### 2.1 Literature on Quality Education

Education quality is a multifaceted concept, defined differently depending on a country's policy objectives and underlying philosophies. According to a recent UNESCO report on education quality, many countries mix the following approaches in their visions of quality, with one approach or another dominating as policy evolves: 1) a humanist approach which focuses on students' construction of knowledge, active learning, and social action; 2) a behaviorist approach which assumes that students must be led by incremental steps to specific, pre-defined ends; 3) a critical approach which focuses on understanding and correcting inequities; and 4) an indigenous approach which rejects mainstream education imported from the centers of power (UNESCO 2004, pp. 32–35).

In Ethiopia, as in most countries, policies define education quality according to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students develop – the familiar cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor domains. According to Ethiopia's policies, cognitive learning is important and includes relevant knowledge, analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills which are the bedrock of the 1994 National Education and Training Policy (NETP) and the new curriculum (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1994). According to policy, knowledge and skills are developed through student-centered and active learning, as is the ability to apply knowledge practically. Affective learning is also important and in Ethiopia, as in many countries, includes the development of social commitment, democratic attitudes, self-knowledge, and appropriate inter-personal skills. According to the framework outlined above, Ethiopia's policies and programs most closely correspond to the humanist approach, although elements of behaviorism are evident in many aspects of the system – the curriculum, textbooks, examinations, and teachers' practices.

Decentralization has become an important focus of education quality in recent years because of the failure of central authority to produce quality and the weak link between top-down policy and school-level practice (Farrell 2002, pp. 251-252). Ethiopia has a highly decentralized system of governance, in the mid-1990s decentralizing to the regional state level and, in the last five years, to the *woreda*<sup>4</sup> and more local levels. The advent of active learning has also prompted a focus on local action and local engagement to inform and mobilize policies. Schools, teachers, and communities, working together in a supportive policy environment, are recognized as the primary engines of quality (Farrell 2002, pp. 251-252). While this seems obvious, policy-makers and program designers have only recently begun looking seriously beyond input and output models of what constitutes quality, now seeking to understand more about complex processes at the local level and the “daily school experience” as basic ingredients of quality (Anderson 2002; Leu 2005; Nielsen and Cummings 1997; Prouty and Tegegn 2000; Rowley 1998; Tatto 2000; USAID/EQUIP2 2006; Verspoor 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> The literature review is an abbreviated version of a longer review of the literature on quality of education and teacher learning available through USAID/EQUIP1 (2006) by Elizabeth Leu and Alison Price-Rom.

<sup>4</sup> In Ethiopia, the *woreda* is the key local administrative authority, something like a county, to which a high degree of autonomy and responsibility has now been decentralized.



Teachers are widely recognized as a critical factor influencing education quality at the school level (Asgedom et al. 1998; Bridges 1998; UNESCO 2006; Villegas Reimers 2003; USAID/EQUIP1 2004a; USAID/EQUIP1 2004b). Researchers, policy makers, and program designers, implementers, and evaluators, therefore, are looking for ways of understanding teacher quality and teacher learning, focusing on effective and promising teacher improvement programs (ADEA 2004; ADEA 2005; Boyle et al. 2003; Craig et al. 1998; Leu 2005; Leu et al. 2005; Lewin and Stuart 2003; UNESCO 2004; UNICEF 2000; USAID/EQUIP1 2004c; Verspoor 2006).

The literature on education quality indicates a strong link between teacher professional development and quality, especially in the areas of “teachers’ beliefs and practices, students’ learning, and on the implementation of educational reforms” (UNESCO 2006, p. 71). This is particularly important for teachers working in the context of new constructivist and active-learning paradigms which reject more traditional behaviorist methods of teaching and emphasize students’ construction of reality, flexible and dynamic ways of knowing the world, continuous construction of new meanings, and learning through social interaction (Case 1996; Dewey 1916; National Institute for Educational Development 2003; Vygotsky 1962). These approaches can only be implemented effectively when teachers understand the ideas behind the reforms and have the ability to apply ideas flexibly in the classroom (Santiago and McKenzie 2006, p. 6).

The literature indicates that a positive and clear policy environment and adequate support for growth are essential for creating and sustaining teacher quality (Fredriksson 2004; Mulkeen et al. 2005). Continuous professional development, in line with Ethiopia’s policies as described in the next chapter, is also necessary for career-long teacher learning and improvement (Craig et al. 1998, p. 13; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005; du Plessis et al. 2002; Fenstermacher and Richardson 2000; Hopkins 2001; Ministry of Education 2002a).

## **2.2 Literature on Teacher Professional Development**

Codified knowledge, prescriptive practice, inflexible rules of conduct, and other traditional approaches to teacher learning belong to traditional or behaviorist paradigms and are unlikely to produce teachers who understand and practice active learning successfully. Constructivist and active-learning approaches require teachers to develop deep understanding of their practice and of the reforms that guide changes in that practice (Santiago and McKenzie 2006). Teachers’ ability to develop, adopt, and improve throughout their careers is essential for effective active learning and depends on their participation in collaborative organizations, or communities of practice, based on continuous inquiry into practice (Bridges 1998; Darling-Hammond 2006; Grossman et al. 2001; Hatch 2006). Scholars and education program specialists have long supported the view that successful school reform is best achieved by helping teachers and schools become inquiring collaborative organizations, engaging the entire school community in the reform (Craig et al. 1998; Darling-Hammond 1993; Lieberman and Miller 1990; Little 1988; Ministry of Education 2002a).

In their professional development, teachers need to acquire the capacity to consider, implement, and make room for changes. The combined processes of efficiency and innovation are assumed to be “complementary at a global level, and they are complementary when appropriate levels of efficiency make room for innovation” (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005, p. 362). In other words, teachers need to develop practices that provide the flexibility for experimentation and innovation in the classroom so that they can become “adaptive experts” (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005, p. 3).

A study of teacher education reform projects in East Africa outlines similar factors that contribute to effective teacher professional development: 1) teacher-centered and school-based workshops; 2) in-class coaching by consultants, supervisors, or peers; 3) team planning and problem-solving by collegial work groups; 4) action research; 5) teacher inter-visitation; and 6) professional study groups (Anderson 2002). Darling-Hammond (1998, pp. 4-5) likewise suggests that the following ideas guide effective programs for teacher learning: 1) experiential, engaging teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, and observation; 2) grounded in participants' questions, inquiry, and experimentation; 3) collaborative, involving shared knowledge among educators; 4) connected to and derived from teachers' work and examination of subject matter and teaching methods; 5) sustained and intensive, supported by modeling, coaching, and problem solving around specific problems of practice; and 6) connected to other aspects of school change.

Many of the ideas of education quality and teacher learning outlined above are evident in Ethiopia's policies and programs, particularly in the overall guidelines for quality teacher development in the Teacher Education Strategic Objective (TESO) and the in-service continuous professional development (CPD) program, both of which are national policies adopted by all of the regional states (Asgedom et al. 1998; Gidey 2002; Ministry of Education 2002a; Ministry of Education 2005b).

## **CHAPTER 3: ETHIOPIA’S POLICY AND PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT**

### **3.1 Policy Background**

When Ethiopia emerged from 17 years of rule by the Derg in 1991,<sup>5</sup> the country’s infrastructure was devastated and participation in primary education was low and unevenly distributed. Gross enrolment rates in the early 1990s were only 20 percent, with limited provision outside of urban areas. In a major initiative to address problems related to access, equity, and quality of educational provision, the new government introduced the New Education and Training Policy in 1994 (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1994). The NETP initiated the decentralization of educational authority to the 11 newly created regional states and called for new education practices based on relevant, active, and student-centered teaching and learning. These reforms established the foundation for all subsequent education policies (Abebe 1998; Ministry of Education 2005b).

Ethiopia has a highly decentralized system of government with the regional states having much of the authority for education. The Ministry of Education consults with the regional states to develop overall policy guidelines and program frameworks. The regional states follow the frameworks voluntarily, but they have wide latitude in the implementation of policies. For example, curriculum is developed according to a national curriculum framework, with each region developing its own syllabi and textbooks, using regionally relevant content and regional languages. Likewise, teacher development, both pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development, is directed by national guidelines, but the regional states shape, implement, and fund the programs (Dufera 1998).

Since the NETP was introduced in 1994, Ethiopia has adopted three subsequent Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDPs) that elaborate policy and provide guidelines for translating policy into action (Ministry of Education 1997; 2002b; 2005b). All three programs have focused on expansion of the system, inclusion of marginalized children in rural and urban areas, correction of gender imbalances, reduction of attrition, improvement of curricula, provision of textbooks, involvement of communities in education, and increase of financing for education. With a population now estimated to be nearing 80 million, Ethiopia has achieved national gross enrolment rates of 95 percent for grades 1-4 and 80 percent for grades 1-8. The quality concerns raised in each of the ESDP documents are, in part, the consequence of this rapid expansion in the context of continuing and severe resource constraints.

### **3.2 Professional Development Opportunities for Ethiopian Teachers**

The government acknowledges the key role that teachers play in education quality and places teachers at the core of its quality-improvement strategies. The recently initiated Teacher Education System Overhaul program of the Ministry of Education guides teacher education in Ethiopia (Ministry of Education 2005b, pp. 18-19). Primary teachers now prepare through two kinds of pre-service programs: 1) a grade 10 + 1-year certificate course for first cycle (grades 1-4) teachers; and 2) a grade 10 + 3-years diploma course for second cycle (grades 5-8) teachers that includes a sandwich year of supervised teaching. An induction period is now built into the initial

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<sup>5</sup> The “Derg” (the “committee” in Amharic) was the Soviet-supported military Marxist/Stalinist regime that overthrew the Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. After 17 years of armed struggle against the Derg, it was overthrown in 1991 by a coalition of forces.

two years of practice. Teacher educators in all teacher education institutions are now required to earn a higher diploma in education, one of the programs initiated under TESO.

Before the late 1990s, Ethiopia relied almost exclusively on cascade or multiplier models of professional development through which selected teachers and principals attended centralized workshops and returned to their schools to disseminate their new knowledge. Although centralized workshops are still used occasionally, national and regional state policies now call for continuous professional development - compulsory, comprehensive, and ongoing programs of professional development carried out predominantly at the school and cluster levels to guide in-service teacher and principal professional development. Although patterns vary widely throughout the country, most of the regional states organize schools into clusters of between four and 10 schools which are close to each other (sometimes defined as up to four to six hours' walking distance from each other). Clusters, most of which are made up of cluster-center and satellite schools, are used as the primary structure for carrying out professional development activities and for facilitating a two-way flow of information between regional state education bureaus and the schools. Beginning in 2002, the Ministry of Education developed TESO and CPD as its primary strategies for building teacher quality through a continuum of improved pre-service and in-service programs. Both programs work to improve teachers' understanding of and ability to implement active-learning approaches which form the philosophical and policy base for curriculum and instruction in Ethiopia. The USAID BESO I program pioneered some of the pre-service and in-service strategies that have evolved into TESO and CPD (Asgedom 1998; Gidey 2002; Ministry of Education 2002a; Ministry of Education 2005b, pp. 18-19).

### **3.3 The Educational Context of the Four Regional States in the Study<sup>6</sup>**

#### ***3.3.1 Overview of Amhara Regional State***

Amhara Regional State lies in the north central part of Ethiopia and is the second largest and most populous state in the country. Its population is close to 16 million people and is largely ethnically homogeneous. Bahir Dar is the capital and largest town, but about 85 percent of the population lives in rural areas, with agriculture forming the state's economic backbone.

Amhara's gross enrolment rate for primary education grades 1-8 in 2004/2005 was 75.9 percent, 4 percent below the national average and the lowest of the four regional states in the study. There is a small gender gap; GER for females in grades 1-8 is 72.6 percent in comparison to 79 percent for boys. The student teacher ratio of grades 1-4 is 66, below the national average of 71. In grades 5-8, the student teacher ratio remains at 66, while the national average decreases to 55. On the 2004 grade 4 national learning assessment, indicating basic proficiency in math and reading, students in Amhara received a composite mean score of 53.7 percent, above the national average of 48.5 percent. Similarly, on the 2004 grade 8 national assessment, Amhara scored 43.0 percent in comparison to the national score of 39.7 percent. The regional state has strongly supported school clustering for CPD, assigning a supervisor drawn from the ranks of excellent teachers to support professional development in each of the region's school clusters (Amhara Regional State Education Bureau 2005). BEP (BESO II) has worked in Amhara since 2002 to support this process.

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<sup>6</sup> Educational statistics for the four regional states reviewed in this section are based on the most recent statistical abstract produced by the Ministry of Education's Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) Department: Ministry of Education 2005a.

### ***3.3.2 Overview of Oromia Regional State***

Oromia Regional State lies in the central part of Ethiopia. With a primarily ethnically homogeneous population of around 25 million, Oromia is Ethiopia's most populous and largest regional state. Oromia surrounds the capital of Addis Ababa, which is a separate administrative entity although it serves as the capital of Oromia. About 90 percent of the population lives in rural areas and is tied to the agricultural economy (e.g., coffee farming).

The gross enrolment rate for grades 1-8 in Oromia for 2004/2005 was 87.5 percent, more than 7 percent above the national average of 79.8. There is wide gender disparity in GER rates: GER for boys is 100.5 percent for grades 1-8 compared to 74.3 percent for girls. The student teacher ratio in grades 1-4 is 90, the highest of the four states in the study. In grades 5-8 the student teacher ratio drops to 58, closer to the national average of 55. Oromia scored 47.8 percent on the 2004 grade 4 student assessment, slightly below the national average of 48.5 percent. However, the state scored 43.2 percent on the 2004 grade 8 assessment, above the national average of 39.7 percent. The regional state has formed clusters and initiated continuous professional development programs, although the system is expanding slowly throughout the regional state. BEP (BESO II) has worked in Oromia since 2002 to support this process.

### ***3.3.3 Overview of SNNP Regional State***

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State lies in the southwestern part of Ethiopia. SNNP, Ethiopia's third largest state, is ethnically diverse, with a population of 14 million people who speak over 25 languages. Awassa is the capital and largest city, although over 90 percent of the population live in rural areas and depend on agriculture as an economic base.

The gross enrolment rate for grades 1-8 in SNNP for 2004/2005 was 78.9 percent, almost the same as the national average. In SNNP there are major gaps between boys and girls; GER for boys in grades 1-8 is 91.7 percent and for girls it is 66.0 percent. The student teacher ratio for grades 1-4 is the same as the national average of 71. For grades 5-8, the student teacher ratio of 59 is slightly above the national average of 55. In terms of achievement, SNNP is slightly below the national average for grades 4 and 8, receiving a mean composite score in the 2004 student assessment of 47.3 percent in grade 4 (compared to the 48.5 percent national average) and 37.4 percent in grade 8 (compared to the 39.7 percent national average). SNNP was one of the states that pioneered the cluster system, along with Tigray, under the BESO I program starting in the late 1990s.

### ***3.3.4 Overview of Tigray Regional State***

Tigray Regional State lies in the far north of Ethiopia. With a population of just over four million, it is much smaller than the other regional states in the study. Tigray is ethnically homogeneous. Mekelle is the capital and largest town, although about 83 percent of the state's population is rural and depends on agriculture.

The Tigray gross enrolment rates for grades 1-8 have expanded from around 10 percent in the early 1990s to 91 percent in 2004/2005, presently over 10 percent above the national average. There is almost no difference between boys' and girls' gross enrollment rates for grades 1-8; GER for girls is 91.1 percent, slightly above the 90.8 percent for boys. The student teacher ratio for grades 1-4 is 50 and for grades 5-8 is 44, the lowest among the four regional states in the study. On the grade 4 national assessment, Tigray ranked below the national average with a mean composite score of 45.9 percent compared to the national average of 48.5 percent. In contrast, on

the grade 8 assessment, the Tigrai score of 43.0 percent was slightly above the national average. The Tigrai Regional State Education Bureau pioneered the school cluster approach to site-based continuous professional development starting in 1996/97 in partnership with the USAID BESO I program.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION QUALITY**

This chapter discusses teachers' and principals' perceptions of education quality, teaching quality, and quality of learning. The data are drawn from in-depth interviews with the core teachers and their principals, focus-group discussions with teachers, and a survey of a wider sample of grade 4 teachers. The findings regarding perceptions of quality of education are presented first as a case study for each regional state and are then drawn together in an inter-case analysis, which includes a discussion of critical issues that emerged from this part of the study.

### **4.1 Amhara Regional State**

#### ***4.1.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Education Quality***

The Amhara teachers who participated in the study view education quality in terms of immediate results such as achieving the objectives of the school and delivering lessons according to plan. They also view resources as a necessary input for a quality education, stressing the importance of appropriate and relevant education materials. Finally, teachers emphasize the broader goal of students becoming aware of their community and environment.

When teachers discussed the definition of quality teaching, most concentrated on their own behavior in the classroom. They believe that quality teaching means teachers' mastery of subject matter, development of good relations with students, involvement of students in the classroom, and effective lesson preparation. They thought that continuous assessment was essential. Teachers also indicated that quality teaching can take place only when teachers have the necessary qualifications, support from the school management, teaching/learning resources, a conducive work environment, and regular teacher improvement opportunities.

The Amhara teachers in the study believe that quality learning takes place when students master the subjects and attend classes regularly. Students' performance is demonstrated by their individual and group participation and doing well on exams and classroom exercises. Teachers also stressed a social component of quality learning, stating that students must respect the rules and regulations of the school and behave ethically in their own community. Despite this, teachers indicated that continuous assessment, as presently formulated, does not promote learning because it de-emphasizes the regular assessment of students' knowledge or subject mastery and emphasizes the assessment of personal and inter-personal characteristics of the students.

#### ***4.1.2 Principals' Perceptions of Quality Education***

Like the teachers, the Amhara principals who participated in the study view quality education in terms of student achievement and good behavior. According to the principals, students should master minimum learning competencies, actively participate in class, and develop self-confidence. Principals reported that qualified teachers, sufficient resources, and classrooms in good condition are necessary inputs for quality education. Principals also emphasized that quality education can improve only when there are close working relations with cluster schools, *woredas*, and regional education authorities.

Similar themes emerged when principals discussed their views of quality teaching. Principals believe that teachers who are well-qualified and well-prepared in pedagogy are the key to quality. They also focus on the interaction between teachers and students inside the classroom, stressing

the importance of a student-centered approach. According to one principal, however, the student-centred approach assumes the availability of resources that are not always present in the classroom. In their view, quality teaching is highly dependent on resources and conducive school environments.

The Amhara principals link quality learning with students' being able to express their views, demonstrate practically what they have learned, and exhibit an awareness of their environment. In addition, the Amhara principals expressed the view that students' backgrounds and socio-economic status can be a serious determinant to their learning. They acknowledge that there is little they can do to change the socio-economic factors, but think that schools can play a role in encouraging children from very low-income families to gain self-confidence and learn through approaches sensitive to their needs.

#### **4.1.3 Amhara Teacher Survey Responses on Perceptions of Quality**

The 115 grade 4 teachers in Amhara who responded to the questionnaire expressed their views concerning quality of teaching and learning. Table 4.1.1 shows that when asked what quality of teaching means the most common responses were teachers' mastery of subjects, having good relations with students, and involving students in the classroom. Interestingly, improvement of students' achievements is one of the least frequent responses. This is consistent with the interview responses in which teachers discussed the importance of academic learning or cognitive achievement, but emphasized the affective aspects of learning focusing on positive relationships.

**Table 4.1.1: Quality of Teaching**

What does quality teaching mean? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
Involving students in the classroom	48	41.7
Giving assignments to students all the time	25	21.7
Improving students' achievements	33	28.7
Having good relations with students	51	44.3
Giving good lectures	6	5.2
Teachers' mastery of subjects	51	44.3

Consistent with the result above, Table 4.1.2 demonstrates that many teachers link quality of student learning more frequently with active class participation than with performance on examinations and tests, again emphasizing the affective over the cognitive aspects of active learning. Another dominant response for teachers is reciting what has been said in class, a rote-learning, behaviorist approach which contradicts both policy and how teachers said they understood active learning in the interviews.

**Table 4.1.2: Quality of Student Learning**

What does good student learning mean? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
Active participation of students in the class	50	43.5
High score in class tests	17	14.8
High score in final examination	7	6.1
Reciting what has been said in the class	35	30.4



## **4.2 Oromia Regional State**

### ***4.2.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Quality Education***

The Oromia teachers in the study focused primarily on the availability of resources and the role of teachers. The teachers believed that quality education is based on the presence of adequate instructional materials and textbooks and sufficient space and furniture in the learning environment. Teachers also stressed that quality is related to teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills as well as to their ability to interact with students using student-centered methodologies.

Teachers' views on quality teaching highlighted their roles inside and outside of the classroom. Although teachers emphasized that quality teaching depends on teacher preparation before entering the classroom, they said that quality teaching depends on how teachers use their subject knowledge and employ different methodologies in the classroom. Teachers discussed the importance of motivating students to be active, rather than passive learners - to participate in class discussions, ask questions, and become self-aware and self-expressive. Teachers believed that this would improve student achievement on an academic as well as a social level, and allow the students to implement what they have learned in their daily lives.

According to the Oromia teachers interviewed, quality learning is dependent on quality teaching as well as on student discipline. Teachers said that learning depends on whether a classroom is managed properly. They also said that students play a crucial role, asserting that students should learn to take the responsibility for obeying school rules, being punctual, listening to the teacher, asking questions, doing their homework, and participating actively in class. According to this view, teachers and students must work together to create quality of learning.

### ***4.2.2 Principals' Perceptions of Quality Education***

The principals interviewed in Oromia echoed the views of teachers on many aspects of education quality. All principals highlighted the importance of adequate resources and facilities, naming textbooks, chairs, teaching aids, and suitable classrooms as important. According to one principal, without those resources quality education is impossible. Principals also indicated that teachers play a fundamental role in ensuring quality education. Principals believe that teachers should be well prepared, use active teaching approaches, and follow the curriculum. Lastly, principals related quality education to behavior change in students which includes active participation in class, obeying the school rules, and respecting community members.

In the view of the Oromia principals, quality teaching depends on the characteristics of the teachers – specifically, whether they have mastered the subject matter and pedagogy through their pre-service and in-service programs. Most importantly, principals think that teachers must be able to utilize that knowledge flexibly in the classroom by employing the student-centered teaching methods that are possible according to the resources available and appropriate for the levels and needs of their students.

The principals' concentration on the quality of teachers was also present in their ideas on quality learning. According to principals, quality learning is based on a combination of teachers' preparation and motivation. Like the Amhara principals, the Oromia principals mentioned the effects that external factors can have on student learning such as their family circumstances and the distance children walk to school which affect their energy level in class. When describing

quality learning, principals do not focus on academic achievement, emphasizing behavior change in students instead. Lastly, they link quality of learning with students' using what they learn in practical ways in their daily lives.

### 4.2.3 Oromia Teacher Survey Responses on Perceptions of Quality

Information from the 94 teacher responses in Oromia offered additional data on teachers' views of quality teaching and student learning. According to Table 4.2.1 teachers' most common response is that quality teaching means involving students in the classroom. To a lesser extent, they cite the response of having good relations with students and their own mastery of subjects. Consistent with the results in Amhara, improving students' achievements is one of the least common responses. This is also consistent with the Oromia teacher interviews which highlighted the importance of students' motivation and participation over cognitive aspects of learning.

**Table 4.2.1: Quality of Teaching**

What does quality teaching mean? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
Involving students in the classroom	44	46.8
Giving assignments to students all the time	21	22.3
Improving students' achievements	14	14.9
Having good relations with students	32	34.0
Giving good lectures	8	8.5
Teachers' mastery of subjects	30	31.9

Teacher questionnaire responses on the meaning of student learning, shown in Table 4.2.2, echo the responses in the previous table. Here students' active participation in class and reciting what has been said are the most frequent responses, even though the two choices can be seen as contradictory. However, these characteristics are more common than test and examination scores suggesting a lack of importance of this type of achievement over more affective, interpersonal aspects of learning.

**Table 4.2.2: Quality of Student Learning**

What does good student learning mean? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
Active participation of students in the class	38	40.4
High score in class tests	9	9.6
High score in final examination	9	9.6
Reciting what has been said in the class	35	37.2

## 4.3 Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State

### 4.3.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Quality of Education

Much like teachers in Amhara and Oromia, SNNP teachers related quality education to resources and the quality of teachers. Teachers referred to the lack of textbooks, large class sizes, and lack of material and financial inputs as barriers to quality. Teachers also emphasized that they must be competent and knowledgeable in their subject matter, flexible in the use of different methodologies, able to manage children's discipline, and motivate students to learn. According to teachers, quality education refers to education that helps students change their behavior.

The teachers' views on quality teaching emphasized the importance of teachers who are well prepared in their subject matter, adhere to school rules and the curriculum, employ student-centered approaches in the classroom, and use continuous assessment to evaluate performance. According to teachers, a quality teacher must be flexible and make the correct choice of methods depending on the nature of the topic. Teachers also stated that the role of the teacher is to function as a family member, interacting in children's lives outside of the classroom to consult with parents and counsel children.

While the teachers interviewed in SNNP believe that a good student-teacher relationship contributes to better learning, they also described quality learning in terms of student achievement. Teachers stressed the importance of student participation using the examples of asking and answering questions. Quality learning was described as improved academic performance and personal behavior of the learner, including students' performance on class work and examinations as well as their ability to solve problems.

#### ***4.3.2 Principals' Perceptions of Quality***

The SNNP principals in the study had perceptions of education quality that were similar to those of the teachers in their schools. The principals viewed education inputs such as textbooks, desks, blackboards, and qualified teachers as essential to ensuring quality education. Similarly, they stressed the importance of a safe, clean, and attractive learning environment. Principals also believed in establishing a community of learning in the school and cooperation with the wider community. They indicated the need for teachers who love and respect the profession, an administration that is responsible and accountable, and a community that contributes to and participates in the life of the school.

Principals' definitions of quality teaching focused primarily on the role of the teacher in preparing good lesson plans and using a learner-centered approach, varied teaching aids, and continuous assessment. According to the principals, good quality teachers strive to motivate learners and make them feel comfortable participating in class and asking questions. Principals said that they encourage teachers to build strong relationships with students and to help students both inside and outside of the classroom.

A similar emphasis on community was apparent in SNNP principals' discussion of quality of learning. They emphasized the important role of strong student-teacher relationships, collaboration of teachers and parents, and the contributions of the community as fundamental to quality learning. The principals believe that quality learning is demonstrated in the class when learners actively participate, improve their confidence levels, perform well, and are promoted to the next grade. They also view quality learning as an improvement in student behavior and the ability to apply what they have learned in practical life situations.

#### ***4.3.3 SNNP Teacher Survey Responses on Perceptions of Quality***

Questionnaire responses from 120 SNNP teachers also provide information on teachers' perceptions of quality teaching and student learning. According to Table 4.3.1, teachers most frequently link quality teaching to involving students in the classroom and having good relations with students. This information complements the interview data, which emphasizes the importance of student participation and the establishment of good relationships with students, supporting the view that teachers should have close relationships with their students, making themselves accessible both inside and outside of the classroom. The fact that inter-personal

aspects are chosen more frequently than students' achievements, is consistent with the results in Amhara and Oromia.

**Table 4.3.1: Quality of Teaching**

What does quality teaching mean? <i>n</i> =120	Number of Responses	%
Involving students in the classroom	47	39.2
Giving assignments to students all the time	24	20.0
Improving students' achievements	25	20.8
Having good relations with students	41	34.2
Giving good lectures	8	6.7
Teachers' mastery of subjects	37	30.8

The responses of the SNNP teachers shown in Table 4.3.2 on the topic of student learning are also similar to those of Amhara and Oromia teachers. Active participation of students in class is cited most frequently; reciting what has been said in the class is the next most common response. The focus on reciting in class may be related to the emphasis on student behavior and discipline. Teachers associate active learning with students' active participation more than with academic achievement as demonstrated through tests and examination, an important finding of the study in SNNP as in the other regional states.

**Table 4.3.2: Quality of Student Learning**

What does good student learning mean? <i>n</i> =120	Number of Responses	%
Active participation of students in the class	62	51.7
High score in class tests	16	13.3
High score in final examination	12	10.0
Reciting what has been said in the class	40	33.3

## 4.4 Tigray Regional State

### 4.4.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Quality of Education

The Tigray teachers who participated in the interviews related quality education to good teaching and to results. They believe that this is dependent on teachers' capacity, subject knowledge, and competencies. They also emphasized the availability of resources by explaining their inability to provide sufficient education without teaching materials and an appropriate learning environment. With the necessary resources, they indicated that quality education is not only academic performance, but it is the demonstration of good conduct, linking quality explicitly with changing students' behavior.

The teachers discussed quality of teaching as the competencies of the teacher in subject matter knowledge, and the ability to communicate and transmit knowledge in the classroom. To achieve quality, they stated that teachers should use lesson plans, evaluate and assess the students' progress, and motivate students to participate actively. Because of the emphasis on changing student behavior, teachers emphasized their function as role models, setting the moral standards in the class and in the school. Lastly, teachers also viewed themselves as facilitators with the community, discussing with parents and helping them to understand their children's problems.

Many of the Tigray teachers described quality of learning in terms of students' improved competencies and changed behavior. They argued that active participation in class activities, regular school attendance, and engaging in class and home assignments are characteristics of quality learning. Focusing on results, they also emphasized that examination results and winning academic competitions in between-school events are important indicators of quality of learning. Resources are another key factor in quality learning. According to teachers, quality of learning is dependent on both student motivation and the availability of books, laboratories, and other teaching materials. Teachers stated that more resources mean more opportunities for a wide variety of experiences which can help stimulate the interest of the students.

#### ***4.4.2 Principals' Perceptions of Education Quality***

The principals in the Tigray study schools view education quality in terms of educational outcomes and the availability of sufficient inputs. In their opinion, resources such as sufficient teaching materials and qualified teachers are required to achieve quality education. The principals described the results of quality education primarily with reference to social outcomes. In addition to making students more knowledgeable, they referred to quality education as a change in behavior of students involving increased social commitment. The principals thought that quality education should promote active citizenship, motivating students to become active members of their school and society. Lastly, principals stressed that quality is achieved when students demonstrate what they have learned in practical ways in their daily lives.

Principals' descriptions of quality teaching concentrated mainly on the characteristics and activities of teachers. Principals stressed that teachers must be competent; they thought that teachers are most successful when teaching in their area of competency, rather than teaching all subjects such as in the self-contained classroom. Another area of principals' emphasis was the teacher's approach in the classroom - their preparation of lesson plans, implementation of student-centered approaches, and use of teaching materials. Again, resources were mentioned as a necessary requirement for supporting effective teaching approaches. Lastly, principals believed that teachers must follow up the learning process with assessments and gauging results by students' performance on assignments, activities, and tests.

Principals explained quality learning in terms of student-centered teaching, active learning, and increased student interest in learning. They suggested certain indicators of active learning such as class participation, class activities, homework assignments, and group discussions. However, they argued that students need more inducements and persuasion to motivate their attendance and participation. Instead of focusing on the responsibility of the students, principals highlighted the teacher's role of stimulating student interest in learning.

#### ***4.4.3 Tigray Teacher Survey Responses on Perceptions of Quality***

The results of the questionnaire completed by 110 grade 4 teachers in Tigray provide information on perceptions of quality from a larger group of teachers, complementing the interview and focus-group data. Unlike in Amhara, Oromia, and SNNP, Table 4.4.1 reveals that Tigray teachers chose improving student achievement most frequently in defining quality teaching. The second most common response, involving students in the classroom, was the dominant response in the other regional states. Although teacher interviews/focus groups in Tigray suggest that student-centered learning and achievement are important, the responses below suggest that teachers chose responses referring to student outcomes more frequently than those related to participation. This

is particularly interesting when compared to the results of the 2004 student assessment which ranked Tigray students at the grades 1-4 level below the students of the other regional states.

**Table 4.4.1: Quality of Teaching**

What does quality teaching mean? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
Involving students in the classroom	18	16.4
Giving assignments to students all the time	18	16.4
Improving students achievements	35	31.8
Having good relations with students	21	19.1
Giving good lectures	4	3.6
Teachers' mastery of subjects	14	12.7

Teacher responses in table 4.4.2 suggest a contradictory message. When asked to define student learning, the most common response was active participation of students in class, instead of high scores in tests or exams. Tigray teachers also associate student learning with reciting what has been said in class, which is distinct from the high concentration on student-centered learning expressed in the interviews. This result raises the question of how the notion of student achievement and the notion of examination results are understood and associated in the minds of the teachers.

**Table 4.4.2: Quality of Student Learning**

What does good student learning mean? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
Active participation of students in the class	38	34.5
High score in class tests	15	13.6
High score in final examination	10	9.1
Reciting what has been said in the class	24	21.8

## 4.5 Inter-Case Analysis of the Four Regional States

The case studies in the four regional states suggest very similar patterns of teacher and principal understanding of education quality, teaching quality and quality of learning. In the analysis below, we first combine the interview results across the four regional states and discuss three important points that emerged from the data: input, process, and output factors related to education quality. Second, we summarize the results from the survey across the regional states. Lastly, we discuss two critical issues that emerged from the combined results that have an important impact on education quality: 1) the relatively minor importance teachers place on student achievement; and 2) inconsistencies around the role of active learning and rote learning.

### 4.5.1 Perceptions of Quality across the Regional States from Interviews

*Input factors:* Teachers and principals in the four regions believe that quality education is dependent on input factors, such as resources, teachers, and the community. Teachers and principals emphasized the importance of sufficient resources such as textbooks, desks, teaching materials, libraries, and adequate classrooms. They believe that without these essential items, they are unable to deliver quality education. Teachers are also considered a crucial resource. Both principals and teachers stressed the need for qualified teachers who have appropriate subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Lastly, teachers view community involvement as a crucial determinant of quality education, including teachers' interactions with parents and the communities' financial support of schools. In Amhara and Oromia, principals mentioned yet

another input, students' socio-economic conditions which they thought often has an impact on a student's ability to learn.

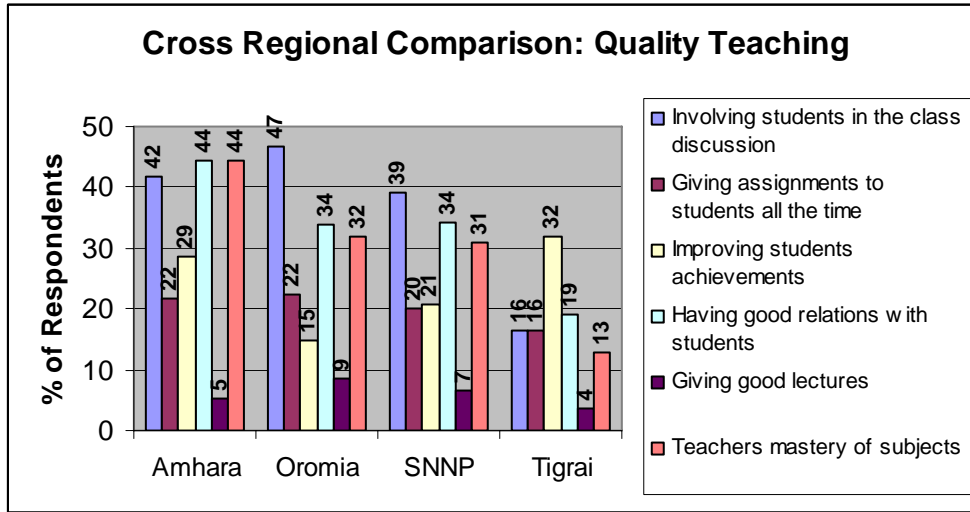
*Process factors:* Process factors of quality relate to teachers' and students' activities in the classroom. In all four states, teachers and principals emphasized employing a student-centered approach. They explained quality education in terms of student participation, students asking questions and building their self-confidence levels. They also referred to the importance of assessing student performance and employing various strategies and teaching materials to motivate students. Teachers and principals reported that teachers should function as a role model to students, upholding the schools' rules and following the curriculum. This concept of the teacher's role differed slightly in the cases of SNNP and Tigray. While building a strong relationship with students and communities is emphasized in all four states, principals and teachers in SNNP and Tigray believe that teachers should play an important active role in children's lives.

*Output factors:* Research participants in all regions explained quality in relation to learning outcomes. Although these outcomes are expressed in terms of achieving high scores on exams, completing homework, and achieving promotion to the next grade, even more prominent are the references to affective aspects of active learning such as how students interact in the classroom, their participation levels, and their self-confidence. Teachers and principals also define achievement as students adhering to the rules and regulations of the school, being punctual, having good attendance, and changing their behavior. Finally, teachers and principals indicated that there is a practical purpose of education, stressing that students have achieved quality learning when they are able to demonstrate their learning in practical settings in their everyday lives.

#### ***4.5.2 Perceptions of Quality across Regional States from the Teacher Survey***

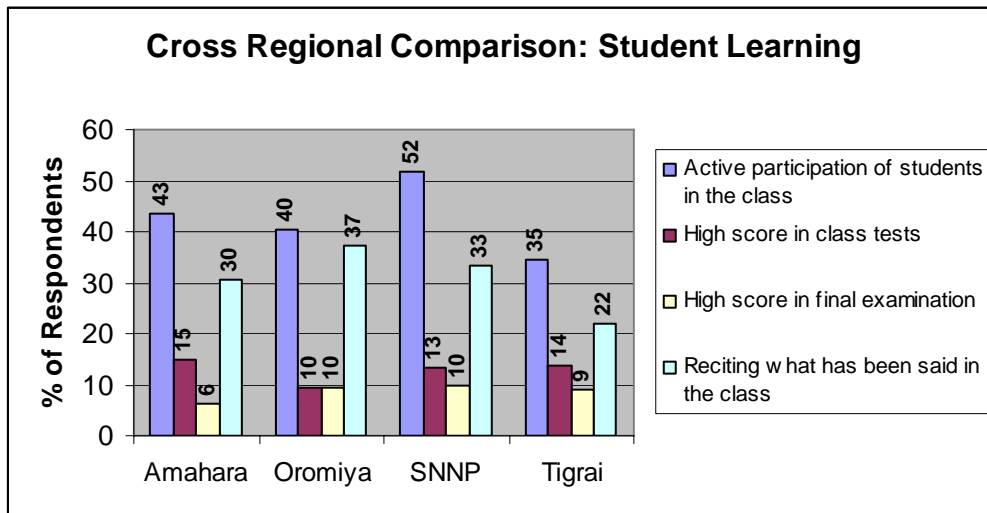
The quantitative results of the teacher survey also reveal similarities across the four regions. Teachers in three of the four regions most commonly defined quality teaching as involving students in class discussions and having good relations with students. Tigray is the only region where teachers more frequently chose improving student achievements. This is consistent with the findings from interviews and focus groups, which highlight the importance of the affective over the cognitive aspects of active learning.

**Figure 4.1: Cross-regional Comparison: Quality Teaching**



Responses about student learning are also consistent across regional states. Active participation in class is the teachers’ dominant response when asked to define student learning, more common than performance on tests and examinations. This result is somewhat at odds with the interview data in which teachers and principals talked about the importance of academic achievement, albeit with a greater emphasis on affective aspects of active learning. The higher frequency of reciting in class suggests that, while active learning is the policy, teachers still depend on non-active, behaviorist practice in the classroom.

**Figure 4.2: Cross-regional Comparison: Student Learning**



**4.5.3 Critical Issues in Perceptions of Quality**

*Cognitive and affective aspects of active learning:* In the interviews, teachers and principals talk more about active participation of students in class and changes in their behavior than they do about students’ academic achievement. In the survey, teachers chose examination and test results less frequently, as compared with students’ active participation in class. It is critical to understand



what this tells us about teachers' interpretation and practice of active learning and how teachers work with the integrated cognitive (conceptual learning), affective (inter-personal), and psycho-motor (practical application of learning) aspects of active learning. Although these results raise more questions than they answer, the issues highlighted are highly important and perhaps point to inconsistencies in policy and practice that constitute a roadblock to quality and to student achievement, as measured in assessments and end-of-cycle examinations. First, if class participation is seen as an end in itself, rather than a means to several ends which include academic achievement, then active learning is misunderstood and does not fulfill its role or potential. Second, if various aspects of active learning policies and programs are out of alignment (curriculum, textbooks, the content of CPD programs, student examinations), there may be confusion where it all comes together, at the teaching/learning level, which could lead to lowered rather than improved quality of teaching and student learning.

The findings of this study suggest the urgent need for an examination of the messages that different professional development programs or supervision structures send to teachers about what defines student achievement and the role that active-learning classroom approaches play in this. It would also be important to investigate, at several levels of policy and practice, the role of flexibility in active learning approaches in relation to the relative rigidity of the curriculum and examinations. This inconsistency in policy and practice has been present and unexamined for years in Ethiopia as well as in many other countries.

*Combining active and rote learning:* Teachers and principals did not refer to rote learning in the interviews as an important classroom strategy. However, when confronted with a question on the survey that asked teachers to define student learning, the importance of students' class participation and reciting what has been said in class, were both common responses. This may relate to how teachers understood the question, but it might also relate to the issues brought up above about lack of alignment in policies and programs where active learning is promoted as classroom practice, but the curriculum remains rigid as do the examinations. It almost certainly relates to what teachers really do in the classroom, with rote-learning approaches persisting despite the introduction of some of the forms and furniture arrangements of active learning such as discussing in groups. As the next chapter illustrates, although groups are present in most classes and many aspects of teacher-student relationships are positive, teaching/learning strategies still rely on absorbing fixed knowledge and giving true/false answers.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY AND PRACTICE**

One of the guiding questions of this study asks what the relationship is between teachers' perceptions of education quality and their practice. In examining this, researchers observed the teaching of each of the core grade 4 teachers making field notes and using observation protocols with guidelines and a framework of observation areas. A summary of the observation findings is presented below for each of the regional states. Results are also presented from three of the survey questions that asked teachers to report on classroom practices. This is followed by an inter-case analysis that combines findings across the regional states, links them to teachers' perceptions of quality reported in the previous chapter, and draws out several critical issues that emerge from the findings.

### **5.1 Amhara Regional State**

#### ***5.1.1 Amhara Classroom Observations***

*Classroom environment:* All classes observed in Amhara were self contained, but there were stark differences between the two urban schools and the rural school. The two schools in or near Bahir Dar were in reasonable condition, had sufficient furniture, and classes of between 47 and 65 students (policy is 45-50 students per class); the rural school was not in good condition with no electricity or telephone, little usable furniture, no chair for the teacher, and dirt floors. Class sizes were large, 71 and 87 students. Student and teacher work was displayed on the walls in the urban schools, but not in the rural school. The classes in the rural school were not arranged in groups as they were in all of the urban classrooms.

*Teacher-student interactions:* Teacher-student interactions in the classes observed were mainly characterized by teachers giving information or assignments, students working in groups, and then group leaders being called to report on group work. Teachers were firm but kind, although in one case the teacher was described as domineering. Although the urban classes were all nominally student-centered, this appeared to be more in form than substance since even group work was highly teacher-directed. In one class it was noted that equal opportunity was given to girls and younger students. However, students sitting in the back of one of the large urban and the two large rural classes could not hear the teacher. Since the teacher made little effort to include these students, they subsequently stopped paying attention.

*Teacher activities:* The Amhara teachers in the study presented material and asked questions, sometimes connecting one day's lesson with what students had learned previously. Two of the teachers in urban schools praised students who performed better; they all handled student misbehavior gently. The urban teachers were energetic and motivated, although the rural teachers were not. In all of the six classes observed, the teacher stayed mainly in front of the class and did not move around the classroom, even to supervise or support group work.

*Student activities:* Students reacted, made comments, and answered questions. Students generally paid attention to what others said. In two cases in urban schools, students were asked to reason out why certain things happened or did not happen. Students came turn-by-turn to the blackboard to explain how they solved certain problems, although usually the group leader played this role.

In some classes, older and larger students dominated the groups. No group work took place in the two rural classes.

*Use of resources:* Textbooks were generally available, sometimes one for each student in both the urban and rural schools. Teachers used textbooks in different ways, sometimes for reference, sometimes reading the textbook to the class, or sometimes asking students to read in class. One urban teacher used local materials (plants and soil) for a science class. No teaching aids were used in the rural school.

*Analysis:* The most striking result for the classes observed in Amhara Regional State is the difference between the urban and rural schools, with the rural classrooms being severely under-resourced and overcrowded and teachers not even attempting to use active learning. Some of the forms of active learning were practiced in the urban classes, although much of the substance, including analytical and critical thinking, was not observed. Group leaders, who tended to dominate, were called upon to use independent communication whereas other students usually were not.

### 5.1.2 Amhara Teacher Survey Responses on Classroom Practices

Table 5.1.1 below demonstrates the extent to which asking students to repeat what is discussed in class is considered a successful teaching strategy. Table 5.1.2 shows teachers rejecting lectures all the time in favor of student discussions, but a large number of teachers report combining lecture with discussions. Responses in Table 5.1.3 correspond to results in the previous chapter that suggesting that teachers most frequently relate successful learning to class participation.

**Table 5.1.1: Successful Teaching**

How do you ensure successful teaching in your classroom? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
By asking students to repeat what is discussed in the class	33	28.7
By giving class assignments	13	11.3
By asking questions	24	20.9

**Table 5.1.2: Teaching Methods**

What kind of teaching method(s) do you use in your classroom? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
Giving good lectures all the time	1	0.9
Emphasizing student discussions, questions and answers	55	47.8
Combination of a & b	47	40.9

**Table 5.1.3: Successful Learning**

How do you determine or assess that successful learning has taken place in your classroom? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
By asking questions	46	40.0
By the level of student engagement in the class	59	51.3
By the type of questions the students ask	35	30.4
I use my own judgment	7	6.1

## **5.2 Oromia Regional State**

### **5.2.1 Oromia Classroom Observations**

*Classroom environment:* Classes observed in Oromia were very large, in most cases double the 45-50 students per class prescribed by policy. The seating arrangement in five of the classes was in rows facing the teacher. Teachers said that this was necessary because of large class sizes. Learning resources, textbooks, and teaching aids prepared by the teacher were observed in only one classroom out of six. None of the classrooms observed had learning materials displayed on the walls.

*Teacher-student interactions:* According to the framework of indicators that was used in the classroom observations, the atmosphere in the classrooms observed and teacher-student interactions were judged to be conducive to student learning in only three of the six classes observed, with the teachers showing friendly attitudes, respect for learners, high standards of behavior, and motivation in these classes. The teachers also appeared to know the students' names in only half of the classes.

*Teacher activities:* The Oromia teachers were generally successful in their techniques of asking open-ended questions, giving feedback, relating the lesson to students' prior experiences, and using multiple real examples in presenting material. They were less successful in using interactive group and pair work. Teachers asked questions or gave assignments that students completed individually, or in one classroom, in groups.

*Student activities:* The nature of students' activities and involvement in the learning process varied. In half of the classes, there were few questions initiated by students, little information presented or communicated independently by students, and little variety in the activities in which students participated. In these classes, the observation indicated that students did not appear to be animated or interested. Students in five of the classes responded individually to the teacher's questions, whereas in one class they discussed in groups. In each case, however, the point was to arrive at simple correct answers rather than to analyze information and communicate ideas.

*Use of resources:* Although the blackboard was used in five of the six classes, learning aids were used in only one of the classes observed. There was a lack of teacher- or student-made materials or real objects used for teaching in these classes. There were no textbooks available in five of the six classes and the textbooks were not well used in the class where they were present.

*Analysis:* The conventional classroom arrangement of five of the six classes observed in Oromia and the relative lack of interactive teaching and learning appear to be the result of extreme overcrowding and the lack of basic resources such as textbooks. When faced with these conditions, quality teaching is difficult to achieve when teachers are not armed with strategies, resources, or the confidence to attempt active learning approaches.

### **5.2.2 Oromia Teacher Survey Responses on Classroom Practices**

In Table 5.2.1, we see that teachers' most commonly chose the response of asking students to repeat what is discussed in class as a successful teaching strategy. In Table 5.2.2, lecturing all the time is rejected, with responses almost equally distributed between emphasizing student discussions and combining discussion with lecture. The responses recorded in Table 5.2.3 are

particularly interesting because of the dominant response of student engagement in class as a measure of successful learning.

**Table 5.2.1: Successful Teaching**

How do you ensure successful teaching in your classroom? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
By asking students to repeat what is discussed in the class	32	34.0
By giving class assignments	6	6.4
By asking questions	19	20.2

**Table 5.2.2: Teaching Methods**

What kind of teaching method(s) do you use in your classroom? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
Giving good lectures all the time	1	1.1
Emphasizing student discussions, questions and answers	38	40.4
Combination of a & b	37	39.4

**Table 5.2.3: Successful Learning**

How do you determine or assess that successful learning has taken place in your classroom? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
By asking questions	29	30.9
By the level of student engagement in the class	61	64.9
By the type of questions the students ask	18	19.1
I use my own judgment	1	1.1

### 5.3 Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State

#### 5.3.1 SNNP Classroom Observations

*Classroom environment:* All of the classrooms observed in the SNNP urban and rural schools were in poor condition, in many cases without doors or windows. Enrolments were high, well above the government policy of 45-50 students per class. None of the six classes had textbooks or other printed material. There were no teacher- or student-made teaching aids or real objects present. There were few displays of teachers’ or students’ work on the classroom walls. Seating arrangements in all classes were flexible allowing groups to form.

*Teacher-student interactions:* The SNNP teachers observed seemed motivated and friendly, praised students for their work, gave attention to less successful children, and often called students by name. The observer’s field notes in addition to his evaluation using the eight indicators in the observation protocol under “teacher attitude” indicate that there was a feeling of care and respect in teacher-student relationships in all of the classes observed.

*Teacher activities:* SNNP teachers in the study gave explanations at the beginning of a class and asked students to make notes or copy notes from the blackboard because of the lack of textbooks. All of the teachers gave class assignments, monitored group/individual work, gave frequent and appropriate feedback, used multiple examples from learners’ experiences, and gave both boys and girls opportunities to participate.

*Student activities:* Students read and copied words and statements from the blackboard. According to the observer’s field notes students’ talk took up half of the class time in one class. According to the observation protocol categories under “indications that learners are actively engaged,” overall in the SNNP observations, students “talked and acted” during the classes more than they “sat and listened.” Students sat in groups doing assignments and interacted with each other, although the task was often to find the right answers from material that the teacher had presented. Students were enthusiastic and appeared to be actively involved in learning tasks.

*Use of resources:* Classes did not have textbooks and few teaching/learning materials were used with the exception of some objects made by students in two of the classes observed.

*Analysis:* The results were remarkably uniform across the six SNNP schools, with little differentiation between the urban and rural schools in conditions, resources, or teaching/learning approaches. All of the teachers were rated by the observer as being friendly, sensitive, and encouraging to the students. However, without textbooks or other teaching aids, the teachers gave information to the students directly or wrote it on the blackboard. Despite these challenges, teachers were attempting to use active learning with some degree of success.

### 5.3.2 SNNP Teacher Survey Responses on Classroom Practices

Table 5.3.1 below demonstrates that repetition in class is frequently chosen as a successful teaching strategy. In Table 5.3.2 responses, although giving lectures all the time is rejected by almost all of the teachers, a combination of lectures with discussions is the most common teaching method reported. Table 5.3.3 shows that student learning is most frequently reported to have taken place if students are engaged in the class.

**Table 5.3.1: Successful Teaching**

How do you ensure successful teaching in your classroom? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
By asking students to repeat what is discussed in the class	45	37.5
By giving class assignments	13	10.8
By asking questions	21	17.5

**Table 5.3.2: Teaching Methods**

What kind of teaching method(s) do you use in your classroom? <i>n</i> =120	Number of Responses	%
Giving good lectures all the time	2	1.7
Emphasizing student discussions, questions and answers	41	34.2
Combination of a & b	63	52.5

**Table 5.3.3: Successful Learning**

How do you determine or assess that successful learning has taken place in your classroom? <i>n</i> =120	Number of Responses	%
By asking questions	48	40.0
By the level of student engagement in the class	77	64.2
By the type of questions the students ask	28	23.3
I use my own judgment	3	2.5

## 5.4 Tigray Regional State

### 5.4.1 Tigray Classroom Observations

*Classroom environment:* Of the six Tigray classrooms observed, urban and rural, all had desks and chairs, but students had access to textbooks and stationery materials in only half of the classrooms. The materials displayed were insufficient - only two of the six classrooms had a few teacher- or student-made displays. In most cases, the walls of the classrooms were empty. Blackboards were available, although of poor quality.

*Teacher-student interactions:* Interactions between teachers and students in the Tigray classes observed were not unfriendly, but the observer's field notes indicate that teachers were formal in their manner and did not appear to be emotionally involved with their students. Interactions lacked enthusiasm with little appreciation shown to students. Classroom interactions were characterized by the teachers' authority, with the teachers initiating questions and discussions, expecting students to react by providing correct, mainly true or false answers, or answers that repeated what the teacher had said. Questions that encouraged individualized or alternative perspectives were absent. In only rare cases did students initiate discussion or ask questions.

*Teacher activities:* All of the Tigray teachers in the study carefully followed their lesson objectives. They divided their classrooms into small working groups, with a seating arrangement that allowed everyone to see every other student in contrast to the traditional layout where students were allowed to see only the teacher. The potential of the new seating arrangement, however, seemed to be unexploited as truly interactive group- or pair-work took place in only two classrooms. In most cases, the teacher posed questions and students made a personal effort to answer the question. Conversations with multiple flow of information in groups were observed only twice.

*Student activities:* This item was weak in the six classrooms observed. Only three classrooms had school children who appeared to be motivated and interested in class activities. Students in the other classes appeared puzzled and confused, possibly because of the result of the observer in the classroom. The observer noted that many students seemed depressed and indifferent to the lessons. There were no learning materials, no games, or materials to manipulate in the classrooms. The student activities were limited to listening, repeating, and reading.

*Use of resources:* With the exception of a chalkboard, teachers taught mainly without using resources. Only half of them taught with the use of textbooks or teachers' guides, even when they were available. Only one teacher used drawings or teacher-made materials. Student-made materials were virtually absent in all schools.

*Analysis:* In spite of their claims of practicing active learning, for the most part, the Tigray teachers in the study expected their students to provide them with true or false or "correct" answers to teacher-initiated questions. Students did not initiate or discuss except to search for correct answers. Three of the teachers told the classroom observer that they felt the need to teach according to their lesson objectives and plans. This demonstrates how flexibility in what and how to teach, which is at the base of active learning, is incompatible with the requirements of the highly prescriptive curriculum.

### 5.4.2 Tigray Teacher Survey Responses on Classroom Practices

Table 5.4.1 shows that the three kinds of strategies are almost equally frequent responses by teachers, including a higher frequency for classroom assignments than in the other regional states. In Table 5.4.2, we see that lecturing all the time is rejected, but an almost equal number of teachers use student discussions or combine lecture and student discussions as a teaching strategy. In Table 5.4.3, student engagement is the most common response for defining successful learning, with asking questions a closer in frequency than it was in the other regional states.

**Table 5.4.1: Successful Teaching**

How do you ensure successful teaching in your classroom? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
By asking students to repeat what is discussed in the class	23	20.9
By giving class assignments	19	17.3
By asking questions	22	20.0

**Table 5.4.2: Teaching Methods**

What kind of teaching method(s) do you use in your classroom? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
Giving good lectures all the time	2	1.8
Emphasizing student discussions, questions and answers	39	35.5
Combination of a & b	38	34.5

**Table 5.4.3: Successful Learning**

How do you determine or assess that successful learning has taken place in your classroom? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
By asking questions	41	37.3
By the level of student engagement in the class	47	42.7
By the type of questions the students ask	16	14.5
I use my own judgment	2	1.8

## 5.5 Inter-case Analysis of the Four Regional States

The analysis below first summarizes the classroom observation data across the four regional states in the areas of physical conditions, availability of materials, and classroom interactions. Second, we summarize the survey data on classroom practices across the four regional states. Third, we draw connections between teachers' classroom practices and teachers' and principals' perceptions of education quality reviewed in the previous chapter.

### 5.5.1 Classroom Practices across the Regional States from Observations

*Physical conditions and availability of materials:* Although the physical conditions of schools and classrooms in the study vary across the regional states, the conditions in most classrooms were not conducive to learning because of poor facilities and overcrowding. The lack of availability of textbooks and other teaching/learning materials also constitute a barrier to quality teaching and learning. With such a paucity of textbooks and other manufactured learning materials, teacher- and student-made learning materials, real objects, and work displayed on the walls, most of the learning environments observed were dull and devoid of stimulation.

*Classroom interactions:* Most of the teachers implemented learner-centered or active learning in a limited way, calling into question how they understand the dimensions of active learning,



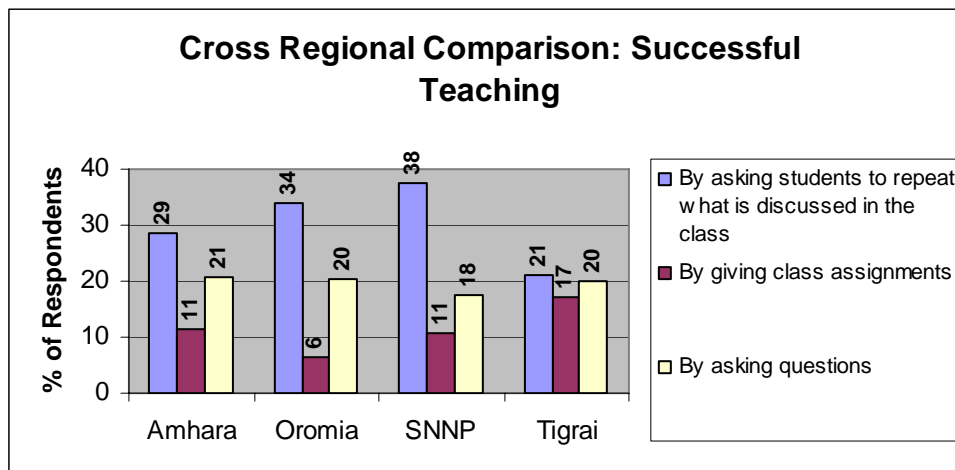
particularly its cognitive dimensions. For the most part, classroom interactions were teacher-directed, even in classes that followed forms of active learning such as discussions within groups. When asked why they use the lecture method, many of the teachers claimed that the curricular materials were not written to be used in active learning classrooms; the textbooks are full of large amounts of information to be memorized by students for the examinations and, thus, teachers feel the responsibility to cover the curriculum in the available time. The flexibility and time required for successful active learning is not easily accomplished within the context of a crowded and prescriptive curriculum.

In addition to these constraints, most teachers are not armed with strategies to attempt active learning in such overcrowded and under-resourced situations as were observed in many of the classrooms in this study. Some promising implementation of the cognitive aspects of active learning was observed. For example, in a few classes, teachers asked students to reason out their responses and to communicate their ideas independently, although it was mainly the group leaders who were asked to do this. The prominence of group leaders who regularly represent the work of groups to the class suggests a phenomenon that provides active learning for some but not for most of the students.

### 5.5.2 Classroom Practices across the Regional States for the Teacher Survey

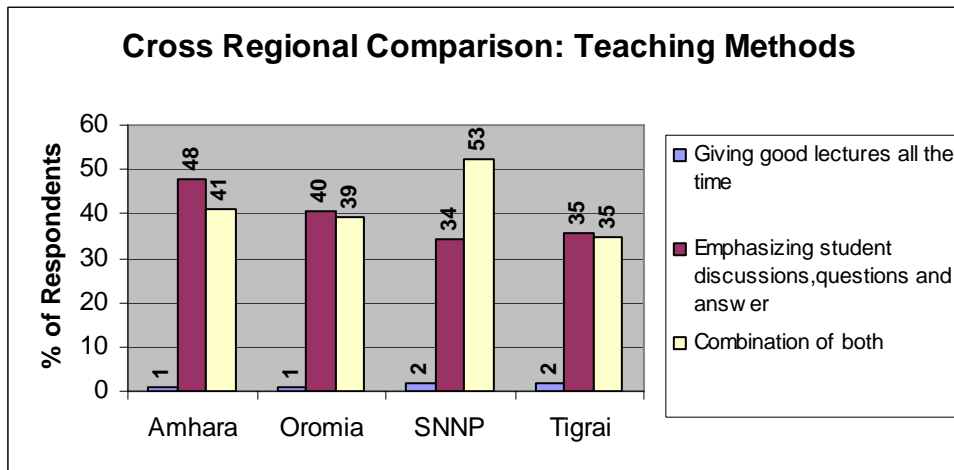
*Successful teaching:* As displayed in Figure 5.1 below, asking students to repeat what is discussed in the class is the main teaching strategy identified as successful by teachers on the survey in all four regions, with the responses particularly high in SNNP and Oromia. While the Tigray survey showed this as the favored teaching strategy, the frequency is much lower and almost equal to the response “asking questions.” This corresponds to the classroom observation data that revealed more emphasis on discussion to determine correct answers than on processing knowledge.

**Figure 5.1: Cross-regional Comparison: Successful Teaching**



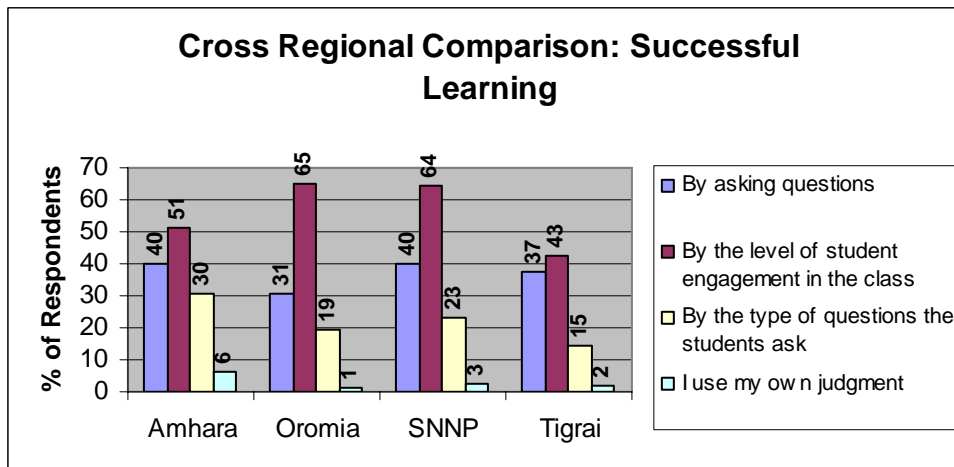
*Teaching methods:* While giving lectures all the time was soundly rejected by teachers in all four regional states, as Figure 5.2 below demonstrates, combining lecture and discussions was the most common response in all states, particularly in SNNP. This corresponds with classroom observation data in which instruction was teacher-centered, although it included elements of student-centered or active learning.

**Figure 5.2: Cross-regional Comparison: Teaching Methods**



*Successful learning:* Figure 5.3 shows that the level of students’ engagement in the class is considered the main determinant of successful learning in all four regional states, although the frequencies are particularly high in Oromia and SNNP and lowest in Tigray. This corresponds directly to results of the survey reported in Chapter 4 in which class participation was thought to be a more important determinant of student learning than test or examination results (see p. 20).

**Figure 5.3: Cross-regional Comparison: Successful Learning**



### 5.5.3 Critical Issues in Quality and Classroom Practice

*Cognitive and affective dimensions of active learning:* The practice of active learning in a cognitive sense – conceptual learning, higher-order thinking skills, independent communication – was noted in only a few instances in the classes observed, for example, when students were asked to reason out their responses or when group leaders (usually not the other students) presented the results of group discussions to the class. At the same time, this core aspect of active learning was hardly mentioned by teachers and principals in the interviews, indicating that this may not be

understood or emphasized in teacher development and support programs. The interview and survey responses in Chapter 4 were similar in their major emphasis on the affective dimensions (for example, knowing students, developing caring relationships with students, communicating with their families) and less prominent emphasis on academic achievement, with virtually no discussion of the conceptual learning aspects of active learning.

For the most part, teaching and learning in the classrooms observed relied on the forms much more than the substance of active learning. The observations indicate, however, a great advance that has accompanied the introduction of the affective forms of active learning. Although some of the teachers observed in the study did not show interest in or engagement with the students, the majority of teachers across the four regions were friendly and engaged. They appeared to feel responsibility for their students as individuals. This observation is supported in the survey data that suggest teachers understand and value the interactions that accompany active learning more than its essential and critical cognitive dimensions. The challenge now is to build on these valuable new understandings that teachers have gained concerning their roles and how to create affective environments conducive to learning, but strengthen the cognitive dimensions of and strategies to achieve improved student academic learning through active learning.

## **CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS: INFLUENCE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON TEACHING PRACTICES**

The previous two chapters have examined teachers' and principals' perceptions of quality and have drawn a link between these perceptions and classroom practice. This chapter takes the discussion a step further by examining how teachers and principals perceive the influence of professional development on education quality and instruction. In asking about the influence of professional development, one purpose is to examine the process through which professional development and student achievement are related, as identified in the 2004 student assessment. The data in this chapter are drawn from the in-depth interviews with the core teachers and principals and the focus-group discussions with teachers. These interview data are also compared with the responses of the larger group of grade 4 teachers on the quantitative survey. The chapter concludes with an inter-case analysis comparing the results from the four regional states and identifying critical issues that emerge from the data.

### **6.1 Amhara Regional State**

#### ***6.1.1 Professional Development Programs in the Study Schools***

The Amhara teachers in this study participate in different kinds of professional development programs that the Regional State Education Bureau provides at the school, cluster, *woreda*, and regional levels. The two urban schools in the study have participated in professional development programs that BESO and UNICEF support. Fifty-four percent of the teachers who completed the questionnaire reported participation in cluster activities, while only 30 percent reported having participated in more than five workshops. The main topic of professional development in which 73 percent of the teachers reported participating concerns the preparation of teaching materials. Despite this, there was little evidence of teacher-made instructional materials in the classrooms.

#### ***6.1.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development***

Teachers defined professional development as a process that improves their learning and knowledge base and leads to professional advancement. Teachers listed improved professional knowledge and teaching practice as the main results of participation in professional development programs. They reported that workshops sharpened their skills in teaching, provided new knowledge in areas such as continuous assessment, action research, lesson planning for self-contained classrooms, the production and use of teaching aids, facilitation rather than transmission of learning, and effective ways of handling tardiness and absenteeism. Teachers, importantly, reported that professional development created a more positive outlook on their profession.

Teachers thought another result of professional development was the impact that their changed practice had on student behavior and achievement. Teachers noted increased student participation, assertiveness, and awareness as well as improved student-teacher relationships as a result of what they had learned through professional development. They thought that student-centered approaches motivated students, and noted that students, in their own way, were becoming researchers and were changing from passive to active learners. Teachers said that improvements in teacher/student relations carried over to improvements in teacher/parent interactions and resulted in improved relationships with the community as a whole. They stressed that exchange of knowledge and experience with other teachers was important in understanding

and adapting themselves as reforms and changes in practice come into effect. It is clear from the Amhara teachers' comments that they place great value on CPD as a means of improving their practice, encouraging better student learning, and improving professional identity.

### ***6.1.3 Principals' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development***

The Amhara principals interviewed were true believers in CPD, stressing that professional development helped with their expanding role as instructional leaders in relation to teachers and their new responsibilities for community engagement. Having teachers with quality and skill makes this dimension of their work more successful. The principals themselves attend professional development workshops which update them in new practices, and help improve their professional communication with teachers. Principals think that they have learned to evaluate teachers better through professional development, using evaluation to support rather than penalize teachers. Some principals mentioned that participation in professional development for themselves and the teachers results in a healthy competition among cluster schools which has brought about increases in the quality of teaching and learning.

### ***6.1.4 Amhara Teacher Survey Responses on Professional Development***

Many of the Amhara core teachers' and principals' perceptions of professional development are echoed by the results of a survey of 115 teachers. In responses to the question about factors that make one a good teacher, Table 6.1.1 shows that teachers emphasize personal effort as the most the most common answer, with professional development received after graduation the second most common factor. The teacher's education level receives a much lower frequency than the other factors.

**Table 6.1.1: Characteristics of a Good Teacher**

What makes one a good teacher? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
Educational level of an individual	11	9.6
Professional development after graduation	42	36.5
Support from the school community	23	20
Personal effort	61	53

It was reported above that Amhara teachers attended a large percentage of professional development sessions on materials development. This is echoed in the survey results reported in Table 6.1.2 below, in which good teaching/learning materials are named as the most common response in support for good quality teaching, although classroom observations reveal little presence or use of teaching materials. Almost as frequent in these responses is interaction with colleagues. The higher frequency of responses related to interaction with colleagues in the survey corresponds with responses to the interview questions. Programs in the schools are one of the least common responses. This raises the question of whether CPD programs in individual schools are of insufficient quality, or whether the most significant CPD is taking place at the cluster level with little follow-up at the individual school level. This result is also somewhat at odds with the importance placed on interaction with colleagues.

**Table 6.1.2: Factors that Support Good Quality Teaching**

What factors support your efforts to become a good quality teacher? <i>n</i> =115	Number of Responses	%
Programs in schools	7	6
Workshops	20	17
Interaction with your colleagues	42	36
Support from the principal	14	12
Good teaching/learning materials	44	38
Any other	37	32

## 6.2 Oromia Regional State

### 6.2.1 Professional Development Programs in the Study Schools

The Oromia teachers in the study indicated that there were not sufficient professional development opportunities available to them. Teachers said that, on the whole, the professional development provided by the *woreda* was minimal and not reinforced by feedback and mentoring. Some teachers participate in summer in-service professional development programs as well as extension and night school programs. Other teachers felt responsible for organizing their own professional development using their own resources, for example, in the private colleges that are starting to offer teaching programs. Two of the schools in the study sample participate in the region's cluster professional development program supported by BEP through which they have more access to professional development.

### 6.2.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development

Like the Amhara teachers in the study, Oromia teachers' responses demonstrate their strong commitment to professional development. They place particular value on professional development that includes communication and experience-sharing with colleagues. In some cases, a cascade model is used where one or two teachers are sent to a workshop and return to their schools to provide further workshops for their colleagues. In other cases, the cluster model is used, based on experience sharing and "self-training" at cluster center and satellite schools.

### 6.2.3 Principals' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development

The Oromia principals believed that effective educators are life-long learners and that professional development must be an on-going process of refining skills, inquiring into practice, and developing new methods. The principals said that they facilitate and support short-term, on-the-job, school-based professional development on topics such as action research, gender, active-learning teaching methods, and English. One of the principals stated that in his school, student examination scores, even on national examinations, have increased and drop-out rates have decreased as a result of teacher improvement through continuous professional development.

### 6.2.4 Oromia Teacher Survey Responses on Professional Development

In response to the survey question asking what makes one a good teacher, most teachers in Oromia, like those in Amhara, the dominant response was personal effort. Professional development after graduation was of the second most common response for Oromia teachers, although fewer Oromia than Amhara teachers favored professional development. This result raises the question of whether the teachers in Oromia participate in as many professional development programs as teachers in Amhara, or whether the quality of programs is less

consistent. Again, as in Amhara, the education level of the teacher is one of the least frequent responses.

**Table 6.2.1: Characteristics of a Good Teacher**

What makes one a good teacher? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
Educational level of an individual	4	4.3
Professional development after graduation	17	18.1
Support form the school community	13	13.8
Personal effort	48	51.1

Oromia teachers overwhelmingly name interaction with colleagues as the most common response in supporting good quality of teaching, as shown in Table 6.2.2 below. Availability of good teaching and learning materials and participation in workshops are much less frequent. Programs in schools and support from the principal both have low frequencies, as in Amhara.

**Table 6.2.2: Factors that Support Good Quality Teaching**

What factors support your efforts to become a good quality teacher? <i>n</i> =94	Number of Responses	%
Programs in schools	7	7
Workshops	18	19
Interaction with your colleagues	38	40
Support from the principal	8	9
Good teaching/learning materials	22	23
Any Other	18	19

### **6.3 Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State**

#### **6.3.1 Professional Development Programs in the Study Schools**

Teacher professional development opportunities for the SNNP teachers in the study take place in different modalities such as summer courses, distance education, and short-term workshops. In particular, the schools are organized in clusters to carry out various activities that promote quality and individual schools organize discussions and workshops on issues of teaching and learning. BESO was mentioned in every school, particularly in connection with the cluster- and school-based programs. Through this program, for example, the schools share resources and experiences in implementing the new active-learning curriculum, participate in academic and sports competitions, prepare model examinations, and organize a mobile library.

#### **6.3.2 Teachers’ Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development**

Teachers reported that in-service programs concerned with student-centered approaches have been particularly helpful in developing the understanding that activities can be part of learning in academic subjects, not just in non-academic subjects. Teachers report that relationships with students have improved as a result of the new classroom approaches and changing attitudes that they have learned to adopt through professional development activities. Likewise, teachers report having gained a better understanding of the problems of students who grow up in difficult circumstances (e.g. girls, orphans, or children who come from low-income families) as a result of what they have learned in professional development programs. The teachers mentioned that these programs have encouraged them to work closely with parents in addressing the students’

problems, although they are concerned that their efforts in this area alone cannot guarantee quality education for children in difficult circumstances in the absence of adequate resources and, sometimes, support from parents.

### **6.3.3 Principals' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development**

Principals reported that various short workshops organized in collaboration with the regional education bureau covered topics such as teaching in self-contained classes, learner-centered methodology, continuous assessment, action research, school-based internal supervision, English language improvement, and the preparation and use of teaching aids. The principals all supported the cluster system as a way of sharing experiences and collaborating among schools. They enumerated a large number of innovations included in cluster-level professional development that had improved teachers' knowledge on issues and problems of implementing active learning and working effectively in self-contained classes. The principals say that teachers show increased interest in updating and upgrading themselves through professional development programs. Principals report improvement in student-teacher relationships since teachers make the effort to know the students better and form relationships with parents. School-community collaboration, a cornerstone of professional development programs at the cluster level, has improved greatly, according to the principals.

### **6.3.4 SNNP Teacher Survey Responses on Professional Development**

Table 6.3.1 below shows that SNNP teachers, similar to teachers in Amhara and Oromia, responded that personal effort is most common response in defining what makes a good teacher. SNNP teachers cited professional development after graduation as the next most common response, although the frequency is much lower. The educational level of the teacher again was the least common response.

**Table 6.3.1: Characteristics of a Good Teacher**

What makes one a good teacher? <i>n</i> =120	Number of Responses	%
Educational level of an individual	16	13
Professional development after graduation	40	33
Support form the school community	24	20
Personal effort	68	57

Table 6.3.2 shows that teachers in SNNP identify learning materials as the most frequent factor that most supports their efforts to become good teachers. It is apparent that teachers in resource-poor schools tend to emphasize textbooks, teaching aids, and other materials, simply because such basic inputs to education are lacking. Nearly as common is the response that interaction with colleagues is a contributor to good quality teaching, a factor that is backed up by the interview and focus-group data which detail experience sharing and mentoring through the cluster school model. Once again, programs in schools are one of the least common responses, possibly because the main professional development activities take place in clusters with little or inadequate follow-up at the school level.



**Table 6.3.2: Factors that Support Good Quality Teaching**

Which factors support your efforts to become a good quality teacher? <i>n</i> =120	Number of Responses	%
Programs in schools	9	8
Workshops	20	17
Interaction with your colleagues	50	42
Support from the principal	22	18
Good teaching/learning materials	54	45
Any other	28	23

## 6.4 Tigray Regional State

### 6.4.1 Professional Development Programs in the Study Schools

In Tigray, teachers participate in various professional development activities such as in-service workshops, action research, teaching material preparation, participation in cluster school activities, and collegial exchange of information. The overwhelming majority of the teachers in the study had opportunities to participate in professional development activities, although with varying degrees of intensity. Only a few teachers in the survey suggested lack of access to professional development. The education bureau in Tigray developed a school-based cluster system in 1998, in cooperation with BESO, which includes all schools in CPD programs in clusters.

### 6.4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development

Teachers say that they have developed a new understanding of the art of teaching as well as the skills to be effective teachers through CPD. The skills reported include better understanding of the learning process, better communication with and sensitivity to students, and more thoughtful lesson plans. Teachers also report learning to be facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of information, and maintain that they have developed a culture of cooperation and collegiality through school- and cluster-based continuous professional development. Teachers perceive a significant influence of CPD on teaching and learning, in terms of enhancing their understanding of the nature of education and the teaching/learning environment, with a special emphasis on the role of independent student communication in the learning process.

### 6.4.3 Principals' Perceptions of the Influence of Professional Development

Principals in Tigray reported that CPD programs have a great impact on preparing teachers to use the outcome-based strategy of teaching, of which continuous assessment is an essential part. They confirm the importance of teachers' use of continuous assessment by using the criteria of student performance in homework, class attendance, and short quizzes. Principals say that, as a result, teachers are required to account for the gaps between planned and performed activities. The three principals claimed that the formation of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) is the result of continuous professional development. Principals and teachers confirmed increased participation of parents in advising and supporting their children academically, supporting the school with budgetary funds, and participating in school boards and PTAs. Teachers have increased communication with parents about the education of their children. Schools also advise parents to supervise school absenteeism, reduce child labor, cover educational expenses, and provide advice and discipline, which they attribute to the influence of CPD.

#### **6.4.4 Tigray Teacher Survey Responses on Professional Development**

Table 6.4.1 shows teachers' responses to a question about factors that make a good teacher. As in the other three regions, the largest number of respondents reported that personal effort was the most common response, with the second, but much lower, frequency given to professional development after graduation. Again, the educational level of the individual receives the lowest frequency.

**Table 6.4.1: Characteristics of a Good Teacher**

What makes one a good teacher? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
Educational level of an individual	6	5.4
Professional development after graduation	25	22.7
Support form the school community	18	16
Personal effort	48	44

In their response to the question asking which factors support efforts to become a good quality teacher, Table 6.4.2 indicates that the dominant response of Tigray teachers is interaction with colleagues. Another common response in support of quality teaching is the use of good teaching and learning materials. As in the other regional state, programs in schools received the lowest frequency.

**Table 6.4.2: Factors that Support Good Quality Teaching**

Which Factors Support your Efforts to Become a Good Quality Teacher? <i>n</i> =110	Number of Responses	%
Programs in schools	8	7
Workshops	12	11
Interaction with your colleagues	40	36
Support from the principal	7	6
Good teaching/learning materials	28	25
Any other	38	35

### **6.5 Inter-case Analysis of the Four Regional States**

The results across the four regional states are very similar, with teachers and principals in each state reporting that professional development opportunities are important and have had a significant impact on educational quality enhancement. The similarities and differences from the interview data and the survey data are reviewed briefly below, followed by several critical issues that emerge from the data.

#### **6.5.1 Perspectives on Professional Development across the Regional States from Interviews**

Teacher professional development in all of the study regions has helped teachers and principals acquire a new understanding of teaching and learning. The old emphasis on student discipline and control has now shifted to a focus on good teacher-student relationships and encouragement of student assertiveness and participation in the classroom. Most teachers expressed the opinion that the learner-centered approach is superior and that their role is to encourage students to be actively engaged in the teaching and learning process. CPD has helped teachers develop skills in lesson planning, continuous assessment, and action research. Teachers and principals claim that CPD has also fostered a culture of cooperation among teachers, students, parents, and the surrounding community.

### 6.5.2 Perspectives on Professional Development across the Regional States from the Teacher Survey

The quantitative data confirm the teachers' commitment to professional development. Figure 6.5.1, which compiles the survey data on professional development across the regional states, shows that teachers commonly relate good teaching to personal effort, with participation in professional development being the second most common response. This suggests a powerful combination of personal motivation and responsibility plus professional support as a potential for creating quality.

**Figure 6.5.1: Cross-regional Comparison: Good Teacher**

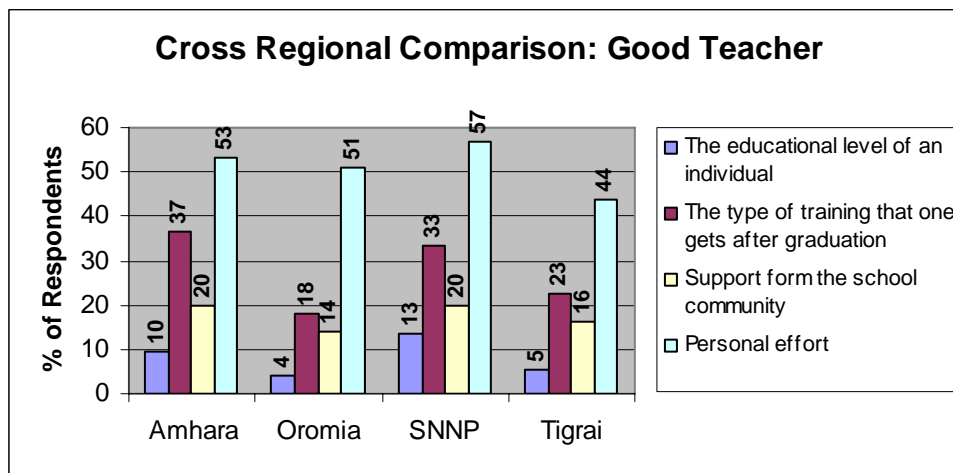
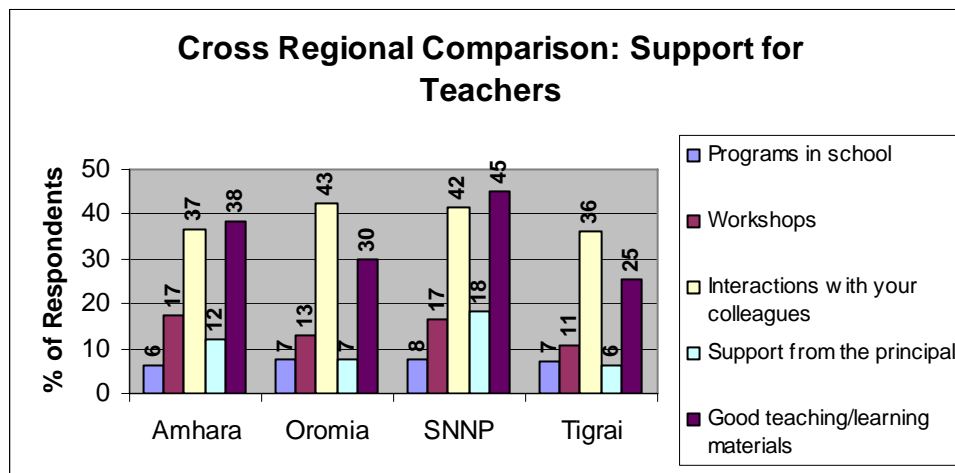


Figure 6.5.2 shows responses across the regional states to the question “Which factors support your efforts to become a good quality teacher?” Teachers in Oromia and Tigray chose more commonly “interactions with colleagues,” while teachers in Amhara and SNNP chose “good teaching/learning materials.” These are the two dominant factors across the four regional states. The support for collegial interactions among teachers may be a result of teachers’ experiences of the cluster school system, while the tendency for teachers to focus on good teaching/learning materials may result from the scarcity of teaching resources in almost all schools observed.

Across all regions, less than half of the teachers believed that workshops, support from the principal, and programs in schools were important factors in determining the quality of teaching. Given the teachers’ support for professional development, it is surprising that workshops receive such a low frequency of response. This may indicate that many CPD workshops are of low quality, or it may indicate a low level of support for programs within CPD. Equally surprising is that teachers did not find “support from the principal” to be of particular significance, suggesting that principals have not yet grown into their roles that emphasize instructional leadership. The lack of support for “programs in schools” is curious, given the preference teachers and principals expressed for CPD which is carried out at the local level. This response may be an artifact of the way the question was framed, since many of these programs are carried out at the cluster level rather than specifically at the school level. If this is the case, however, it would suggest that the very important follow-up at the individual school level, which should be led by school principals, is not strong.

**Figure 6.5.2: Cross-regional Comparison: Support for Teachers**



### 6.5.3 Critical Issues in Professional Development and Quality

*Building teacher confidence, identity, and morale:* According to the interviews, the support and enthusiasm among teachers and principals for CPD is extremely high, although the study suggests challenges in the structure and implementation of CPD. Many of the characteristics that teachers report having acquired through professional development contribute to the creation of a good environment for learning. Teachers state that professional development provides them with improved knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make them better teachers. They indicate that CPD improves their professional identity and morale. From the way teachers and principals describe what they have learned through CPD, these programs have made strides in developing teachers' holistic perspectives on their jobs and responsibilities that includes a commitment to knowing and developing the whole child beyond his or her ability to memorize knowledge for the examinations. However, there seems to be a gap in the discourse concerning students' academic knowledge and, perhaps, some contradictions in how this gap is being addressed.

*Building a stronger commitment to student learning:* Throughout the study we have pointed out the dominance of the affective over the cognitive in the way in which teachers and principals regard active learning. Through the focus on the affective aspects of active learning, there appears to be a de-emphasis on the use of active learning as a means of fostering better academic learning. There may be several reasons for this.

Teachers practice at the point where a number of contradictions come together. Policy supports active learning. Programs based on policy, such as pre-service teacher education and CPD, promote active learning. Teachers report that continuous assessment dwells more on students' personal and interpersonal characteristics than their academic learning. The message teachers receive from the curriculum, textbooks, and examinations, however, is very different. They are crowded and rigid, requiring behaviorist, memorization, and teacher-centered approaches. This lack of alignment may be responsible for some of the decline in the overall quality of teaching and learning and the insufficient academic achievement reported on student assessments.

An important approach to tackling this issue would be to consider, through widespread dialogue, how active learning can support student achievement without returning to behaviorist and rote-memory approaches. Such a dialogue could result in the need for improved system alignment so

that policy and programs - curriculum, textbooks, examinations, continuous assessment, and different forms of teacher development - are based on the same principles and support each other.

*Professional development, teacher attitudes, and student achievement:* The results of the 2004 student assessment identify a correlation between student achievement and teacher attitudes toward students and teachers' professional development. In the grade 4 student assessment, teacher variables that positively and significantly correlated to student achievement are teachers' perceptions and attitudes of students' learning abilities, teacher training on new teaching methods and new assessment techniques, and the average level of teacher professional development (NOE 2004a, p. 91).<sup>7</sup> In the 2004 grade 8 student assessment, teachers' perceptions and attitudes about student learning, as well as the number of periods taught per week, are the strongest explanatory teacher-related conditions influencing learning (NOE 2004b, pp. 113-114).

The kind of process-oriented professional development described in this chapter emphasizes improved teacher attitudes and, as suggested above, teachers' more holistic views of their students. It may be just this which has, in fact, produced the better academic achievement recorded in the 2004 student assessment. The argument here is that CPD in Ethiopia has made great strides in changing teachers' attitudes and classroom approaches, but now must concentrate on using this promising foundation to build stronger academic achievement.

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<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, teachers' age, qualifications, total teaching experience, distance from school and social commitment are negatively correlated with student achievement, although these relations were not statistically significant.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study is exploratory and seeks to understand participants' experiences and perspectives, the purpose of much qualitative research. One of the most interesting findings of the study is the similarity of results across widely dispersed regional states, teachers, and principals. In the three areas of study findings - perceptions of quality, classroom practice, and the influence of professional development - very similar themes emerged in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray.

### **7.1 Active Learning and Quality - The Need for Clarity and Action**

#### ***7.1.1 Learning That Defines Quality***

Education quality is a complex and multifaceted concept. In Ethiopia, as in most countries, policies define education quality according to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students develop. In Ethiopia's policies, active learning is important and includes relevant knowledge, analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Appropriate knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge practically are developed through student-centered and active learning. Affective learning is an important element of policy and includes the development of students' social commitments, democratic attitudes, self-knowledge, and inter-personal skills. An important result of this study suggests that cognitive learning is not included in the discourse of teachers and principals as frequently, or with as much depth of understanding, as the affective dimension of learning. Teachers and principals emphasize the development of participatory and inter-personal skills when they talk about student learning. As important as these characteristics are, academic skills are also important. This emerges as a critical issue, given the urgency of raising student achievement in Ethiopia.

#### ***7.1.2 Clarifying Active and Student-centered Learning***

Building a stronger commitment to the cognitive aspects of active learning, building on the impressive achievements in affective areas demonstrated in this study, calls for a thorough re-examination of aspects of policy and programs which, at the present time, seem to be out of alignment. Policy emphasizes active and student-centered learning. Teachers are prepared in pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development programs to practice active learning.

A number of questions arise from the study about how active learning is interpreted and promoted within these programs: 1) What is the balance of messages that teachers receive and skills that they build in pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development about the meaning and practice of active learning? 2) How is cognitive learning, the development of academic learning, approached within these programs – especially cognitive learning within the active learning paradigm that rejects simple memorization and repetition and emphasizes the use of higher-order thinking skills to mobilize knowledge and develop meaningful, conceptual learning?

When teachers reach their classrooms, they often face contradictions. The crowded and rigid curriculum and textbooks, filled with information that must be memorized for examinations, may be at odds with what teachers have learned about effective active-learning practice. This prompts teachers to fall back into teacher-centered, rote memory approaches. However, to confuse things further, the system of continuous assessment appears to emphasize students' personal characteristics and interpersonal skills over their academic learning. This raises a second set of

questions about how teachers should practice in the midst of this apparent misalignment. It also calls for an examination of the way in which the different programs understand and promote active learning, balancing its cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor dimensions.

### ***7.1.3 Teacher Attitudes, Professional Development, and Student Achievement***

One of the purposes of this study was to examine the link identified in the 2004 student assessment between teachers' attitudes and professional development and student achievement. Although this study leaves many questions unanswered, two important sets of issues have emerged from the findings that policy makers and planners may find useful in their search for improved education quality.

1) It is clear that the foundation has been established for quality through the extremely promising and positive perspectives and attitudes of teachers and principals as expressed in the interviews, observations, and the survey in this study. Teachers' and principals' expanded concepts of their roles as educators, their commitment to the whole child, and their recognition of the importance of a positive and supportive learning environment are all characteristics that build the foundation for excellent learning, characteristics without which excellent learning within the active learning paradigm is not possible. It is exactly this conjunction between positive attitudes about student learning and professional development that was identified in the student assessment as supporting better learning. Pre-service teacher education and continuous professional development programs appear to be highly successful in promoting better practice in affective areas of active learning.

2) How cognitive and academic learning, within the active-learning paradigm, are understood and practiced, within pre-service and in-service programs, and throughout the whole system, clearly requires re-examination, clarification, and alignment. Until this is done, great improvements in student achievement are unlikely. Within this examination it will be important to clarify that improving the cognitive aspects of teaching and learning does not mean a return to rote memorization. Since Ethiopia has placed education at the center of its strategies for development and democratization, this indicates the need to move forward to strengthen analytical, conceptual, and meaningful learning which requires students to understand, mobilize, and communicate about knowledge in the creative and flexible ways that the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands.

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