

**An ethnographic case study of the agendas,
participation and influence of stakeholders at an urban
government primary school in Tigray, Ethiopia**

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Abstract

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This study provides an account of the agendas, participation and influence of management, teachers, students and parents at a primary school in Tigray, Ethiopia. A literature review revealed gaps in the knowledge of these stakeholders' involvement in school leadership structures in the current national policy context. A broader review of the major traditions of school research informed the design of this ethnographic case study. Fieldwork at 'Ketema School' took place over an eight-month period in 2014, and involved participant observation, informant-led interviews, and the collection of institutional documents. Data collection focused on the meetings of various bodies, and the activities of a single class in Grade 6 and 7. Inductive analysis of the case data was supported by Atlas.ti.

The study reveals a convergence of understandings about the purposes and processes of the school consistent with the state-authorised model of schooling for national development. Structures and processes of surveillance and control incentivise and normalise compliance with government directives. These include positions of distributed leadership and mechanisms of mutual surveillance and internal accountability through which teachers and students share responsibility for supervising peers and colleagues. For example, the student leaders of the 'one-to-five' networks perform an academic support and behavioural control function in relation to their peers; and *gim gima* is a practice of public critique used for exposing misconduct. Meetings and other participative spaces enable members of the school community to share their views on conditions in school according to their interests and priorities; however, these forums are dominated by management agendas, and school-level decisions are restricted by a strong external policy context.

This study extends knowledge of school leadership practices in Ethiopia and informs wider debates around community participation, accountability and school autonomy in developing countries. Recommendations are made for sharing and strengthening democratic practices and for future research.

Key words: accountability, community participation, Ethiopia, ethnographic case study, power analysis, school-based management, school leadership and management, student leadership, student voice, Tigray

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Frequently used acronyms

1PDC / 2PDC	First / Second Period of Data Collection
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
CPD	Continuous Professional Development (education policy, MOE, 2004)
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EDA	Education Development Army
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party
ETP	Education and Training Policy (Ethiopian)
FNs	Fieldnotes
GEQUIP	General Education Quality Improvement Programme (Ethiopian)
HoD	Head of Department
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MOE	Ministry of Education (Ethiopian)
NDS	National Development Script
NLA	National Learning Assessment (Ethiopian)
PD	Primary Document (Atlas.ti)
PE	Physical Education (subject)
PSTA	Parent, Student and Teacher Association
REB	Regional Education Bureau
RL	Reflexive Log
SER	School Effectiveness Research
SI	School Improvement (research tradition)
SIP	School Improvement Programme (education policy, MOE, 2007)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TDA	Tigray Development Agency
TGOE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front ('the Party')
VD	Vice Director
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WEO	<i>Woreda</i> (district) Education Office

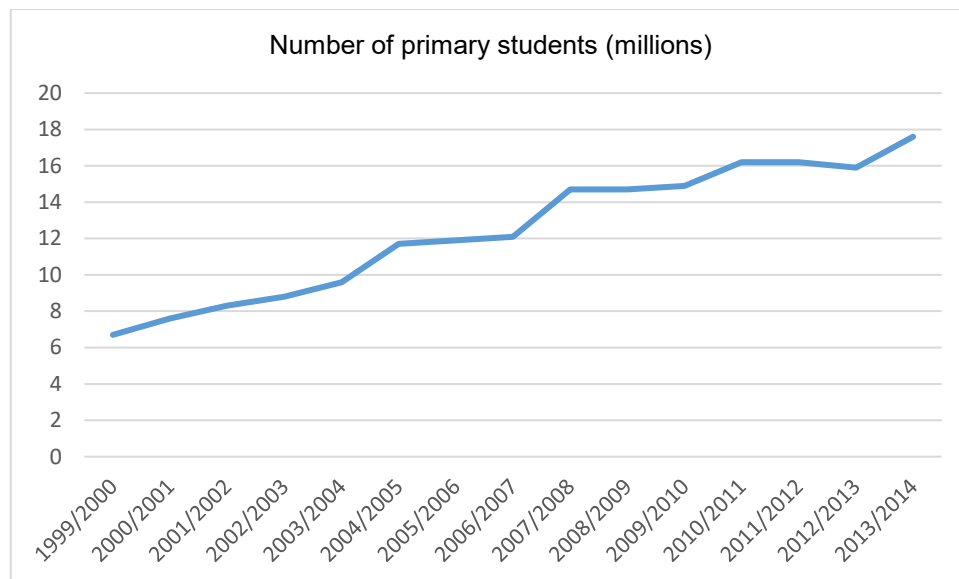
Chapter 1: An introduction to schooling in Ethiopia

This chapter introduces the context of schooling in Ethiopia and my personal involvement in the sector. This is followed by an account of the country's history and the development of the national school system, which incorporates a review of school research in Ethiopia. The chapter ends with an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Schooling in Ethiopia: an overview of the past 25 years

The last twenty-five years have seen an extraordinary expansion of primary schooling in Ethiopia. Enrolment has increased from three to 18 million students (MOE, 2015), and the country has transitioned from having one of the lowest rates of educational participation in the world, to enrolling 85% of young people aged 7-14 (ODI, 2011). Figure 1.1 shows the steady expansion of the student population in the fifteen years from 1999-2014.

Figure 1.1 Primary student population, 1999-2014



(Source: CSA, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2014; MOE, 2015)

The expansion of the student population required through a three-fold increase in the number of schools, from 11,000 to 32,048 over this period (MOE, 2015). This was achieved through massive state investment, community cost-sharing, and direct support from foreign donor countries, which accounted for up to 35% of the education budget in recent years (MOE, 2005; Dom, 2009; Jeilu, 2009; ICAI, 2012). The rapid expansion of the school system was accompanied by concerns about declining attainment (ICAI, 2012; MOE, 2015), and the low primary school completion rate, which over the last decade has

fluctuated between 44% and 52%, and currently stands at 47% (MOE, 2015). The government has sought to address these concerns through revisions of curricula and textbooks, and policies for teacher development and community participation in school-based management (MOE, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008). It was through the teacher development aspects of these reforms that I first became involved in the sector.

My involvement with schooling in Ethiopia

My involvement with schooling in Ethiopia dates from my work at a government teacher training college in Tigray from 2007-2009 with the UK-based international development organisation VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas). I worked alongside Micheal Abraham, a local teacher educator, to coordinate the college's professional and material support to 70 urban and rural schools in the region (reported in Mitchell, 2012). I encountered teachers, directors, parents and supervisors committed to expanding access to education and improving its quality; and students who greatly appreciated the opportunities available to them. Teachers worked in challenging circumstances, with large classes and limited material resources, for a low salary. Many parents supported schools through personal financial and material contributions, and some provided labour – digging holes for latrines, and building classrooms stone by stone. The schools I visited were the product of this collaboration between teachers, local communities and the state.

While I was at the college, news of a tranche of national policy initiatives started reaching the schools I was working with, including the School Improvement Programme (SIP) and a programme for teachers' continuous professional development (CPD). The latter required teachers to conduct action research and develop professional portfolios, putatively towards establishing a more evidence- and research-informed model of teacher professionalism. Many teachers and directors responded to these policies with confusion and anxiety. SIP and CPD involved foreign concepts not seen before in Tigrigna: portfolios, CPD, self-evaluation, action research. Teachers were concerned about what these policies required of them, and how they would affect their careers. They looked to the college for explanations. From my perspective, these new policies had much to commend them, but they were not grounded in the perspectives, concerns and activities of people working in schools. Rather, based on western school improvement research (Mitchell, 2015a), these policies were introduced on the advice of the government's

development partners, including the World Bank and VSO (Pillay, 2010), without being trialled in the Ethiopian context.

It was two years after leaving the college that I first encountered research on education in Ethiopia. I realised that, despite the considerable expansion and reform project underway, there were large gaps in the literature. Many studies were undertaken by foreign development organisations which displayed a tendency to evaluate schooling in Ethiopia according to foreign assumptions and quality criteria (e.g. DeStefano & Elaheebocus, 2010; Piper, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). This created a deficit portrait of education in Ethiopia (Mitchell, 2015a), which did not reflect my experiences. Moreover, like the policies I had encountered while working at the college, much research reflected a lack of appreciation for the perspectives and priorities of those participating directly in the lives and processes of the schools under investigation. This study seeks to bring these voices to the fore.

Having provided an overview of the recent history of schooling in Ethiopia and my involvement in the sector, I offer a more detailed account of the national context.

1.2 The national context

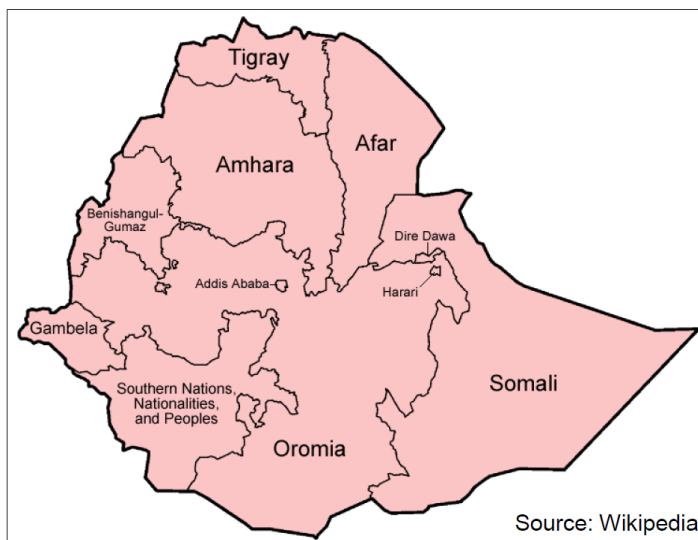
With a population of over 90 million, Ethiopia is the second-most populous country in Africa (CSA, 2012). Eighty percent of the population live in the temperate highlands which cover roughly half of the landmass, and more than 80% of the population live in rural areas, making Ethiopia amongst the least urbanised countries in the world (ibid.). The economy is predominantly agrarian, and recurrent droughts exacerbated by ‘bad policy’ have led to devastating famines over the past century (McCann, 1990). Gross national income per capita is \$550, which is below the sub-Saharan African (SSA) average of \$628, but annual economic growth is over 10%, more than twice the SSA average (World Bank, 2016).

Three thousand years ago the northern highlands formed part of the Sabaeen Kingdom, a powerful empire on the Red Sea. For most of the first millennium CE this was the seat of the Axumite Empire which developed the *Ge’ez* script (from which the modern Amharic and Tigrigna scripts derive) and erected grand stone obelisks which remain to this day. Christianity was adopted as the state religion in the 4th century and is currently practiced by around 60% of the population. Islam arrived during the Prophet Mohammed’s lifetime

(7th century) and is practised by around 30% of the population (CSA, 2007). For most of the past millennium, much of Ethiopia was ruled by kings from Amhara and Tigray who claimed lineage from King Solomon (but see Poluha and Elehu [2016] for a revisionist historical account). Ethiopia was the only African nation to maintain its independence through the European ‘Scramble for Africa’; an invading Italian army was defeated at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, but Eritrea was annexed. In turn, Ethiopia expanded to occupy lands in the south.

The last feudal ruler of Ethiopia was Emperor Haile Selassie, who reigned from 1930-1974, when he was deposed in a military coup. The Derg government which followed pursued radical land reform under the slogan ‘*Land to the tiller!*’ Its rule was marked by violence and unrest. In 1977-8, tens of thousands of civilians were killed during the Red Terror campaign to eliminate counter-revolutionaries, and subsequently much of the government’s energy was directed towards fighting ethnic-based rebel movements, such as the TPLF (the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front). Many hundreds of thousands of civilians died in the seventeen-year civil war (1974-1991), including 400,000 people in the famine of 1983-5, which was intentionally manipulated and fomented by the government as a counter-insurgency tactic (de Waal, 1991). In 1991, the military government was ousted by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a national coalition of ethnic-based rebel groups, which remains in power to this day.

Figure 1.2 Regional map of Ethiopia



The EPRDF established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, dividing the

country into 11 ethnically-based regions and city states (see Figure 1.2). With what was described as ‘the most pro-poor budget of Africa’ (Dom, 2009, p.iv), the new government tried to address the country’s deep and widespread poverty. As part of its poverty reduction strategy, the government sought to universalise basic services, and invested in health, education and food security with financial support from foreign donor countries and financial institutions (MOFED, 2010). Stability and development have led to steady improvements in the standard of living across the country. Since the late 1990s, infant mortality has decreased 39% (CSA, 2012), and life expectancy risen from 50 to 64, which is five years above the SSA average (World Bank, 2016).

The EPRDF is in coalition or partnership with the ruling party in each region. A dominant partner in the coalition is the TPLF, an organisation with its roots in Marxism-Leninism which provides ideological leadership for the EPRDF (Bach, 2011; Vaughan, 2011; de Waal, 2013). The EPRDF and its allies have won each of the past five elections, and opposition parties have failed to gain significant support. Following the disputed results of the 2005 election, there was violence in which up to 200 civilians were killed and many thousands arrested. In 2015, the EPRDF and its allies won 100% of the parliamentary seats in an election which independent monitors from the African Union described as ‘calm, peaceful and credible’ (Powell, 2015), but which was described in Western media as ‘non-competitive’, ‘an exercise in controlled political participation’ (Moseley, 2015).

1.3 Schooling in Ethiopia

This section offers an account of the historical development of schooling in Ethiopia and the current school system, incorporating reports and policy documents from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and other government agencies, and the findings from research literature, where available. The section concludes with a synthesis of research findings on the Ethiopian school system, and an identification of gaps which the current study seeks to address.

1.3.1 The historical development of schooling in Ethiopia

Formal education has been conducted according to the Orthodox and Islamic traditions for more than a millennium. Orthodox schools are housed in the grounds of a church:

In a typical classroom one finds an old man, usually a priest...seated on a small stool with a long stick beside him and the book of psalms in his hands, while

some thirty pupils, in groups of two or three, sit on the floor before him. The more advanced students teach the less advanced, while the teacher attends to the former, but periodically checks on the progress of the smaller children. (Girma, 1967, p.2)

The curriculum for *nebab bet*, the first stage of church education, involves learning the *Ge'ez* syllabary, memorising the Acts of the Apostles, and developing 'the virtues of obedience, humility, and respect for their elders' by running errands for the teacher in return for his blessing (ibid., p.2; see Appendix 1 for a Tigrigna and Amharic glossary). Students recite scriptures in the liturgical language of *Ge'ez*, which they do not understand. In later stages of church education (equivalent to high school and university), students learn poetry composition, and the interpretation of the scriptures (Bahru, 2002, pp.20-21). Islamic education is conducted in Arabic, a language similarly divorced from students' mother tongue, and the initial stage involves learning the alphabet and reciting the Quran (ibid.). In both cases, the elementary stages of religious education position students as recipients of a stable body of knowledge which is divinely revealed, rather than created by humans; Guthrie (2011) refers to this as a 'revelatory epistemology', rather than a scientific one.

The first 'modern' state schools opened in Addis Ababa in the early 20th century for the sons of royals and nobility. The curriculum included Maths, Humanities, Drawing and Sport, but was weighted towards foreign languages: French, English, Arabic and Italian, to meet the demands of international diplomacy as well as feudal administration (Bahru, 2002). In contrast to the traditional systems of schooling outlined above, the modern schools aimed to produce the statesmen and administrators required to govern the country and defend it against foreign aggression. Workneh Eshete, a strong advocate of new schools, argued that there was 'a universal law that the more developed are bound to dominate the less developed and that development can only come through education' (Bahru, 2002, p.139). The schools were staffed by foreign teachers who were prohibited from discussing religious or political matters, yet many parents were reluctant to send their children to these schools, lest they become corrupted by foreign ideas. Nevertheless, by 1924 there were 3000 graduates, and the first school for girls was opened in 1931 (ibid.). Graduates of these schools established similar institutions in the provinces they came to govern, and so the modern school system gradually extended through the country, until the project was brought to a halt by the Italian occupation of 1935-1941 (Alemayehu

& Lasser, 2012). Following the Italian defeat, the imperial government was re-instated by Britain which came to exert a strong influence on the Ethiopian curriculum, to the extent that it was said the classroom contained *nothing* that was Ethiopian, except the children (ibid.). There were no fees for state schools, and children from ordinary households were able to attend if they lived nearby (Tekeste, 2006, p.15); yet by the 1950s, as Ethiopia's population approached 20 million, there were no more than 400 state primary schools and 11 high schools, and a few hundred schools run by foreign religious organisations (Bahru, 2002). The school system continued to expand through the 1960s with support from UNESCO, until, by 1974, primary school enrolment had reached 1 million students, with a high school population of 80,000 students (Tekeste, 2006). Despite the relatively small number of high school graduates, supply far exceeded the demands of the modern workforce, and there was high unemployment amongst high school leavers – a factor which contributed to the unrest surrounding the collapse of the imperial regime in 1974 (ibid.).

The revolutionary Derg government extended coverage of the school system. In an effort to use schooling to promote its ideological agendas, political education was introduced to the curriculum to foster students' political consciousness (Tekeste, 2006), 'so that they abide by the principles of socialist morality and discipline' (Alemayehu & Lasser, 2012, p.63). Amharic was adopted as the language of instruction for primary schooling across the country. In the period from 1975-1989, the government succeeded in increasing enrolment to around 35% of young people aged 7-16 years (Tekeste, 2006, p.19). But partly as a result of its high military spending, the government lacked the funds required for infrastructure development. A shift system was introduced so that the same classrooms could be used by different 'batches' of students in the morning and afternoon respectively. To make up the shortfall in teaching staff, thousands of high school graduates were employed as teachers directly after Grade 12 (Alemayehu & Lasser, 2012). This enabled the expansion of the state school system into rural areas for the first time, albeit with unqualified teachers working in overcrowded and poorly-resourced conditions. There was 'widespread public dissatisfaction with the quality of education' (Tekeste, 2006, p.20), as 'a fairly good education for a relatively small number of children had...been transformed into quite a poor education for a much larger number of children' (Clapham, 1990, cited in Poluha, 2004, p.182). Under the Derg primary school enrolment

increased threefold, reaching three million students by the time of the government's collapse in 1991.

1.3.2 Schooling in the federal system

The new federal EPRDF government found the existing school system 'narrow and limited [in] scale', serving little purpose beyond 'incubating bureaucratic clerks' (MOE, 2002, p.1). A reform agenda was established in the Education and Training Policy (ETP) (TGOE, 1994) which lay the foundations of the current school system (MOE, 2015). Significant breaks with the previous system included: using regional languages (instead of Amharic) as the medium of instruction for primary schooling; identifying democracy, peace and gender equality as explicit aims of schooling (in addition to national development, which the Derg had also acknowledged); committing to the expansion of the school system into underserved rural areas; and beginning the process of decentralising responsibilities to the regional and *woreda* (district, local authority) levels.

The structure of the school system

Compulsory education runs from ages 7-14 years, covering the 8 grades of primary schooling (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Structure of school system

	Primary First Cycle	Primary Second Cycle	General High School	Post Grade 10, three routes: - Preparatory High School (Grades 11-12) - College (e.g. 3 year teaching diploma) - TVET
Grades	1-4	5-8	9-10	
Official age range (years)	7-10	11-14	15-16	
Medium of instruction	Regional language		English	

The curriculum and textbooks for most subjects are developed at the national level (MOE, 2010). The primary curriculum includes Maths, Science, Amharic, English, Social Studies, Civics and Ethical Education, PE, Art, Music and the regional language (e.g. Afan Oromo in Oromia, Tigrigna in Tigray). First Cycle is taught by a single teacher for all subjects, a practice known as 'self-contained' teaching. Throughout Second Cycle, each subject is taught by a specialist (i.e. a teacher with a diploma in their subject of instruction). There is 'automatic promotion' through Grades 1-3 (MOE, 2005), and students' progression through Grades 4-7 is dependent on their achieving a passing mark

in internal assessments. At the end of Grade 8, students sit a regional exam which determines their eligibility to progress to high school; those who fail are permitted to re-take the exam the following year. High school is conducted in English, and most subjects are taught using pre-recorded television programmes, known locally as ‘plasma’. The terminal Grade 10 exam determines students’ subsequent options within the formal education system. Around one third of those who take the Grade 10 exam continue to Grade 11; 45% pass into technical and vocational education and training (TVET); and about 15% register for other programmes, including teacher and police training (MOE, 2015). For those joining the primary teaching profession, the minimum qualification requirement is a three-year diploma in a specialist subject for Second Cycle, or a ‘cluster’ of subjects for First Cycle. Until recently there was a serious shortage of diploma-qualified primary school teachers, but due to a state-sponsored programme for ‘upgrading’ teachers’ qualifications, between 2010-2015 the percentage of diploma-holders rose from 38% to 70% (55% in the first cycle; 92% in the second cycle) (MOE, 2015).

Primary school enrolment and completion

Primary school enrolment has grown rapidly from 3 million students in the early 1990s to over 18 million students currently (MOE, 2015). Table 1.2 presents enrolment data for the year 2011/2, the most recent year for which comprehensive national-level statistics are available.

Table 1.2 National school enrolment data

	Phase	Enrolment	Net Enrolment Ratio ¹	% female students
Primary school	First Cycle	11,425,055	92.2%	47.8%
	Second Cycle	5,564,729	48.1%	
High school	General	1,442,226	17.3%	46.3%
	Preparatory	323,785	4.8%	

(Source: MOE, 2012a)

These national figures mask disparities within and between regions; primary enrolment in urban areas is near-universal, while enrolment in rural areas is far lower (Tekeste, 2006), and high school provision is non-existent. The government estimates that around 3 million young people of compulsory primary school age have either dropped out, or

¹ The net enrolment ratio is the percentage of children of official school age who are enrolled against the (estimated) total number of school-age children.

have never enrolled in school (MOE, 2012b). Nationally, Grade 1 dropout stands at 22%, and 11% for each successive grade of primary school, while the repetition rate is 8% for each grade, with similar patterns amongst males and females (MOE, 2015, p.16). These figures should be treated cautiously since it is not clear how they were calculated, and the MOE acknowledges errors in its data (ibid., p.15). Furthermore, the figures indicate system-level averages rather than conditions in any particular school. In 2011/2, the national Grade 5 completion rate stood at 74%, indicating that three-quarters of those who enrolled in primary school passed this grade. The Grade 8 completion rate was a less-healthy 52%, and this figure dropped to 47% in 2013/4 (MOE, 2012a, 2015), which shows a decline in the proportion of students who completed the full eight grades of primary school (discussed below).

Cost-sharing and variations in school conditions

Over the last two decades, the number of primary schools has tripled from 11,000 to 32,048 (MOE, 2015), up to 10% of which are non-governmental, run by religious organisations, NGOs or private investors (MOE, 2012a). This expansion has been achieved through massive state investment, with education accounting for 20-25% of total government spending over the past decade (ODI, 2011; MOE, 2015, p.134). Nevertheless, the cost of developing and maintaining the national school system is only partly borne by the government; since the early years of this century there has been a policy of supplementing schools' running costs through voluntary parental contributions (TGOE, 1994, p.32; MOE, 2005; Jeilu, 2009). Schools are provided with teachers, textbooks and a small per capita grant towards running costs through the *Woreda* Education Office (WEO); parents provide the balance. A UNESCO study (Jeilu, 2009) conducted several years ago found that 83% of schools were supported by their communities through cash contributions for books, furniture and maintenance. The varying capacity of communities to contribute to school budgets has resulted in great disparities between schools, discussed below.

Over the past two decades, the national primary student-teacher ratio rose from 52:1 in 1996 to 69:1 in 2004, before declining to 57:1 in 2010 and 55:1 in 2012 (MOE, 2002, 2010, 2012a). In 2012, the government reported that 44% of schools had a library, 90% had a latrine, and just over one third had 'access to water' (MOE, 2012a). But underlying these national averages were wide variations around the country, as Table 1.3 illustrates.

These disparities persist, as a result of numerous factors – demographic, geographical, political and historical. Urban schools tend to be better-resourced than rural ones, with higher per-student expenditure (World Bank, 2005; Tekeste, 2006). Thus, schools in the urban centres such as Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Harar have smaller class sizes and superior facilities to those in predominantly rural regions such as Amhara, Tigray, Oromia and Somali. Table 1.3 presents region-level data which does not convey the wide urban/rural disparities within each region.

Table 1.3 Variations in primary school infrastructure and conditions in selected regions

	Access to water (% of schools)	Library (% of schools)	Pedagogy Centre ² (% of schools)	Average # of students per class
Addis Ababa	92.6	82.5	72.3	38
Amhara	32.6	48.3	48.7	47
Gambela	31.4	8.3	7.9	63
Oromia	35.4	43.7	64.4	57
Somali	26.9	2.1	1.3	93
Tigray	37.4	43.2	45.4	44

(Compiled by the author using data from MOE, 2012a)

Research shows that many schools across the country face serious resource constraints, including dilapidated classrooms and shortages of desks, seats and basic teaching materials: chalk, blackboards and textbooks (Poluha, 2004; Tatek, 2008; Mehadi & Tesfaye, 2010; DeStefano & Elaheebocus, 2010). There have been no national studies of the effects of such resource constraints on students' learning outcomes; however, a study (Tassew et al., 2005) conducted in five regions found that factors including large class sizes, a lack of textbooks and inadequate toilet facilities discouraged students from remaining in school.

Students' background characteristics and academic attainment

Despite a lack of research investigating the effects of school-level factors on students' learning, large-scale studies (Tassew et al., 2005; Piper, 2010) have explored the links between students' academic attainment and their background characteristics, including gender, household wealth and geographical location (see Table 1.4).

² A Pedagogy Centre is an arts and crafts workshop where learning aids are made.

Table 1.4 Studies of students' attainment

Study	Sample / data collection	Focus of study
<i>Children's educational completion rates and achievement</i> (Tassew et al., 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1000 eight-year-olds in five regions - Survey of household characteristics - Literacy and numeracy tests 	Relationship between young people's background characteristics and literacy and numeracy skills
<i>Ethiopia Early Grade Reading Assessment: Data Analysis Report</i> (Piper, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 13,000 students (Grades 2-3) from 338 schools in eight regions - Survey of student and household characteristics - Early grade reading assessment (EGRA) of students 	National study of students' reading ability

Tassew et al. (2005) found that household wealth was positively associated with young people's literacy and numeracy skills, and poverty was an all-round barrier to performance (see Table 1.5).

Table 1.5 Academic skills by household characteristics

Skills		Very poor household	Poor household	Less poor household
Reading	Cannot read	71%	32%	10%
	Reads sentence	10%	35%	54%
Writing	Cannot write	73%	35%	16%
	Can write but with difficulty	14%	27%	44%
	Can write without difficulty	13%	38%	39%
Numeracy	Can perform simple arithmetic	35%	51%	57%

(Source: Tassew et al., 2005, p.16)

In the poorest households, 71% of eight-year-olds could not read, compared to 10% from more affluent households. To a greater or lesser extent, similar wealth-related disparities existed across all the skills measured. A follow-up study (Tassew & Aregawi, 2016) conducted a decade later reached similar conclusions. Piper (2010) also found that students' oral reading fluency was closely associated with household characteristics. Students in urban areas with affluent, educated parents had the highest levels of fluency. In urban areas, girls outperformed boys, while in rural areas the reverse was true.

Quality concerns: falling attainment

Alongside the expansion of the school system, the MOE (2008, 2015) has expressed concern at the perceived decline in the quality of primary schooling as evidenced by the falling completion rate, and declining levels of student attainment across successive National Learning Assessments (NLAs) from 1999 to the present. The NLAs measure the attainment of an unspecified sample of the national student population. Grade 4 students are assessed in Maths, Environmental Sciences, English and the regional language; Grade 8 students are assessed in Maths, English, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Students' attainment across these curriculum areas is rated as proficient (scoring 75-100%), basic (scoring 50-74%) or below-basic (under 50%). Table 1.6 shows the percentage of students scoring within each attainment range in 2008 and 2012.

Table 1.6 Percentage of students by attainment range in the National Learning Assessments

		Below basic	Basic	Proficient
Grade 4	2008	47%	38%	15%
	2012	57%	26%	17%
Grade 8	2008	62%	24%	14%
	2012	56%	28%	16%

(Adapted from MOE, 2015)

As Table 1.6 shows, there was a general pattern of declining attainment in Grade 4 between 2008 and 2012, with a 10% drop in the number of students either meeting or exceeding grade-level curriculum objectives. Grade 8 saw a marginal improvement over the same period, but 56% of students still failed to meet the curriculum objectives.

Other government studies support this bleak picture of student attainment – for example, a recent study of Grade 2 students' oral reading fluency in regional languages of instruction (see Table 1.7).

Table 1.7 Grade 2 students' oral reading fluency in regional language of instruction

Language	None: non-reader	Below basic: reads slowly with limited comprehension	Basic: reads with some fluency and comprehension	Proficient: reads fluently with full comprehension
Afaan Oromo	54%	21%	20%	5%
Somali	26%	13%	27%	34%
Amharic	25%	48%	21%	6%
Hadiyya	76%	13%	7%	4%
Sidaamu Afoo	69%	15%	13%	3%
Tigrigna	31%	34%	33%	2%
Wolaytta	50%	18%	20%	12%

(Source MOE, 2015, p.18)

From one perspective, these figures show the positive impact that schools are having on improving literacy across the country. For example, a national census (CSA, 2007) reported a literacy rate of 14% amongst the population (aged 5 years and above) in Somali Region; yet Table 1.7 shows that after less than two years' schooling, three-quarters of students had achieved some degree of literacy in the Somali language, which is certainly an achievement. However, the MOE (2015) interpreted this study as evidence of the 'failure of the education system to ensure student learning and acquisition of basic skills' (p.19). The decline in average attainment since the start of the millennium is arguably unsurprising given the changing intake over this period (Dom, 2009), and the inclusion of students from less affluent households who tend to underperform in school (Tassew et al., 2005; Piper, 2010), as discussed above. Nevertheless, the government has interpreted the evidence of falling attainment as grounds for wide-ranging reforms, outlined below.

The national policy response

The government has responded to evidence of falling student attainment with reforms aimed at curriculum, pedagogy and community participation in school leadership and management (MOE, 2003, 2008):

- *Curriculum.* The eight-year General Education Quality Improvement Plan (GEQUIP) (MOE, 2008) aims to introduce new textbooks and minimum learning competencies for all subjects and grades.
- *Pedagogy.* Through changes to pre- and in-service teacher education (MOE, 2003, 2004, 2008) the government seeks to prepare teachers to 'confidently promote active learning and the development of problem-solving skills through a learner-centred approach' (MOE, 2003, p.17). A nationally-mandated continuous professional development (CPD) programme (MOE, 2004) calls for small groups of teachers to work through centrally-produced handbooks with topics on pedagogy (e.g. active learning, continuous assessment) and national priority issues (e.g. HIV, gender equality). There is also encouragement for teachers to upgrade their academic qualifications (certificate to diploma, diploma to degree) through a government-funded programme (MOE, 2008).
- *School leadership and management.* The government has sought to strengthen school management and promote autonomy and accountability through community participation in school evaluation, consultation and decision-making.

The national School Improvement Programme (SIP) requires school stakeholders, including parents and students, to evaluate the school according to a centrally-produced template, and participate in consultation and decision-making through the Parent, Student and Teacher Association (PSTA) (MOE, 2007, 2008, 2015). The government undertakes to provide schools with a per capita grant to support the implementation of school improvement plans (MOE, 2008).

Empirical studies spanning this reform period (2003-present) offer insights into aspects of schooling pertaining to these policies, particularly *teaching practices* and *community participation in school leadership and management*. The two sections which follow synthesise findings in these areas, and identify gaps which the present study aims to address.

Teaching practices

This review draws from four studies, details of which are presented in Table 1.8.

Table 1.8 Studies which report teaching practices

Study	Sample / data collection	Focus of study
<i>The power of continuity: Ethiopia through the eyes of its children</i> (Poluha, 2004)	- Ethnographic case study of a private primary school in Addis Ababa - Participant observation in two classes (Grades 4 & 5)	Processes of social reproduction in the school
<i>Tension between traditional and modern teaching: learning approaches in Ethiopian primary schools</i> (Derebssa, 2006)	- Observations of lessons and facilities in 12 schools, three regions - Questionnaires from 120 teachers and 600 students (Grades 4 & 8)	The use of a learner-centred approach in primary school
<i>Using opportunity to learn and early grade reading fluency to measure school effectiveness</i> (DeStefano & Elaheebocus, 2010)	- 24 schools in Oromia - Surveys of teacher and student attendance - Structured observations of one lesson from Grades 1-3 at each school - Reading assessments for Grade 3 students (n = 20) at each school	The relationship between school characteristics, time available for learning and reading ability
<i>Children's Learning Practices in Ethiopia: Observations from Primary School Classes</i> (Frost & Little, 2014)	- Structured observations of 776 Maths lessons (Grades 1-8) in 120 schools in five regions - Structured interviews with observed teachers (qualifications, experience, attendance, supervision)	Match/mismatch between government-prescribed pedagogy and classroom practice

In an ethnographic case study of a private school from early in this reform period, Poluha (2004) reported that teachers tended to view learning as the memorisation of knowledge

transmitted by the teacher. Teachers' principal classroom agenda was 'to fill the students with the required information' (Poluha, 2004, p.101), reflecting Freire's (1972) 'banking' concept of education. Teachers spent up to half of the lesson copying notes onto the board, and up to a third of the lesson lecturing. Poluha (2004) explained that this pattern of activity partly resulted from a shortage of textbooks.

A decade later – and thus well into the reform period – Frost and Little (2014) reported on a large-scale study involving systematic observations of more than 700 Maths lessons across the country. They found that an average 74.5% of lesson time was occupied with teacher-centred activities, 10.7% with student-centred activities, and 14.7% of lesson time was 'unused'. In a smaller study in rural Oromia, DeStefano and Elaheebocus (2010) found that students were 'off-task' 38% of the time, and reported:

Lessons were hauntingly similar across grades, subjects, and schools. A single approach to teaching seemed to predominate: demonstration at the blackboard followed by seatwork and copying. (p.28)

Derebssa (2006, p.16) reached a similar conclusion: 'traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen dominate most classrooms.' This study involved eliciting teachers' (n = 120) and students' (n = 600) views on active learning using a questionnaire (the response rate was not reported). He reported that 86.6% of teachers and 81.3% of students expressed the view that the lecture method was best suited to the curriculum. Furthermore, 96.7% teachers felt that students lacked sufficient knowledge and experience to engage in active learning activities.

The studies reviewed here reveal the dominance of teacher-centred methods, in contrast to government policy (MOE, 2003, 2004, 2008). However, the most wide-ranging study (Frost & Little, 2014) focuses exclusively on Maths teaching which may not reflect practices in other subjects; and the only other study which focuses on teaching (Derebssa, 2006) does not report observations of practice. Moreover, with one exception (Poluha, 2004), the studies employ *a priori* categories and codings which offer limited grounds for contextually-sensitive accounts of classroom practices. The perspectives of teachers and students, and the meanings and motivations underlying classroom activities are largely absent from the literature. The present study aims to address these gaps by investigating teaching practices across a range of subjects, and developing contextualised accounts of

teaching and other aspects of classroom life which are informed by teachers' and students' perspectives.

Community participation in school leadership and management

School leadership and management in Ethiopia is a greatly under-researched area (Workneh, 2012), but four studies from the current reform period offer useful insights into this aspect of school life.

Table 1.9 Studies which investigate community participation, school leadership and management

Study	Sample / data collection	Focus of study
<i>What community participation in schooling means: insights from southern Ethiopia</i> (Swift-Morgan, 2006)	- Focus groups with parents from eight rural/semi-urban sites in the south	The meaning and modalities of community participation
<i>The challenges of free primary education in Ethiopia</i> (Jeilu, 2009)	- 74 primary schools, four regions - Document review (policies, statistics) - Survey of directors and parents (n = 156; 95.5% response rate) - Survey of financial and enrolment data	The impact of free schooling; the nature of community participation
<i>School management and decision-making in Ethiopian government schools</i> (Workneh, 2012)	- 15 schools, five regions - Individual interviews with teachers (n = 43), directors (n = 15)	The participation of directors, teachers, parents and WEO in school-based management and decision-making
<i>Determinants of 'community participation': the tradition of local initiatives and the institutionalisation of school management committees in Oromia Region, Ethiopia</i> (Yamada, 2014)	- 14 schools in Oromia - Focus group discussions with parents (n = 92)	Communities' commitment to schooling and participation in school management

Research indicates growing parental involvement in schooling since the start of the millennium. Jeilu (2009) found that 83% of schools were supported by their communities through financial contributions or labour, and other studies confirm the prevalence of such forms of support (Swift-Morgan, 2006; Workneh, 2012; Yamada, 2014). Through School Management Councils, parent representatives participate in decisions regarding school infrastructure development and resource mobilisation (Swift-Morgan, 2006; Workneh, 2012; Yamada, 2014). The SIP (MOE, 2007, 2008) calls for parental involvement in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in school. Swift-Morgan

(2006) found parents unwilling to participate in this way due to a lack of knowledge and experience, and deference to teachers. Workneh (2012) also reported no evidence of this in his 15-school study and concluded ‘more efforts are still needed to ensure their full participation in school affairs’ (p.19). However, Yamada (2014) found that parents were engaged in monitoring teachers’ work in at least one school in Oromia, for example, by checking that students’ work had been marked.

Workneh’s (2012) insightful exploratory study is the only research to investigate the participation of school directors, teachers, parents and WEO officials in school management and decision-making. He found that leadership and management systems were highly centralised at the WEO level, leaving little scope for schools’ autonomous decision-making. Despite the federal government’s commitment to transfer per capita grants to schools for the implementation of local improvement plans, directors had not received these funds. WEOs took responsibility for procuring material resources, and limited funds were given to schools to cover maintenance costs. Furthermore, decisions about the recruitment and appointment of teachers were made by the WEO. Directors were able to nominate teachers for external training opportunities, but these were dependent on WEO approval. Teachers reported a lack of transparency regarding criteria for selection, and suspected that decisions were influenced by personal and political considerations. In short, the WEO posed an opaque and locally unaccountable barrier to school-based management in the key areas of finance, staff recruitment and staff development.

These studies offer insights into the changing nature of school leadership and management in the current policy context, especially the increased participation of parents in various aspects of schooling, and the structural constraints to schools’ autonomy at the level of the WEO. The evidence considered here suggests that national policies pertaining to school management have had a more tangible impact than those pertaining to teaching practice; however, the research base is limited and the coverage patchy, and so such conclusions can only be tentative. Further research is needed into the concerns and priorities of different stakeholders in the school community, including students, whose perspectives are currently missing from the literature. Further research is also needed into the relationship between the school and the WEO, and the sphere of influence of school-level leadership and management. The present study aims to address these gaps by exploring the perspectives and priorities of a broader range of stakeholders

within the school community, the nature of their participation and influence in school, and the scope for school-level decision-making in relation to the WEO and other governmental bodies and institutions.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This chapter introduced the context of schooling in Ethiopia and my personal involvement in the sector. I provided an account of the country's history, the development of schooling, and the current policy context, followed by a review of research undertaken in this area. To inform the development and focus of my own study, in Chapter 2 I conduct a broader review of school research literature. Chapter 3 offers a biographical account of this research project, and the decisions underpinning its design. The findings from this study are presented in Chapters 4-6, followed by discussion and conclusions in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2: A review of school research literature

Introduction

In order to inform the design of my own study of the perspectives, priorities and participation of school stakeholders in Ethiopia, I conducted a broad review of school research literature from different contexts around the world. A comprehensive review was beyond the scope and requirements of this study. Instead, I sought to understand the main traditions of school research: the kinds of questions that had been addressed; the orientations and research methods employed; the affordances and limitations of different approaches; and findings which were likely to be relevant to my study of schooling in Ethiopia.

I read widely at first to understand the major trends in school research over the past 50 years, and identified three broad traditions of school research, around which the current chapter is organised:

- 2.1 School effectiveness research (SER)
- 2.2 School improvement (SI) research and practice
- 2.3 Ethnographic school research

I read reviews of research within each tradition which helped me identify representative and canonical studies for inclusion in the review. As I read, I was continuously questioning: What is being investigated, and how? What opportunities and limitations are presented by this approach? How might the research process and/or the findings inform my own study of schooling in Ethiopia? I was aware of a bias towards research from ‘western’, and especially Anglo-American contexts (Harber & Davies, 1997; Connell, 2007). Cultural, material and other factors affect the applicability of western research to non-western contexts (Tabulawa, 2013). Indeed, in his recent book, *The Progressive Education Fallacy in Developing Countries*, Guthrie (2011) argues: ‘so irrelevant to developing countries do I consider research on education in western countries that this book contains almost no examples of it’ (p.xxvi). Since I was concerned with the processes of school research, as well as the findings, I did not discount western school research, but sought to include studies from non-western, and especially African contexts, where available.

2.1 School effectiveness research

This section considers the origins, foci, methodology and range of findings produced by school effectiveness research (SER), and evaluates the contributions of this tradition to our understanding of the influence of schools on the experiences and achievements of students.

Origins: investigating the school effect

SER emerged from the ambitions of research teams to understand the relative effects of family background and school on students' academic success. Work in this area began in the USA as part of the Civil Rights Movement, due to concerns about the inequitable educational provision for black and white students. The 'Coleman Report' (Coleman et al., 1966) audited the facilities in a nationally representative sample of schools, and collected data on the literacy and numeracy attainment of over 600,000 students. This allowed the team to calculate the average attainment of students at each school and the range of variation between schools. They found that educational attainment was affected by socioeconomic background far more than by the quality of school inputs (e.g. per-student expenditure, library size), and that schools were 'remarkably similar in the effect they have on [students'] achievement' (ibid., p.21).

The first SER study in England was *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary schools and their effects on children* (Rutter et al., 1979). In this comparatively small-scale but authoritative study of 12 secondary schools in London, the team studied the extent to which students' academic and behavioural outcomes were affected by the schools they attended, and the school-level factors associated with these differences. The team used an input-process-output model to study the effects of schooling, where 'process' refers to school-level factors such as the social organisation of schools and the learning environment provided for students. Rutter et al. (1979) conducted fieldwork in three pilot schools to identify potentially important school-level factors, collecting data through informal observations and interviews with teachers and students, before developing survey instruments to measure between-school variation in relation to a number of school-level variables hypothesised to influence student attainment. The team identified a range of factors associated with the students' academic and behavioural outcomes: teaching methods, academic emphasis, rewards and punishment systems, students' working conditions, students' responsibilities and participation in school, the stability of class and

friendship groups, and the organisation of staff (ibid., p.107). They found that schools varied significantly in terms of students' academic and behavioural outcomes, and that these differences were not attributable to the physical characteristics of schools, such as the age or size of the buildings, but to their social characteristics: the teaching methods used, the degree of academic emphasis, and their systems of reward and punishment. They concluded that 'children's behaviour and attitudes are shaped and influenced by their experiences at school, and, in particular, by the qualities of the school as a social institution' (ibid., p.179). This provided an early empirical basis for reconsidering Coleman et al.'s (1966) findings, and for hypothesising an independent school effect to be examined in subsequent SER. The essential characteristics of this approach are considered below.

The SER approach

SER is concerned with identifying the variable effectiveness of schools for influencing students' attainment, attitude and behaviour outcomes, and the in-school factors responsible for such variation. Researchers in this tradition have tended to take a rational system perspective on the school, and used an input-process-output model, where inputs are student characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, prior attainment); processes are school-level factors (e.g. student organisation, teaching or leadership practices); and outputs are academic attainment and (less often) non-cognitive outcomes, such as behaviour (e.g. Rutter et al., 1979; Mortimore et al., 1988). By measuring a school's outputs and correcting for input characteristics, school effectiveness researchers are able to calculate the extent to which a school 'adds value' to students' attainments (Reynolds et al., 1996). An effective school is 'one in which students progress more than might be expected on the basis of their intake characteristics' (Sammons et al., 1997, p.160).

The identification of in-school factors associated with effectiveness sometimes involves qualitative research in a subsample of schools, and the use of surveys to generalise across a wider population (e.g. MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001). SER operates on the assumption that effective schools share observable characteristics which, once identified, can be used to improve the performance of less effective schools (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). SER's largely quantitative approach, and use of large datasets, reflects this aspiration of generalising a model of school effectiveness and between-school variation across a range of contexts at scale (Reynolds et al., 1996).

Findings from SER

Summarising learning from three decades of SER conducted mostly in the UK and USA, MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) identify a broad consensus that there *is* a ‘school effect’ which accounts for something in the range of 5-15% of variation in students’ academic attainment in Anglo-American contexts. Lest this seem insignificant, in the UK this translates into the difference between seven grade Cs at GCSE and six grade Es (ibid., p.6). This point can be elaborated with reference to *School Matters* (Mortimore et al., 1988), the first major SER study of primary schools in England. This landmark longitudinal study followed two thousand 7-year-olds from 50 schools over a four-year period, and aimed to establish whether schools were differentially effective in promoting students’ academic, affective and behavioural outcomes, and if so, which factors contributed to a positive effect. The team found that schools had a variable effect on cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Percentage gains and losses measured against average school in sample

	Least effective school	Most effective school
Reading	-19%	+28%
Maths	-21%	+21%
Attendance	-4%	+5%

Sample size: 2000 students from 50 primary schools. Maths and reading data reflect attainment in researcher-administered tests over a three-year period (Source: Mortimore et al., 1988)

The study found schools to be responsible for 9% of variance in students’ attainment in reading at the end of the third year, and for 24% of variance in their progress over the three years. For Maths, the figures were similar (11% and 23% respectively). So strong was the magnitude of variation that Mortimore et al. (1988, p.217) concluded that ‘disadvantaged children in the most effective schools can end up with higher achievements than their advantaged peers in less effective schools.’

Mortimore et al. (1988) used a variety of means for collecting evidence of schools’ internal characteristics, including interviews with headteachers, teachers and parents; systematic lesson observations; and questionnaires with teachers and students. Based on the analysis of these data, alongside the statistical findings, the team identified 12 key characteristics of effective schools, including: purposeful leadership of the staff by the headteacher; the involvement of the deputy head and teachers in curriculum planning and decision-making; and a positive school climate. Two of the study’s authors subsequently

produced a similar list (Sammons et al., 1995) based on a wider review of SER (see Box 2.1).

Box 2.1 Eleven characteristics of effective schools

1. Professional leadership - firm and purposeful - a participative approach - the leading professional	6. High expectations - high expectations all round - communicating expectations - providing intellectual challenge
2. Shared vision and goals - unity of purpose - consistency of practice - collegiality and collaboration	7. Positive reinforcement - clear and fair discipline - feedback
3. A learning environment - an orderly atmosphere - an attractive working environment	8. Monitoring progress - monitoring pupil performance - evaluating school performance
4. Concentration on teaching and learning - maximisation of learning time - academic emphasis - focus on achievement	9. Pupil rights and responsibilities - raising pupil self-esteem - positions of responsibility - control of work
5. Purposeful teaching - efficient organisation - clarity of purpose - structured lessons - adaptive practice	10. Home-school partnership - parental involvement
	11. Learning organisation - school-based staff development

(Source: Sammons et al., 1995)

Since the 1990s, SER – now more broadly conceived as educational effectiveness research – has used increasingly sophisticated statistical techniques, including multilevel modelling, to study, for example, the stability of school effects over time, and schools’ differential effects for students of different backgrounds (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001; Reynolds et al., 2014).

Critical discussion of the SER tradition

SER has contributed to our understanding of the variable impact on student attainment of different schools (Mortimore et al., 1988), departments (Sammons et al., 1997) and teachers (Day et al., 2007). It has highlighted the significant impact that students’ background characteristics such as age, gender and socioeconomic status have on their achievement in school, and demonstrated that further to these factors, schools have a

significant and quantifiable effect across a range of cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001). When it comes to student attainment, schools *do* matter, especially in how they are organised and led as social institutions.

SER is less successful in its aim to produce transferable, actionable knowledge. Effectiveness characteristics do not in themselves indicate a path to school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2011), and the effectiveness characteristics in Box 2.1 are open to multiple interpretations (Wrigley, 2004). For example, how does ‘professional leadership’ (Sammons et al., 1995) differ from ‘purposeful leadership’ (Mortimore et al., 1988)? Elliott (1996) has argued that these characteristics comprise a mixture of *a priori* truths (e.g. ‘concentration on teaching and learning’) and value-based assertions which reflect a social control ideology (e.g. ‘consistency of practice’). Furthermore, while the effectiveness of a school necessarily depends on its context, and the agendas of its stakeholders, effectiveness characteristics such as those in Box 2.1, tend to be presented ‘context-free’, as if their application transcends the phase, location, community or aims of any particular school.

Limited SER of comparable quality to that undertaken in industrialised contexts has been conducted in developing countries (Yu, 2007), but available evidence suggests far greater variance between schools (Harber & Davies, 1997). For example, in a study of 24 schools in rural Oromia (DeStefano & Elaheebocus, 2010; see Table 1.8 in the previous chapter), the average oral reading fluency of Grade 3 students ranged from 5.5 – 41 words-per-minute; while the percentage of ‘non-readers’ in these schools ranged from 5% to 75%. Despite these stark variations in attainment, the researchers found no strong relationship between students’ reading fluency and any of the school-level factors investigated (p.29). Researchers in Ethiopia and similar contexts often lack the resources of those in industrialised contexts: the Oromia study included no baseline data, and involved only a few hours’ observation in each school, whereas *School Matters* (Mortimore et al., 1988) utilised four years of attainment data, alongside sustained observational and interview data. But more important than these constraints is the lack of knowledge about what constitutes an effective school in the Ethiopian context. Harber and Davies (1997) argue that SER is:

most usefully valid when it uses outcome measures consistent with expressed goals, or uses a *range* of such measures when those goals appear inconsistent or contested. (p.44)

The aims of schooling for different stakeholders in Ethiopia requires further investigation, which would logically precede SER in this context.

2.2 School improvement research

Introduction

School improvement (SI) research and practice has been described as:

a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. In this sense school improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it. (Hopkins et al., 1994, p.3)

This quotation draws attention to the twin foci of SI. The first, student learning and its immediate instructional context; the second, the wider organisational context and conditions which directly and indirectly affect teaching and learning. SI research and practice is concerned with both levels, the classroom and the school, and with understanding and strengthening the links between student learning and organisational conditions. Work in this area proceeds from the assumption that intentional actions and strategies can improve teaching and learning in school (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p.6), albeit in nonlinear and unpredictable ways (Deakin Crick et al., 2016, p.3).

SI research and practice is a bottom-up approach to reform in which the school is the principal unit of change. It entails the adoption of a 'learning orientation', focusing on the learning of students, teachers, leaders and the organisation as a whole (Senge, 2000; Frost, 2008; Deakin Crick et al., 2016). Reflection, inquiry and evaluation are key (Chapman & Sammons, 2013), as is the development of professional and organisational capacity. SI calls for the broad participation of school-level stakeholders, on the grounds that 'every individual in the school has a contribution to make to the improvement' (Potter et al., 2002, p.251). Mobilising the school community towards an inclusive, learning orientation calls for leadership at every level of the school (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009, p.48), and senior school leaders have an especially important role in providing leadership for

learning, and nurturing leadership in others, including teachers and students (Robinson et al., 2008; MacBeath et al., 2008; Day et al., 2009; Bryk et al., 2010). Studies indicate the importance of looking beyond institutional leaders to consider leadership as a shared activity, a *practice* distributed across individuals at different levels of the school (Spillane, 2005; Frost, 2008; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Researchers have argued the importance of recognising the exercise of non-positional leadership as an important feature of teachers' professionalism (Frost & Roberts, 2013), and that student voice has a vital role in school improvement (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

Having introduced these central features of the SI tradition, I turn to the links between students' classroom learning and organisational conditions, before considering the function of leadership, organisational learning, professional capacity building and student participation in school improvement. This section of the review concludes with a synthesis of learnings from the SI research tradition, and the implications for my own study of schooling in Ethiopia.

Linking classroom learning to organisational conditions

A landmark SI study was undertaken by Bryk et al. (2010) following decentralising reforms in Chicago in the 1980s. The team utilised 7 years of longitudinal quantitative data on student attainment (in reading and maths) and attendance at 390 primary schools in the city, and a mixed-methods investigation of schools' internal conditions. From these unique datasets, Bryk et al. (2010) developed a framework of five essential supports for SI.

At the centre of their model for SI is the classroom and the 'instructional triangle', comprising three elements: teacher, student and subject matter. Students' learning results from interactions between these elements. Bryk et al. (2010) found that students' learning is moderated by the capacities and preferences of teachers and students; the quality and use of learning resources; and the time available for learning, which in turn is affected by students' attendance, punctuality and motivation for learning. Organisational conditions in school affect these dynamics within the instructional triangle. Schools in which student attainment improved made positive changes to these classroom-level factors. At the organisational level, the team (ibid.) identified five essential supports for achieving this school improvement:

- *Instructional guidance* – improving the quality of curricula, pedagogy and assessment
- *Professional capacity* – developing the school’s human resource base by recruiting capable staff, and strengthening support for collaborative professional learning
- *Student-centred learning climate* – fostering a safe, academically ambitious environment for students
- *Parent-community ties* – improving relationships with the community, and strengthening links with other local institutions
- *Leadership as a driver for change* – the principal’s focus on improving instruction, and fostering the leadership of others within the school community

It will be noticed that most of the elements outlined above feature in the synthesis of findings from SER (see Box 2.1), with the exception of instructional guidance. The distinctive contribution of this study (Bryk et al., 2010) is an empirically validated theorisation of links between student learning and organisational conditions, and the identification of the five essential supports for school improvement. However, the relevance of this model has not been tested outside the west.

Leadership and school improvement

Leadership is the central element in Bryk et al.’s (2010) framework for school improvement, driving the other essential supports. Studies in western contexts tend to support this emphasis given to school leaders: by strengthening professional capacity, and focusing attention on improving teaching and learning, they can indirectly affect academic outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008; Day et al., 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2011).

The largest study of school leadership in England to date (Day et al., 2009), involved data from a national sample of more than 700 primary and secondary schools in which student learning outcomes had improved over a three-year period under the same headteacher. The team used national data on student attainment, and conducted interviews, observations and surveys in 20 schools selected from the larger sample. Day et al. (2009) found that headteachers are perceived as the main source of leadership in school, and their values and practices indirectly affect school and classroom conditions. The headteachers of improving schools support teachers’ professional learning, strengthen collaborative relationships, and progressively adapt organisational structures in order to distribute

leadership amongst the staff; these factors promote teachers' commitment to the school, while building their professional capacity. Such headteachers also work with teams of colleagues to ensure curriculum continuity and breadth, and an emphasis and supportive focus on students' personal and social development as well as on their academic learning and achievements. By focusing on students' learning, and developing the organisational arrangements and processes which support it, school leaders' practice has a large cumulative effect, 'second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning' (ibid., p.10).

A key feature of leadership for SI is the phased distribution of leadership amongst staff (Day et al., 2009). The team identified three phases in the trajectories of leadership at improving schools. In the first phase, headteachers make improvements to physical infrastructure, establish whole school expectations for student behaviour, and introduce performance management systems. At this stage, leadership may be 'autocratic' (ibid., p.139), restricted to the headteacher and senior leadership team (cf. Potter et al. 2002, p.250). The second phase involves greater use of data to inform decision-making and target-setting, and the gradual distribution of leadership responsibilities and accountabilities amongst staff, moving from vertical to more horizontal structures of leadership and coordination. The third phase involves continuing curriculum development, and a wider distribution of leadership responsibilities throughout the school. Day et al. (2009) found that staff preferred working within more horizontal leadership and management structures, and the distribution of leadership resulted in increased levels of trust and commitment.

Researchers have long argued the importance of broadening stakeholder participation for SI (Hopkins et al., 1994; Potter et al., 2002; Spillane, 2005; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). While distributing leadership responsibilities amongst staff is a means of increasing participation, it is also a means of delegating responsibility for realising management agendas (Hatcher, 2005; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006). Distributing leadership does not mean abandoning the direction of the school to the discretion of diverse interest groups. Rather, an essential characteristic of effective school leadership is the establishment of *collective* expectations and goals (Robinson et al., 2008, p.659). Elmore (2005a) clarifies the links between school leadership, collective expectations and internal accountability:

As schools become more coherent and effective as organizations, rather than collections of individuals, collective expectations are more influential over individual teachers' work, and the work of school leaders becomes defined as the explicit reinforcement of organizational values. This process of moving from an atomized state to a more coherent organizational state is called *alignment*. The alignment of individual values with collective expectations, reinforced by the processes of accountability, results in internal accountability. As internal accountability develops, schools become more effective as organizations rather than as groups of individuals. (pp.135-6)

Thus, it is by establishing collective expectations within the school community, supported by internal accountability mechanisms, that school leaders may drive school improvement (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999; Bryk et al., 2010). This entails learning to do things better, at the individual and organisational level (Senge, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Deakin Crick et al., 2016); this is addressed in the following section.

However, before progressing with this review, I must draw attention to the exclusively western research base in the studies considered so far. The significance of the phased distribution of leadership responsibilities, and the development of internal accountability structures, has not been established in Ethiopia, or elsewhere in Africa, where there is far less evidence on the links between school leadership and academic outcomes (Oduro et al., 2007). Evidence suggests that the procurement of essential resources, such as duplication facilities (Harber & Davies, 1997), and targeting attendance issues amongst staff and students (DeStefano & Elaheebocus, 2010; Bosu et al., 2011; Tao, 2013), may be issues of more fundamental concern for school leaders in developing countries.

Strategies for organisational learning: school self-evaluation

School self-evaluation (SSE) is a strategy for facilitating professional and organisational learning (Deakin Crick et al., 2016), a process through which members of a school community 'reflect on their practice and identify areas for action to stimulate improvement in the areas of pupil and professional learning' (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p.17). Collecting, analysing and discussing data is in itself a learning process (Pedder & MacBeath, 2008), and a feature of decision-making and target-setting in improving schools (Day et al., 2009).

The potential for learning from SSE depends on its form and function, and whether it is primarily internally or externally driven, formative or summative (Chapman & Sammons, 2013). SSE may be oriented towards external policy imperatives, the priorities of school-level stakeholders, or a mixture of the two. SSE in itself is not a sufficient condition for deep organisational learning; at its most restricted, it may amount to an auditing exercise, monitoring compliance with external policy requirements according to pre-specified criteria (MacBeath, 2006; Chapman & Sammons, 2013). Such auditing activities have been reported in South Africa (Setlalentoa, 2013), where teachers share their evaluations of the school on a standardised template prior to external inspection. Ehren et al. (2016) praise the principle of transparent inspection criteria, while others (e.g. MacBeath, 1999; Pedder & MacBeath, 2008; Deakin Crick et al., 2016) highlight the value of more open-ended forms of evaluation which draws from a range of stakeholder values and perspectives. In England, as in South Africa, schools have tended to conduct self-evaluation according to external inspection frameworks (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p.19), but the changing policy context in recent years has led to a diversification of SSE practices, and the evaluation of a wider range of educational outcomes on the basis of stakeholder priorities (Deakin Crick et al., 2016).

There is growing evidence of the importance of SSE for school improvement. In the Day et al. (2009) study over 50% of primary and secondary headteachers identified SSE as responsible for a high, direct and positive impact on students' learning (p.63). A study of SSE in Hong Kong (MacBeath, 2008) involved fieldwork in 20 schools, and questionnaires from 32,000 teachers across the region. The introduction of SSE was associated with increases in learning-related dialogue and knowledge-sharing at the school-level, and teachers became more receptive to student voice. MacBeath (2010) argues that the efficacy of SSE stems from making existing practices and conditions 'explicit and discussable' (p.906), and providing a forum and language for dialogue about learning. There is limited evidence of whether these benefits are felt in African contexts. Ethiopia recently introduced a centrally-produced template for SSE as a component of the national School Improvement Programme (SIP) (MOE, 2007). The template seeks to elicit teachers', students' and parents' evaluations of teaching and learning, and other aspects of the school. Some items for evaluation suggest the foreign provenance of the template, inappropriate in the Ethiopian context – for example, 'The school website, where available, is current, interesting and interactive' (MOE, 2007, p.40). However,

there have been no studies of stakeholders' participation in the processes of school evaluation, or the links between SSE and school improvement in this context.

Professional capacity building: teachers' professional learning

Evidence from Anglo-American contexts indicates the interdependency of teachers' professional learning and school improvement (Day et al., 2009; Bryk et al., 2010). The need for continuous learning derives from the complex nature of classroom teaching, and the demands this places on teachers' knowledge and abilities (McIntyre, 2000; Pedder et al., 2005). Contextual variation between schools, classes and students limits the extent to which good practice can be centrally specified and mandated (Stenhouse, 1975; Pedder et al., 2010). Teachers' expertise develops through classroom experience, through learning which is often involuntary and tacit (Eraut, 1994). This may be made conscious and subject to intentional action through reflection and dialogue which focuses on practice and values (McIntyre, 1993; MacBeath, 2010). Stenhouse (1975) advocated research engagement as a means of teachers improving the quality of support for students' learning. He stressed the importance of collaboration between teachers in undertaking and disseminating research, and the need for school-level coordination and support. These ideas are advanced by Hargreaves (1994, 1999, 2001, 2003), who highlights the need for school-level knowledge management and development. A school's 'intellectual capital' – the knowledge and abilities of those in the school community – should be viewed as an organisational attribute rather than an individual one. From this perspective, teachers' professional learning should capitalise on the intellectual capital of the school, and be strategically-focused towards corporate school improvement priorities. Beyond the school, a network of research-engaged schools is proposed as a means of developing and disseminating knowledge for systemic improvement (Hargreaves, 2003; McLaughlin et al., 2008).

Much research in Anglo-American contexts has validated and built upon Stenhouse's (1975) view of teachers' professional learning, and there is now broad consensus about the value of collaborative, classroom-based inquiry which focuses on specific aspects of curriculum and pedagogy, and attends to students' learning and experiences (Cordingley et al., 2005; Pedder & Opfer, 2013; Cajkler et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2013; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015). Studies in English schools have identified organisational factors which promote and constrain teachers' professional learning. Effective teacher

development activities are those which are linked to SSE and improvement planning, and coordinated by experienced leaders (Earley, 2010). Constraining factors include a lack of school-level coordination, inadequate time and other resource commitments (ibid.), and a view of professional capacity as an individual rather than an organisational attribute (Cajkler et al., 2013).

The Ethiopian CPD programme (MOE, 2004) is informed by western research in this tradition, and reflects a mixture of enabling and constraining factors, as identified above. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the programme requires teachers to work through centrally-produced modules in study circles, and includes reflective activities and action research. No research has explored links between CPD and school improvement in Ethiopia, however an insightful study (Fekede & Tynjälä, 2015) of high school teachers' perspectives on the CPD programme suggests a lack of school-level leadership. As one teacher put it, the CPD programme 'is only active on paper. Practically, nothing was changed' (p.11). Research in Anglo-American contexts also reveals a widespread disconnect between teachers' professional learning in schools and the consensus view of effective professional learning practices (Elmore, 2004; Earley, 2010; Pedder & Opfer, 2011, 2013). As Elmore (2004) argues, the dominant organisational model of the school is not one in which teachers are expected or supported to continuously and collaboratively develop their practice based on evaluations of students' learning; more often, teachers are 'solo practitioners operating in isolation from one another under conditions of work that severely limit their exposure to adults doing the same work' (p.92).

Student voice and school improvement: teaching and learning

The past two decades have seen a sustained interest in investigating the potential of students' perspectives and voices to inform school improvement efforts (Rudduck et al., 1996; MacBeath, 1999; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007; MacBeath et al., 2008). These ideas have informed the SIP in Ethiopia (MOE 2007, 2015), which calls for students' participation in school evaluation and decision-making. In England, three major studies have investigated students' perspectives on learning in school. *Making Your Way Through Secondary School* was a qualitative study in three schools (Rudduck et al., 1996) which followed the progress of 80 students over a four-year period. In termly interviews, students were asked about their experiences and feelings about learning. The second study, funded as part of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), the

Consulting Pupils Network, involved studies by six teams of researchers in 48 primary and secondary schools (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). This study aimed to understand ways in which consultation can improve students' engagement and achievement. The third, smaller-scale study, the *Influence and Participation of Children and Young People in their Learning* (IPiL) project (MacBeath et al., 2008), conducted in 26 schools, sought to identify practices which enable students to participate in the learning process and influence the conditions of learning in school.

Synthesising findings from the first two studies, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) identified a high degree of consistency in the desired qualities of a teacher (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Qualities of a good teacher from students' perspective

<i>Good teachers are</i>	Description
<i>Human, accessible, reliable and consistent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fair and calm with a sense of humour - people you can talk to - don't give up on you; forgive previous mistakes - understand what it's like to be young and a teenager
<i>Respectful of students and sensitive to their difficulties</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - don't shout - don't make fun of you or humiliate you in front of others - don't assume you haven't listened when help is asked for - respect students and treat them as individuals - let students have a say; listen to you
<i>Positive and enthusiastic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enjoy being a teacher and teaching their subject - give praise more than punishment - make you think you can do well
<i>Professionally skilled</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make lessons interesting; link the subject to life outside school - will have a laugh but know how to keep order - are knowledgeable about their subject but know how to explain - vary their teaching to suit their classes - allow inputs from students; give them choices

(Adapted from Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, pp.77-78)

Students emphasised the values and interpersonal skills of teachers; their ability to foster relationships marked by fairness, respect and mutual engagement. While teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge was important, so was their knowledge of students' interests and affective responses to the curriculum and classroom environment. It is notable that students did not mention teachers' ability to get them a high passing mark, but rather their capacities to motivate, explain and make learning meaningful. Subsequent research (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007, p.59) found that students consistently identified four criteria of a good lesson, irrespective of their levels of motivation and attainment:

- the avoidance of tedium
- the pursuit of meaningful learning

- the need for togetherness
- the aspiration to be autonomous

Again, English students referred to social and affective dimensions of the teaching and learning process, and valued activities which were interesting and meaningful, especially those involving collaboration with peers. Similar research into students' perspectives has not been undertaken in the Ethiopian context, and it is unclear how the different socio-cultural, material and systemic factors may affect their preferences.

The English studies discussed above confirm students' capacity to provide valuable insights into classroom practices, experiences and relationships which help and hinder their learning. However, they also indicate barriers to using student consultation to support inclusive instructional improvement. Not all students are equally adept at explaining what helps them learn, and those from whom teachers most need guidance can find it difficult to articulate what helps them learn (McIntyre et al., 2005, p.167). Some students require sustained engagement and support in order to develop the trust and confidence which is a prerequisite for them sharing their views (MacBeath et al., 2008). Yet failing to consider the full diversity of voices in school limits the potential to learn from consultation, and risks producing a consulted elite (McIntyre et al., 2005) and an 'unconsulted majority' (MacBeath et al., 2008). Evidence (ibid.) suggests that schools in England find it challenging to develop inclusive consultative processes which focus on the core activities of teaching and learning. In a survey of over 600 students, the team found a wide gap between the influence that students believed they should have on learning, teaching, and assessment, and the actual opportunities presented to them in school (p.23). Again, it is unclear how school-level student consultation is implemented in the Ethiopian context – or whether the policy is 'only active on paper', as was said of the CPD programme (Fekede & Tynjälä, 2015, p.11). Traditional elder-youth relations (Omolewa, 2007), and the high power differentials between teachers and students (Poluha, 2004), may pose a different set of barriers to consulting students about teaching and learning than those identified in English schools.

Student voice and school improvement: beyond the classroom

SI research and practice calls for the broad involvement of all stakeholders, including students, to improve learning and the conditions of learning (Hopkins, 2001; Potter et al., 2002). Fletcher (2005, p.5) advocates treating students as 'allies and partners' in school

improvement, providing them with ‘training and authority to create real solutions to the challenges that schools face in learning, teaching and leadership.’ This is a radical position, and far from conventional practice; however, there is evidence of a steady shift towards increasing student participation in SI efforts around the world (Mitra, 2004; MacBeath et al., 2008; Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011).

MacBeath et al. (2008) identified structures which support students’ participation in English schools, including school councils, peer mentoring and monitoring systems, and student-as-researcher projects. Students are also involved in school-level decisions over issues such as uniform, school meals, toilet facilities and teacher recruitment (*ibid.*, p.26). In these ways, students are ‘allies’ but not major players in SI efforts. Their participation in these disparate areas of school life does not amount to a comprehensive commitment to involving students in decisions which affect them (Harber, 2010); and most importantly, as noted already, there is a lack of student involvement in decisions affecting the core business of schooling: teaching and learning. Rather, their participation is directed towards ‘safe’ areas ‘which do not have significant impact on the work of adults within the school’ (Fielding & Rudduck, 2005, p.3).

Schools in England typically grant students less responsibility and autonomy than they experience in other aspects of their lives (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000), and when asked, students express the wish to change structures which ‘cast them in a marginal role and limit their agency’ (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007, p.84). Increasing students’ participation and influence in school is ‘a developmental process...unfolding over time’ (MacBeath et al., 2008, p.30). It requires fostering students’ agency, and their trust in democratic principles and processes (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). At the staff level, it can require teachers relinquishing some control; this shift in power relations can be threatening. MacBeath et al. (2008, p.9) find that leadership is important in promoting ‘a culture of inquiry’, in which teachers and students gather and debate evidence, and feed into improvement planning. Most importantly, fostering student participation requires acting upon their stated preferences and decisions. Schools’ capacity to do so may be restricted by external policy requirements or accountability pressures (McIntyre et al., 2005; MacBeath et al., 2008).

Summary

The literature reviewed in this section demonstrates that students' learning is affected by conditions within the instructional triangle, embedded within the wider organisational context of the school (Bryk et al., 2010). In Anglo-American contexts, leaders of improving schools positively influence conditions within the instructional triangle by focusing on professional capacity building and instructional guidance, promoting a student-centred learning climate, and fostering community-school relations (ibid.). There is less evidence on the links between school leadership and the instructional triangle in developing countries (Oduro et al., 2007), although evidence suggests the importance of additional factors, such as securing material resources, and maximising student and teacher attendance.

School improvement entails learning to do things better at the individual and organisational level, which calls for a learning orientation across the school community, and the broad participation of all stakeholders in evaluating conditions and adapting practice for the better (Senge, 2000; Hopkins, 2001; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). This is supported by leadership which establishes collective expectations around improving students' learning, and shares responsibility for achieving this (Elmore, 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Day et al., 2009).

The literature reveals challenges to the adoption of a school-wide learning orientation, including external pressures for compliance with professional standards, narrowly-conceived performance measures, and self-evaluation which is limited to auditing compliance with external policy requirements (Pedder & MacBeath, 2008; Pedder et al., 2010). Learning is facilitated by open-ended forms of enquiry, and structures which promote collaboration, dialogue and debate (MacBeath et al., 2008; Deakin Crick et al., 2016). In South Africa, Setlalentoa (2013) found that most teachers' involvement in school evaluation was limited to auditing the school according to external inspection criteria, which offers fairly limited scope for organisational learning. School evaluation in Ethiopia is potentially more radical, since it involves students as well as teachers and parents; however, the policy has not been studied in practice to establish the learning which results from this process, and the extent to which it reflects government or school-level priorities and concerns.

The SI tradition is especially important for my study of schooling in Ethiopia due to its influence on recent policies in Ethiopia, such as the SIP and the CPD programmes, discussed previously. Research in this tradition indicates a number of facets of school life which are potentially important for understanding schooling in Ethiopia, especially: school leadership, its nature and distribution; stakeholder participation in school evaluation, decisions and priority-setting; and internal and external accountability systems. In so far as so little SI research has been carried out with schools in Ethiopia, I did not tie myself to these facets before undertaking fieldwork, but these ideas provided an initial framework on my entrance to the setting.

2.3 Ethnographic school research

This section reviews learnings from ethnographic school research, and the affordances and limitations of this approach, to inform my own study of schooling in Ethiopia. Ethnographic school research in England emerged in the 1960s from a University of Manchester project investigating social relations in schools. This led to case studies of different types of school: a secondary modern (Hargreaves, 1967), a boys' grammar school (Lacey, 1970); and later, a comprehensive school (Ball, 1981). These studies were concerned with the structuring of social relations and its effects on participants – students, in particular. By the 1970s and 80s the field had diversified, with ethnographic methods used to study classroom interactions (Delamont, 1983; Woods, 1983); the 'micro-political' struggle for power, status and control between teachers and senior management (Burgess, 1983; Ball, 1987); and the experiences, aspirations and social trajectories of specific groups of students distinguished by culture, class, gender or ethnicity (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1988). Ethnographic school research is a diverse field, with studies conducted around the world, many of which are unavailable in English (Gordon et al., 2001).

More than either of the two approaches reviewed above, the ethnographic tradition focuses on process, especially the routine activities through which school is experienced by participants, and the values and meanings participants attach to different aspects of school life. Ethnographic school research explores the structures and processes through which power, control and influence are cultivated and used in pursuit of different agendas and interests. Furthermore, ethnographers are concerned with a range of social outcomes and consequences of schooling that include but extend beyond measures and indicators

of academic participation and attainment which shaped, in their different ways, the foci and preoccupations of the two traditions considered previously in this chapter.

Ethnographers have typically entered schools as teachers (Hargreaves, 1967; Burgess, 1983; Pollard, 1985) or ancillary staff (Willis, 1977) to engage in participant observation. As staff members engaging in the daily life of the school, they recorded their experiences of events and interactions in fieldnotes, and gathered naturalistic data through open-ended interviews, lesson observations, and internal documents (Burgess, 1983). These methods were sometimes supplemented by more obtrusive data collection instruments such as questionnaires (Ball, 1981) or student diaries (Hargreaves, 1967). In this way, they gathered a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data, which was iteratively analysed through the course of the fieldwork (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Since a thorough review is beyond the scope and requirements of this study, this section focuses on the approaches and methods used in the above-mentioned ‘classic’ English studies, with supporting insights from Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa, where available. The review is structured around three broad aspects of school life which have been illuminated by ethnographic school research:

- Organisational structures and their effects on the lives of students
- Social reproduction and the school
- The school as an ‘arena of struggle’

These themes are explored in the following discussion.

Organisational structures and their effects on the lives of students

The effects of ability-banding on students’ experiences and school careers was the focus of two early case studies. Students at Hargreaves’ (1967) secondary modern and Lacey’s (1970) grammar school, were differentiated according to teachers’ evaluations of their academic ability, based on test data and reports from former teachers. Both researchers found that this differentiation of students into ability groups led to their differential treatment by teachers, and a resultant polarisation in their attitudes and orientation to schooling. These were landmark studies, important for understanding the ethnographic school research tradition, and so I will provide an account of the methods used. Both researchers used surveys to elicit systematic data on students’ views on lessons, teachers, and other students in their year group. Lessons were observed to gather data on patterns

of teacher/student interaction in high, middle and low ability classes; and through informal conversations over a number of years, the ethnographers gathered data pertaining to teachers' perceptions of different classes. Institutional documents were also collected, including records of attendance and detention.

Both researchers identified patterns of differential teacher expectations and treatment of students in different classes. For example, at Hargreaves' (1967) secondary modern, the top class, 4A, was taken on school trips, while the bottom class, 4D, was not. Differential treatment extended to the content and pace of lessons. In Maths lessons, 4A had to keep pace with the teacher, who drove them quickly through the curriculum; 4D was given repetitive drills from the textbook, and students who made mistakes were told to repeat the page, which hindered their progress. At both schools, students experienced systematically different expectations and treatment as a result of differentiation, which resulted in a cumulative divergence in their attitudes as they progressed through school. To illustrate this point with another example from Hargreaves' (1967) study, ability-banding powerfully influenced students' friendship choices and perceptions of each other. In sentence completion exercises, 4A expressed negative opinions of 4D ('the rough type, a bad lot...not willing to learn anything', p.70), and this disapproval was reciprocated ('bigheads they think they know everything', *ibid.*). Furthermore, polarisation also occurred *within* each class, so that popular students in 4A expressed pro-school values, whereas in 4D only unpopular students did so. As mentioned earlier, the *Fifteen Thousand Hours* study (Rutter et al., 1979) concluded that 'children's behaviour and attitudes are shaped and influenced by their experiences at school, and...the qualities of the school as a social institution' (p.179). The work conducted by Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) not only documented the effects of organisational structures on students' attitudes and behaviour, but also offered explanations of the means through which this occurred: through ability-band stereotyping, and differential curriculum and instructional practices.

Ability banding is not used in Ethiopian primary schools, but other organisational structures may exert a similarly powerful effect on students' lives. For example, in Ghana, Adzahlie-Mensah (2014) employed an ethnographic approach to study the power relations underpinning organisational structures and practices at a rural primary school. He found that teachers' unyielding demand for silence in class, their routine use of corporal punishment, and regular undermining of students' knowledge, led to students developing a sense that they were 'nobodies' (p.160).

Social reproduction and the school

Ethnographic school research also explains how macro level social structures, such as social class and gender relations, are reproduced at the micro level. In the English context, Willis' (1977) study of 'how working class kids get working class jobs' (p.1) is a good example of this. Previous studies had offered structural explanations for the reproduction of class. For example, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that schools shape students' aspirations and class-identification 'to the requirements of the social division of labour' (p.129), by socialising them into the unequal conditions of the industrial workplace. This occurs, they argued, through a correspondence between schools and the workplace in terms of hierarchical relations (principal, teacher, student = boss, foreman, worker), and the lack of control students experience in the classroom. As Giddens (1984) argued, such structural accounts of the reproduction of class erroneously attribute agency to a social construct: capitalism; whereas an adequate explanation of social reproduction should show how acts of individual agency lead to the reproduction of structural inequality. Willis (1977) achieved this in his ethnographic study of twelve anti-school white working class boys ('the lads') at a secondary modern. Collecting data through participant observation in lessons and around the school, Willis (1977) developed an account of their culture and perspectives, and how their purposive actions, informed by a partial understanding of their situation, led them to willingly accept low-paid jobs.

Willis (1977) found that 'the lads' culture drew 'material for resistance' (p.19) from the world of working class male adults. Factory workers resisted authority in the workplace, influencing the allocation of tasks and the rate of production. Similarly, 'the lads' asserted their will in school by hijacking lessons to 'have a laff', and creating their own timetable by wandering in and out of class. Far from being malleable recipients of social engineering, 'the lads' used school for their own purposes: meeting friends and entertaining themselves.

PW: What's the last time you've done some writing?

Will: Writing?

Fuzz: Oh are, last time was in careers, 'cos I writ 'yes' on a piece of paper, that broke my heart.

PW: Why did it break your heart?

Fuzz: I mean to write, 'cos I was going to try and go through the term without

writing anything. ‘Cos since we’ve cum back, I ain’t dun nothing [it was half way through term]. (ibid., p.27)

‘The lads’ did not conform to the academic purpose of the school, and felt superior to students who did. Taking their cue from the working class adults they respect, they also looked down on teachers who had spent their lives in school and college (‘What do they know, telling us?’ p.39). Outside school, ‘the lads’ took on paid employment to enable them to engage in adult activities – socialising at the pub and contributing to the household budget. It was not, then, state coercion or the power of capitalist ideology which led ‘the lads’ into low-paid jobs, but their own wishes, informed by their values and limited knowledge of alternatives. Willis (1977, p.3) notes that their ‘self-damnation...is experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance.’ In affirming their own values and rejecting teachers’ definitions of appropriate behaviour, ‘the lads’ act purposefully ‘within conditions of bounded knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1984, p.294); their irrevocable commitment to manual labour is an ‘unintended consequence’ (ibid.).

Compared to the previously-discussed studies of the effects of differentiation, Willis (1977) offers greater insight into the perspectives of students on their own terms rather than those of the school establishment. By focusing on ‘the lads’ culture and agency, his account transcends more structural explanations of the processes and outcomes of schooling. One limitation of the study is its narrow focus on anti-school boys, when presumably many pro-school boys at the secondary modern also went on to take working class jobs. Subsequent studies addressed this limitation by using multiple case studies. For example, Mac an Ghaill (1988) studied academically-oriented black female students, as well as anti-school black males.

The school as an ‘arena of struggle’

In contrast to the rational system perspective on the school offered by SER (‘unity of purpose’, ‘efficient organisation’, see Box 2.1), ethnographic research has conceived the school as an ‘arena of struggle’, ‘riven with actual and potential conflict between members...poorly coordinated...[and] ideologically diverse’ (Ball, 1987, p.19). Ethnographers have sought to investigate divergence, conflict and negotiation in the school (Ball, 1987). This section draws from a rich body of ethnographic research

focusing on conflict and negotiation between teachers and students in the classroom, and amongst staff in the wider school.

In the classroom

Several studies make use of the notion of ‘strategies’ to refer to the actions of teachers and students in pursuing their interests in the context of the school or classroom (Delamont, 1983; Woods, 1990; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2014). Individuals pursue their interests in condition of external constraint (Woods, 1983, p.104):

the individual weighs one prospect against another in the light of the situation and resources available, and makes a series of decisions to achieve a modicum of ends.

In English primary school classrooms, Pollard (1985) identified the primary interests of teachers as: retaining autonomy, controlling the workload, avoiding stress, maximising enjoyment and maintaining their self-image. Instruction and order, he argued, were secondary interests, pursued to advance these primary interests. In a study of a private girls’ secondary school in England, Delamont (1983, p.115) found that a common teacher strategy was ‘to impose her definition of the situation by talking most of the time.’ Students, on the other hand, sought to:

find out what the teacher wants and give it to her – assuming that they can see a pay-off for themselves, in terms of grades, eventual jobs, or peace and quiet. When there is no discernible benefit to be had by giving the teacher what she wants, ‘disruptive behaviour’ is likely to become the major strategy. (ibid., p.122)

In a synthesis of findings from several ethnographic studies in England, Woods (1983) provided a classification of strategies used by students who are oppositional, supportive and detached (i.e. indifferent) to the teacher-defined purposes of the school (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Students’ orientations and strategies

Strategies	Oppositional	Supportive	Detached
Working		X	X
Bunking off	X		X
Having a laugh	X	X	X
Mucking about	X		X

Flirting		X	
Making a noise	X		
Being friendly		X	
Indulgence	X	X	
Having a chat	X		X
Threat/bribery	X		
Sussing out	X		

(Source: Woods, 1983, p.122)

This classification highlights that the same observable behaviour can result from different underlying motivations. For example, ‘bunking off’ is a strategy of students seeking to actively resist the authority of the teacher (e.g. ‘the lads’), as well as those indifferent to the formal purposes of the school. In Ghana, Adzahlie-Mensah (2014) found that a common student strategy for resisting teacher authority is *silence*: students pretend not hear instructions they do not wish to follow. The power of this strategy derives from teachers’ uncertainty over whether or not the student is intentionally rebelling, or did not hear the instruction (p.190).

In the school

Ball (1987) advances a micro-political perspective on the school, focusing on conflict, interests, goal diversity, ideological dispute, political activity, control and power amongst staff. This is in keeping with his portrayal of the school as an ‘arena of struggle’, where resources and status are contested by different individuals and interest groups. Many aspects of this perspective are evident in Burgess’ (1983) study of a Catholic comprehensive school in England. Burgess (1983) identified power imbalances and struggles between different groups of teachers: pastoral houses/academic departments, regular/non-academic subjects, Catholic/non-Catholic, old/young. The measure of each group’s influence was its capacity to impose its definition of the situation on others (cf. Delamont, 1983, discussed above), which generally occurred below the formal level of the organisation. For example, the remits of pastoral houses and academic departments were formally specified by the headteacher, but the teachers in each body ‘quickly established their own patterns of activity...their own standards of acceptable work and conduct’ (Burgess, 1983, p.80). Behind the scenes, the pastoral head wrote to the headteacher to downplay the importance of students’ academics over their ethical development, and academic staff reassured themselves that pastoral staff were not ‘real teachers’. The students themselves were a battleground in this struggle, as the competing sides sought to establish different rules, expectations and educational aims.

In Ball's (1981) study of a comprehensive school, the headteacher's proposal to introduce mixed-ability groupings across the school (as advocated by Lacey, 1970) resulted in open conflict along departmental lines. The English Department championed the policy on the grounds of equality of opportunity, whereas the Maths Department opposed it on pedagogical grounds, arguing that the nature of their subject matter demanded ability banding. Ultimately, in order to overcome departmental opposition, the headteacher made concessions which effectively allowed some departments to retain their existing groupings. In other words, the headteacher was able to implement this whole-school policy only by agreeing not to enforce it upon reluctant departments. As Ball (1987, p.40) observes, 'Changes in policy should not be confused with changes in practice. In the micro-politics of the school, it is most often the former which is at stake.' Ball's work (1981, 1987) emphasises the importance of distinguishing between policy and practice, and not conflating the two. This is an especially important insight for researching schooling in Ethiopia, where nationally-mandated policies draw from foreign notions of school improvement (Mitchell, 2015a) that have not been studied in practice from the perspective of school-level actors.

Summary

The research reviewed in this section reveals the significant and unintended effects that the structures, practices and relations in schools can have on students' lives (Hargreaves, 1967; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2014). These studies demonstrate the importance of looking beyond structural explanations for social inequalities, to consider the perspectives and agency of different groups in school – particularly students, whose uses of the school may be at odds with the purposes expressed by teachers and policy-makers (Willis, 1977). These studies challenge rational organisational models of the school by depicting it as an 'arena of struggle', characterised by goal diversity, conflict and ongoing negotiation (Ball, 1981, 1987). This indicates the importance of recognising diverse interests and agendas pursued by different groups in different social contexts, for example, the classroom (Woods, 1983; Delamont, 1983; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2014), the staffroom (Woods, 1979) and staff meetings (Burgess, 1983; Ball, 1987).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to undertake a broad review of school research to inform my study of schooling in Ethiopia. I considered the approaches and methods of the three

major traditions of school research, and identified findings which may be relevant to my own study. This review influenced the way I formulated my research focus, as I explain below.

SER is a means of investigating the variable effectiveness of schools within a sample. The question is: effectiveness at what, for whom, by whose criteria? In the Ethiopian context, there is insufficient knowledge of the desired outcomes of schooling from the perspectives of different stakeholders; this must be addressed in order to establish whose agendas are served by the school.

The findings from SI research are particularly important in light of this tradition's influence on recent national policies in Ethiopia, such as the provision for community participation in school management structures, and processes of evaluation and consultation. SI research points to the importance of attending to leadership and its distribution in school, and the nature of internal and external accountability systems. SI research also demonstrates that SSE may be a useful stimulus for learning, and a basis for school improvement. However, evaluation may be more or less open; at its most restricted, it amounts to an auditing exercise according to externally-specified quality criteria. Similarly, consultation may be directed towards 'safe' issues, skirting the core business of teaching and learning, and the expressed preferences of the consultees may not be acted upon (Fielding & Rudduck, 2005; MacBeath et al., 2008). In the Ethiopian context, it is important to establish whether stakeholders' participation in structures and processes of evaluation, consultation and decision-making enables them to influence conditions in school in ways that are significant to them.

Ethnographic research reviewed in this chapter highlights the diversity of interests and agendas which different participants pursue through the school. It points to the divergence and conflict which may underlie routine activities in different settings, and how power relations affect the processes of struggle, negotiation and control (Ball, 1981, 1987; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2014).

In light of these insights, the broad questions that shaped the initial development of my study in the Ethiopian primary school context were:

1. What range of interests and agendas are pursued through the school by different groups within the school community?

2. How are the participation and influence of different groups achieved and mediated by structures and processes in the school?

The following chapter provides an account of my research strategy for addressing these questions.

Chapter 3: Biography of an ethnographic case study

Introduction

Developing an approach to investigate the agendas, participation and influence of different stakeholders in school required an early decision on the basic research design. I discounted survey research, since the selection of items for a survey requires an empirical or theoretical basis, and there was insufficient research in this context on which to base such decisions. My review of Ethiopian school research (1.3.2) indicated the need for more exploratory work, which suggested the value of working qualitatively and inductively. I could have opted to work across several regions, but the practical challenges of doing so were significant (requiring contacts in each location, and clearance from each Regional Education Bureau [REB]). Due to my past experience and ongoing personal connections in Tigray, I opted to focus on this region. I could have worked broadly across multiple sites, but reasoned that what I might gain in breadth, I would lose in depth; and an investigation of the interests, agendas and influence of different groups would benefit from a deep understanding of the social setting, the individuals concerned, and their activities over time. For these reasons, I decided to conduct an ethnographic case study of a single school, like the research reviewed in the previous chapter (e.g. Hargreaves, 1967; Ball, 1981; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2014).

This chapter offers a ‘research biography’ of this ethnographic case study, described by Ball (1990) as:

a reflexive account of the conduct of the research which, by drawing on fieldnotes and reflections, recounts the processes, problems, choices, and errors which describe the fieldwork upon which the substantive account is based.
(p.170)

This chapter is organised into three sections which broadly reflect the chronology of the study: 3.1 Pre-fieldwork; 3.2 Fieldwork; 3.3 Post-fieldwork.

3.1 Pre-fieldwork

Aims and objectives

In an under-researched national policy context which calls for increased community participation in school leadership and management, this study aims to develop empirical

and theoretical insights into the purposes attached to the school by constituents of a single school community, and the nature of their participation and influence in school. These aims are encapsulated in the following objectives:

- Develop understandings of the meanings attached to recurrent activities and relationships in the school
- Investigate the priorities, interests and agendas of different groups in school
- Identify modes of participation and influence at key sites within the school community
- Identify structures and processes by which management, teachers, students and parents participate in school and sub-school-level decision-making
- Identify the capacity of different groups to influence conditions in school, and areas resistant to school-level influence
- Develop theorised understandings of schooling in Tigray and make recommendations regarding national, regional *woreda* and school-level policy

Theoretical framework

I found Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration helpful in clarifying relations between structure and agency when investigating the modes of participation and influence in school. Giddens (1984) proposed that social systems are constituted through interactions between structure and agency. Structures, for Giddens, are the 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems' (p.377). In participating in a social activity – singing the national anthem, doing homework – an individual draws upon structural knowledge pertaining to language, concepts, actions, values and beliefs. To the extent that *raising a hand to answer the teacher* is not mistaken for *pointing at the ceiling*, this is reliant on 'mutual knowledge' of structures within the community through which an actor intends his or her action to be meaningful to others. For Archer (2010), structures pre-exist the actions of individuals, but are wholly dependent upon social action for their reproduction and transformation. Participants may be willing and able to articulate *some* aspects of their structural knowledge to a researcher (Prus, 1996), but most knowledge is 'practical in character...not directly accessible to the consciousness of actors' (Giddens, 1984, p.4). In their daily routines and interactions, actors constantly utilise tacit knowledge which they are unable to articulate. In structuration theory, 'practical consciousness' is the term given to the structural knowledge possessed tacitly by an actor, which he or she acts upon without being able to describe. It is through

participation in the routines and daily activities of a community that actors reproduce and transform the social structures within that community or social system.

The significance of structuration theory lies in its conceptual framework and analysis, which led me to focus on understanding and describing recurrent activities, and the meanings attached to them. It was important that I attended to what participants *did*, as well as what they *said* about what they did. Methodologically, this pointed to the importance of focusing on agents' routine practices in the 'durée' of the life of the school. This entailed developing an ethnographic strategy for supporting participants to develop accounts of their experiences, and combining these with fieldnotes recording observable aspects of their participation in school life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

I understood my task as researcher was not to make absolute and incontrovertible knowledge claims about the social system under investigation, but rather to develop a valid, if imperfect, representation of the social world of the school (Hammersley, 1992; Maxwell, 2012). My understanding of 'knowledge' was consistent with Hammersley's 'subtle realist' position: knowledge consists of 'beliefs about whose validity we are reasonably confident' (Hammersley, 1992, p.50). I recognised that confidence in the validity of my knowledge claims would hinge upon the systematic and transparent nature of the inquiry (Stenhouse, 1975), the presentation of evidence and clarity of argument, and the suitability of the procedures for data collection, verification and analysis. The processes involved in developing and validating different datasets are detailed in 3.2.

Developing an ethnographic approach

Ethnography is an open-ended and iterative approach to social research (Delamont, 2012) with the end goal of cultural description and interpretation (Wolcott, 1985, 2008). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) identify five common characteristics of ethnography:

- Participants' actions and accounts are studied first-hand in their social context, 'in the field'
- Data are drawn from a range of sources, including participant observation, informal conversations, and documents used/produced in the field
- Data collection is guided by a 'loose' research design, whereby the concepts, codes or categories used to interpret data emerge from the iterative processes of data collection and analysis
- The research focus is limited to one or a few cases, to enable a fine-grained study

- Reports include descriptions, explanations and theories of the ‘meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices’ (ibid., p.3), and statistical analysis tends to play a secondary role

A basic assumption of the ethnographic approach is that the closer a researcher gets to the conditions in which meanings are attributed ‘to objects and events, the more accurate...descriptions of those meanings are likely to be’ (Becker, 1996, p.58). A distinctive affordance of this approach for understanding schools is that it supports the development of accounts of school activities which are grounded in the perspectives and intentions of teachers and students, rather than the imposition of external frames of reference which might ill-reflect the experiences of those in the school community.

Ethnography developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for the study of non-western, ‘pre-literate’ societies in the context of (western) social anthropology (Aull Davies, 1999). This involved an ethnographer travelling to a distant land to study the language, behaviour and customs of a people while living for a year or more alongside those she/he was studying (ibid.). In the current study, several aspects of the situation gravitated against my adopting this more anthropologically-oriented approach, termed ‘classical’ or ‘conventional’ ethnography (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Knoblauch, 2005). In educational settings, few studies follow this conventional model, which involves spending a year or more living amongst people in the field (Hammersley, 2006). That schools’ participants tend to live outside the compound, which is open for a limited number of hours during the day, means that this anthropological approach generally requires adaptation to the context – although there are notable exceptions, such as Wolcott’s (1967) study, *A Kwakiutl Village and School*, where the ethnographer lived in the schoolhouse.

Jeffrey and Troman (2004) suggest that ethnographic work in schools often makes use of a ‘selective intermittent time mode’ (p.540), with a flexible approach to visiting the site based on a developing focus and the identification of ‘specific rich contexts for examination and interpretation’ (ibid.). This ‘selective intermittent’ use of time is evident in other school case studies (e.g. Ball, 1981; Burgess, 1983). As a PhD student at the University of Leicester I found the timeframe for doctoral studies insufficient for a full year’s fieldwork, especially given my personal development needs as a novice researcher and my Graduate Teaching Assistant contract, which allocated 20% of my time to teaching throughout the course of my PhD, including my fieldwork ‘year’.

Personal factors also diverged from the conventional model. Although I was a foreigner in Tigray, I was not a ‘stranger’ to schools in Tigray (Agar, 2008), having spent 2 years working on professional development programmes with directors, teachers, supervisors and teacher educators from 2007-2009. My research interests grew from these experiences in the sector. Furthermore, prior to undertaking fieldwork I had written a review article on education policy and research in Ethiopia, which considered the responsibilities of different groups within the nationally-mandated school improvement programme (Mitchell, 2015a). As a result, I entered the field with a broad but identifiable research focus: the range of interests and agendas which different groups pursued through the school, and the ways in which their participation and influence were achieved and mediated by structures and processes in school. This pushed the study towards a more problem-based, ‘focused ethnography’ (Knoblauch, 2005). This term was coined to describe a trend in recent decades in fields such as education, health and management (Hammersley, 2006, p.6; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p.253). Focused ethnography occurs over a shorter time period than conventional ethnography, often in one’s own society, and makes use of intensive data collection to address ‘specific aspects of fields in highly differentiated organisations’ (Knoblauch, 2005, p.4). The ‘focus’ in focused ethnography is enabled by prior ‘knowledge of the field of which it forms a part’ (ibid., p.20). Most ethnographic studies of schools broadly fit within with Knoblauch’s (2005) conception of focused ethnography (e.g. Lacey, 1970; Burgess, 1983), and mine can be located similarly, somewhere on the borders between focused and conventional ethnography.

It was at this early design stage that I considered and rejected taking a ‘critical’ approach. A critical approach is ‘governed by an emancipatory interest in increasing human autonomy from social constraint’ (Hammersley, 2003, p.9). Critical ethnographers aim to ‘empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices’ (McLaren, 1994, p.168). This is an increasingly common stance in education research, which has led to, for example, overtly anti-racist and feminist studies (e.g. Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Happel, 2012). In deciding against a critical approach I was guided by my past experience of working at a college in Tigray. With some years’ hindsight I judged many of my interventions aimed at challenging the status quo to have been misguided. To give a single example, one resource which my former-colleague Micheal Abraham and I translated into Tigrigna for use in schools was a diagnostic instrument for teachers to

identify their preferred learning style – visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. This was a popular workshop activity, and teachers told us it was a revelation: they had not realised that these different learning styles existed! A few years later I read a paper entitled ‘*VAK or VAK-uous? Towards the trivialisation of learning and the death of scholarship*’ (Sharp et al., 2008) which challenged the assumptions underlying this workshop activity. I realised that future well-meaning interventions should be guided by greater knowledge of what was actually occurring in schools in Tigray, rather than imported ideas for improvement.

School research in Ethiopia tends to take a deficit view on local practices (Mitchell, 2015a, pp.337-9), using foreign criteria to report on ‘what’s *not* happening’ (e.g. DeStefano & Elaheebocus, 2010; Piper, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). Such accounts do not attend to local actors’ interpretations of relationships and activities in school, or give a sense of what teachers and others are trying to achieve, or what is possible and desirable in the context. I reasoned that a descriptive study could offer greater insights into local practices and better inform future development efforts. The appreciative stance I took is similar to that advanced by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) in her account of ‘portraiture’, which she pioneered, described as ‘an approach to inquiry which resists the more typical social science preoccupation with documenting pathology and suggesting remedies’ (p.141). This study was motivated by a ‘search for goodness’ (ibid.), rather than pathology.

It was at this early stage, too, that I opted for a case study research design. Case study is:

an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. (Merriam, 1988, p.16)

the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. (Stake, 1995, p.xi).

Thomas (2011) argues that case study comprises two elements: a subject – ‘wherein the parameters of particularity are set by spatial, temporal, personal, organizational, or other factors’ (p.512) – and an object, or analytical frame, according to which the case may be said to be ‘a case of something’ (ibid.). In these terms, Ketema School³ is the subject of this study, and the agendas, participation and influence of different groups its objects. As

³ Names of schools and individuals are pseudonymous.

I go on to discuss, this study involves nested case studies (of a particular class, and meetings in school) within the overarching case study frame.

Having introduced the aims of the study, and the decisions which underpinned my adoption of a focused ethnographic approach to produce a descriptive case study, I turn now to a framework for ethical analysis which informed my planning from the early stages.

A framework for ethical analysis

Ethical planning was especially important given the cross-cultural nature of this study, which involved negotiating codified, informal and tacit ethical principles held by myself and other participants in the study, professional associations (e.g. BERA, 2011), and legal codes in Ethiopia and the UK – each of which required consideration. My planning was informed by a published framework for ethical analysis in educational research (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009). The framework draws attention to four ethical dimensions for evaluating research activities and researcher conduct: deontological, consequential, relational and ecological ethics. From a *deontological* perspective, actions are judged according to their adherence to (supposedly universal) principles such as honesty and fairness. From a *consequential* perspective, actions are judged by their consequences. *Relational* ethics directs attention to the immediate social context in the field, and the quality of relationships developed with participants. *Ecological* ethics refers to the broader contexts of the research – institutional, regional, national, disciplinary. As Stuchbury and Fox (2009) argue, these dimensions provide a structure for systematic ethical thinking and planning which goes beyond compliance with institutional and professional guidelines. The framework also supports ongoing ethical analysis and decision-making in the field, which is a necessary aspect of ethnographic practice (Burgess, 1989). At relevant points in the chapter I highlight ethical dimensions of research decisions with reference to this framework.

Having introduced the basic elements of this ethnographic case study, I now turn to the fieldwork and data collection methods, and discuss how these plans were enacted in the field.

3.2 The fieldwork

This study involved three visits to Tigray, a brief scoping trip, followed by two three-month periods of data collection.

- *Scoping trip* – 2 weeks in October 2013
- *1st period of data collection* – 12 weeks (07/04/14 – 27/06/14)
- *2nd period of data collection* – 12 weeks (15/09/14 – 02/12/14)

My work across these three periods is described in the sections which follow.

3.2.1 Scoping trip

In October 2013 I spent two weeks in Tigray, visiting offices and schools to meet officials, directors and teachers for the purpose of:

- Securing permission from the REB and *Woreda* Education Office (WEO) to undertake the study
- Selecting a case study school, and negotiating initial access with the Director
- Trialling my data collection methods (i.e. use of fieldnotes to collect observational and participant account data [see Figure 3.1])
- Informing the development of my research design
- Identifying personal development needs in relation to the planned study

Securing permission to study in the region and the *woreda* (local authority) involved formal bureaucratic and informal social processes; a mixture of planning and luck. I visited the Tigray REB office in the regional capital with a signed and stamped letter of introduction from the University of Leicester. This was a necessary but insufficient condition for receiving authorisation for research in the region. In order to respect local protocols (ecological ethics), I needed approval from someone at the REB. I was fortunate to find an official who had supervised my work at the college five years previously. He authorised the study and provided letters of introduction from the REB to two *woredas*⁴, one rural, one urban (see Appendix 2).

The rural *woreda* was in a malarial area, and since it was not long since the Summer rain, on reflection I decided against this trip, and travelled instead to the urban *woreda*. On visiting the *Woreda* Education Office (WEO) I met another former colleague with whom

⁴ For ease of reading, Tigrigna words are pluralised with an ‘s’ throughout the thesis (after Hendrie, 1999).

I had worked on a supervisor coaching programme five years previously (reported in Mitchell, 2012). He was now the Head of the WEO in a middle-sized town, which included two high schools and 18 government primary schools. He welcomed my proposed case study of a school in the *woreda*, suggested the names of several schools I might visit, and gave me letters of introduction with which I could approach directors.

Selecting a case

The basis for selecting a site for case study research should be clear and defensible, for example, on the grounds that it is a prime or unusual example of something (Walford, 2008). This requires prior knowledge of the population from which the selection is to be made, and a theoretical justification for picking one school over another: I had neither. The WEO Head particularly recommended I visit Hadinet School, which he said was a ‘model school’, with the highest Grade 8 results in town. I visited Hadinet three times during the scoping trip, observed an English lesson and interviewed the Director to ask for his explanation of the school’s success. Following this discussion, I judged that it would indeed be an interesting site for study, but decided against it, since it would be difficult to protect the identity of this high-profile school.

I visited 6 schools, observed one or more lessons at each, and talked with teachers and the director; at one, no-one from management was available to see me. One evening I met an old friend at a cafe who introduced me to his friend Dawit, who was the Director of Ketema School. Although this was a social occasion, Dawit immediately began telling me about his school, and had invited me to visit even before I had the chance to ask. I visited Ketema twice during the scoping trip, spoke with the Director and teachers, received a tour of the compound, and observed a few lessons. The teachers I met were friendly and made time to speak to me, and the Director expressed a willingness to host the study. My selection of Ketema as a site of study was not made according to strict theoretical criteria (Walford, 2008), but partly because it had a lower profile than Hadinet (making it easier to protect its identity). Its academic attainment profile was closer to the *woreda* mean (making it more ‘typical’). Furthermore, the friendly reception I had received seemed to present an opportunity for maximising learning from the case (Stake, 1995) and, I hoped, ‘collect[ing] the richest possible data’ (Lofland et al., 2006, p.15). That Director Dawit had *invited* me to visit the school also felt symbolically important,

and the fact that we had a close mutual friend promoted an initial degree of trust which seemed conducive to learning about the case.

Post scoping trip

Developing an initial plan

On arriving back in the UK in November 2013 I worked on my advanced postgraduate (APG) report and ethics application. In keeping with the exploratory purpose of the study, I opted for a ‘loose’, inductive research design (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in anticipation of adapting my initial plans based on conditions and opportunities as they arose during the course of the fieldwork. The scoping trip had sensitised me to six data sources relevant to my research focus:

- Activities (e.g. lessons, flag ceremony)
- Participants’ talk in action (e.g. at meetings, during group work in lessons)
- Participant accounts (i.e. explanations to the researcher)
- Institutional texts (e.g. school evaluation reports, students’ work)
- Physical settings (e.g. staffroom, school field)
- Direct experience through participant observation

In my APG report I summarised my research design as follows:

I have opted to adopt an ethnographic mode of inquiry, and limit my investigation to the intensive study of a single urban school (Ketema Elementary) in Tigray region...Participant observation and interviews will be used to collect data, recorded in fieldnotes.

The first weeks at Ketema will be a period of familiarisation in which I will use general observations and interviews to identify strategic areas for exploring processes in the school (Lacey, 1970; Ball, 1981). Classroom observations will initially focus on Second Cycle (Grades 5-8) English lessons, before extending to other grades and subjects. Outside the classroom I will systematically investigate what appear to be important contexts of [participation] and influence in the school—the staffroom, the Director’s office, the playground; and progressively focus-in on salient processes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), using theoretical sampling to inform data collection for developing concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

After 1-3 months I will start work as a part-time English teacher to...develop an 'intimate familiarity' (Lofland et al., 2006) with the culture of the school, and gain greater acceptance from the community (Okely, 2012). Throughout the fieldwork, interviews with teachers, the Director and visiting WEO staff will be conducted by myself, and with the assistance of an interpreter for students.

On re-reading this report shortly after completing my fieldwork I found that events had largely occurred as outlined above, with the exception that I had not taken on a teaching role. My intention had been to follow other school ethnographers by taking an active participant role in the school (Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1977; Ball, 1981; Mac an Ghaill, 1988), which I hoped would reciprocate for the school's hospitality (i.e. relational ethics), and facilitate data collection. However, at my APG panel review (January 2014) I was advised against taking on a teaching role in case this hindered my fieldwork, for example, by positioning me in ways that limited access to certain informant groups such as students (as Hargreaves [1967] had reported in his study). 'Find another way to reciprocate,' I was advised. This turned out to be good advice, as I later realised; in addition to the problem of identifying too closely with the staffroom, combining teacher and researcher roles would have severely compromised my data collection and analysis in the field due to time pressures (discussed in 3.2.2).

After receiving approval from the APG committee I booked my visa and flights for the beginning of April 2014. I would have preferred to spend eight months in the field (two 4 month blocks), but visa restrictions precluded me from spending more than three consecutive months at a time (cf. Ayers, 2014), and so I adapted my schedule as described above (3.2).

Reflecting on the scoping trip: developing a fieldnotes strategy

The months prior to my departure were an important time for reflecting on my experiences from the scoping trip and making further preparations for the study. On re-reading my fieldnotes (FNs) I found that neither participant accounts (e.g. my conversations with WEO staff and directors) nor my data collection path had been documented adequately. I had frequently failed to distinguish between verbatim dialogue and my own summaries of conversations. Furthermore, I had not provided a rationale for my movements in the field, which made it difficult to reconstruct what had happened and why. It was imperative for me to develop a system for recording and managing FNs, since

these would be at the heart of my study. Since I anticipated producing a large quantity of written data, I needed a system for making the FNs easily navigable and safe from loss or damage. I opted to record the FNs electronically, so that it would be retrievable even if my notebooks were lost or damaged. Microsoft Word has limited functionality to support qualitative data analysis: tables can be sorted by column, and the search function can be used to locate text (La Pelle, 2004). At this stage I was reluctant to become reliant on anything beyond the most basic and easily available software in case my laptop was lost or damaged in the field. For this reason, I opted to use Word, and developed the following template based on my analysis of notes from my scoping trip:

Date	FN#	Location code	Notes

I planned to make handwritten fieldnotes during participant observation, and type these into the Word file each day. Except in rare circumstances (i.e. extended powercuts, physical exhaustion), I was able to maintain this work pattern throughout the fieldwork. An unanticipated advantage of using this template was that it facilitated the subsequent migration of the case data to Atlas.ti (discussed in 3.3).

During this period I read Carspecken's (1995) *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, which influenced the style of my FNs. Carspecken advocates the use of 'low inference' vocabulary. This made typing FNs time-intensive, but helped me to mentally re-construct fieldwork experiences a year after I had left the school.

Another Word file I developed at this time was the reflexive log (RL). In the field I made 'thinking notes', separate from my observational notes, which I typed and developed in the RL. This included analytic memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), self-doubts (Ball, 1990), the rationale for decisions, and plans for further data collection paths and strategies. Like the FNs, the RL also used a template and was recorded chronologically, but related to my own thinking rather than data from the school; it was a means of promoting and capturing thinking through writing (Moon, 1999). Many of the concepts I went on to develop through formal analysis had their origins in work begun in the RL. Another important Word document I developed prior to fieldwork was entitled 'Data collection path', and contained a chronological record of my participant observation activities each day, and a summary of significant events at the end of each week. This proved to be essential for keeping track of events.

Studying Tigrigna

The scoping trip had indicated the necessity of improving my Tigrigna, the regional language of Tigray and the working language of the school. Tigrigna is a Semitic language with its own script. It is a complex language, with, for example, distinct ways of greeting a girl, a boy, a mixed-gender group of children, a group of female elders, etc. There are limited materials available for learning Tigrigna. I decided to prioritise spoken Tigrigna, and dispense with learning the script altogether. For the three months prior to my departure I studied for 1-2 hours every day using a Peace Corps training manual. I found learning Tigrigna challenging but enjoyable, and substantially improved my capacity through daily study. However, once in the field I lacked time to study the language for 1-2 hours each day, and so my spoken Tigrigna never progressed beyond the beginner's stage.

3.2.2 First period of data collection

The first period of data collection (1PDC) lasted from 07/04/14 – 27/06/14, which corresponded to the final three months of the 2013/4 school year. Over this period I spent a total of 158 hours collecting data through participant observation in and around the school (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Hours of participant observation during 1PDC

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Hours	15	9	13	10	13	19	13	15	16	2	19	14

I tended to spend two to three hours in school each day, with the exception of Week 10, when the Grade 8 national exams took place. The shortest data collection sessions lasted around an hour; the longest were around 6 hours, when I attended meetings or ceremonies. Typing my fieldnotes (FNs) after each data collection session took almost twice as long as I had spent in the field, sometimes longer if it involved substantial transcription. I typed my FN's immediately after leaving the field, slept when I had finished, and returned to school the next day. When I was not typing my FN's, I was re-reading and analysing them; this was full-time work, seven days a week. When there was too much to type-up I avoided further data collection until I had processed the previous session (Wolcott, 1995). During 1PDC I took two days off from data collection, once by design, to catch up on typing, and once from exhaustion. Although I was working hard, I looked like a man of

leisure – spending a few hours in school each day, before going home ‘to rest’. Teachers mocked me about this: ‘You have an appointment with your bed!’

I rented a room in a family compound 15 minutes from the school. I wore an old grey or brown suit, like a member of management or an older teacher. I carried my data collection tools with me at all times: biro, notebook, watch, a discrete voice recorder, and my smartphone which I used for photographs. In my backpack I carried tissues, hand sanitizer, water bottle, and a hat, which was necessary for the walk to school.

Familiarisation: the first week

The familiarisation stage of my fieldwork lasted for most of 1PDC, but I will discuss important methodological aspects of the familiarisation stage with reference to my first week in school.

	Morning	Afternoon
Mon 07/04/14	8.30-9.30am - Office: meet Vice Directors - Lesson observation: G8 English	
Tue 08/04/14	7.45-11.25am - Flag ceremony - Lesson observation: G7 English - Cafe - Lesson observation: G6 English - Staffroom at Break - Lesson observation: G5 English	
Wed 09/04/14	8.00-10.00am - Staffroom - Cafe - Library - Store	12.40-3.15pm - Staffroom - Cafe - Staffroom: coffee ceremony
Thur 10/04/14	7.50-9.10am - Staffroom - Lesson observation: G6 English	1.00-3.10pm - Cafe - Staffroom - Lesson observation: G7 English
Fri 11/04/14	7.55-10.20am - Lesson observation: G7 Maths - Cafe - Lesson observation: G5 English - Cafe	

When I arrived at Ketema that first Monday morning I went to the office, where I met Vice Directors (VDs) Haftom and Yesuf, who had not been expecting me. I had planned to introduce myself and my research at a staff meeting, and had prepared a written statement for this purpose. However, the VDs told me that Director Dawit was out-of-

town for training for the next fortnight.⁵ They phoned him to check that I had authorisation to be there, and Dawit confirmed this. He welcomed me back, and told me that the VDs would make all necessary arrangements. After this conversation, Haftom asked me if I understood the local language. I told him in well-rehearsed Tigrigna that my language was poor, but I was studying every day from a book, and would improve little by little. He advised me to observe an English lesson, and escorted me to a Grade 8 classroom, where I met a teacher I recognised from the scoping trip.

When I say that this was a period of *familiarisation*, I mean that I was not yet acquainted with the basic patterns of activity and relations in school. Rock (2001, p.34) has described data collection at this stage of fieldwork as ‘omnivorous’:

One is not in a position to judge what is useful and what is not...One is building up a skein of materials whose import is emergent and changing, whose significance will be determined by things as yet unseen and unthought, which may form a critical mass whose significance will become clear, but one cannot now make much sense of them.

On my second day I arrived at school early enough to observe the flag ceremony, before continuing to observe Second Cycle (i.e. Grades 5-8) English lessons. Since each grade was taught by a different teacher, I gradually expanded my circle of acquaintances. After observing a lesson, I talked with the teacher, or if she/he were busy I returned to the staffroom. If I found someone, I would strike up a conversation; if I was alone, I would consolidate my notes, and start mapping the room. In this way I slowly made my way around the school, mapping the staffroom, the library, and introducing myself to teachers I met, who introduced me to others.

The social trajectory: developing relationships

As Wolcott (1980, p.354) advises: ‘Nothing is to be regarded as trivial that is not trivial to the host or hosts.’ A lot of time was spent in the cafe that first week, where teachers taught me phrases in Tigrigna, and discussed the language’s similarities and differences with Amharic and Arabic. Teachers told me about policies and problems in school: their salaries, class sizes, students’ backgrounds. They asked me about English Premier League football (about which I knew little), schools in England, places I had visited, and mutual

⁵ I did not attend a staff meeting until 5 weeks later, when Director Dawit formally introduced me to the staff. My social position was already fairly established by this point.

acquaintances. I recorded these conversations in my FNs. This was the start of the ‘social’ trajectory of my fieldwork (Ball, 1990): I was developing the relationships necessary for generating data relevant to my research focus, and which would subsequently be useful for pursuing the ‘technical’ trajectory of my fieldwork. An ethnographic approach calls for progressive focusing, which has been likened to a funnel; I was at the broad end of this funnel, my technical goals at their least specified. At this early stage of fieldwork I did not know that formal meetings and routine classroom activities were going to prove important ‘rich contexts’ for my study (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p.540).

My position in school

This was a period of *mutual* familiarisation: I was getting to know and be known by members of the school community. Even before I spoke, preconceptions about who I was were attached to visible, categorical aspects of my identity. I came to think of my identity as comprising hard and soft aspects. The hard aspects were ‘givens’, not directly amenable to the influence of myself or others; soft aspects of my identity were more ‘fluid’ (Thomson & Gunter, 2011), changeable over time and in different social contexts. From the outset, significant hard aspects of my identity were that I was a white European male in my early 30s. This carried implications for my position in the field which I came to understand more fully with time. I was a young male adult, a *menisay*. As such, it was acceptable for me to greet, talk with and observe the lessons of any member of staff, but it was not quite appropriate for me to *tch’awat* (hang out) with unaccompanied younger female members of staff. I could, however, spend time alone with males, or in groups of both sexes, a condition which affected the representation of male and female voices in the case data. Since I was younger than most of the teachers, I was someone who could legitimately benefit from the wisdom of more-experienced seniors. I was an age-mate of the younger teachers, who were my socially-appropriate companions. This group included many of the lower-status, more peripheral teachers, including contract teachers and those considering leaving the profession, who probably spoke more frankly with me about their marginal status than they would have done had I been older.

Shütz (1944) proposed that the members of a social group, such as the school community, share knowledge and understandings which provide a tacit scheme of reference, an ‘unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world’ (p.501). A stranger seeking acceptability within the social group, must

engage in a 'continuous process of inquiry into the cultural pattern of the approached group' (p.507). I was not wholly a stranger, since I had spent two years working with schools in the region; however, I sought a greater understanding of the tacit meanings and values participants attached to their routine activities. Being a foreigner gave me license to ask questions which would otherwise have been ridiculous, and '[beyond] the bounds of common sense and decorum' (Rock, 2001, p.32). It also meant that people preemptively took it upon themselves to explain things they thought I might not know or understand ('Do you know Meles, our brave Prime Minister?' 'The students are hungry because of *tsom* – they are fasting.').

Most teachers initially assumed I was at the school in a consultancy/advisory role. This was a 'soft' aspect of my identity that people were disabused of within the first few weeks. After my first lesson observation with a teacher, he or she would normally ask for feedback (or 'corrections'), to which I would reply that I was there to learn. If they were disappointed with this response then I would say something positive about the lesson, such as 'The students seemed to enjoy the activity' or 'They all did their homework' – which was enough to convince people that I was there to learn, not to judge.

If being an outsider put me in an advantageous position for ethnographic inquiry, then it certainly did not *feel* this way in the first week. Because I looked foreign I felt awkward and embarrassed. The kindergarten students called '*Farenji!*' (European foreigner) or '*China!*' (Asian foreigner) when they saw me. When I explained that I was an Englishman this provoked screams of laughter. One teacher had a toddler who shrieked and buried his face when he saw me – it must have looked like I was inside-out! The children seemed to recognise something so obvious that it took a child to say it: I was a foreigner, I had no place being at their school.

I was worried that I would unwittingly do something to provoke my dismissal. On a couple of occasions during this first week VD Haftom suggested that I conduct my study at the local high school, since the instructional medium was English and I would understand more of what was happening. I didn't know whether this was a well-meaning suggestion, or a hint that I was not welcome. VD Yesuf made me even more uncomfortable. Like me, he was a quiet observer of activities in school, watching teachers and students from a distance. There was a whistle around his neck, which seemed to threaten that, at any moment, he could step in to bring activities to a halt. Several times

in the early days he entered the empty staffroom to find me scribbling away – lingered for a moment, checked something on the wall and left.

Sponsorship

There was probably nothing more I could have done to hasten the process of acceptance. I found that my social acceptability increased with acts of trust and acceptance from teachers; and more than any action on my part, my status in school derived from how I was treated by them. A key event occurred on my third day. As I was leaving school for lunch, I was stopped by Gebreselassie, an elder male teacher. Where was I going, he demanded: ‘Have you had coffee ceremony?’ Since it was *kidamay Miazia*, the first of the month, there was a special ceremony in the staffroom. ‘It’s not only about teaching and learning,’ he said, leading me there by the arm. The staffroom was transformed for the ceremony, with homemade bread laid out on a pink tablecloth, and Zetun, a female elder, crouched over a charcoal stove making traditional coffee. This ceremony, on the first of the month, was a time for re-affirming community and sharing hopes for the future. As we drank small cups of black coffee, people opened up to each other. Gebreselassie talked about his hopes as he neared retirement; VD Haftom told me about the various positions he had held since leaving university, and how after six years of working in schools he had been ‘left with nothing.’ Everyone was hoping that the government would raise teachers’ salaries at the end of the year, which was the rumour. ‘*Tesfa negeber*,’ let’s hope, I said. After the ceremony, I felt that I had been formally welcomed to the school, and for the first time I sensed the feasibility of the study. The technical term for what Gebreselassie did for me is ‘sponsorship’ (Whyte, 1943; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As my self-confidence grew, I became more relaxed at school. I no longer felt like a spy, as I flicked through school documents, or sat outside the staffroom watching students play on the field.

Keeping an open mind and diary

My timetable was flexible, I seldom made appointments. Not only my conversations, but my observations were ‘informant-led’ during this familiarisation phase. It was customary to greet everyone in the workplace each morning. In the course of greetings, teachers invited me to observe their lessons, or introduced me to colleagues – ‘This is Mesereta, you should observe her.’ I greeted teachers in Tigrigna, but otherwise spoke to them in English. My Tigrigna was sufficient for explaining who I was and what I was doing in

school and responding to simple questions from students and parents, but I could not converse in Tigrigna far beyond this, although I understood more than I could say.⁶

During this familiarisation stage I tried to experience as many aspects of the school as possible, and maintain vigilance against overlooking areas through personal bias. Reviewing my activities at the end of each day I identified aspects of school life I had neglected. For example, in Week 2 Fanta the PE teacher invited me to observe his lesson. I made a polite obfuscation – perhaps I would come next week. As I was typing the FNs that evening I noticed my reaction, and realised that my personal bias in favour of ‘academic’ subjects had led me to dismiss this opportunity. By recognising my bias at this early stage I was able to consciously direct attention towards PE and other ‘non-academic’ subjects – Music and Art. In so doing, I came to recognise that my personal biases were shared by others in the school, and that these subjects were systematically marginalised (reported in 5.2.1).⁷ Allowing myself to be guided by Fanta and Gebreselassie as described above, trusting their knowledge and good intentions, is an example of how relational ethics underpinned decisions in the field.

Eliciting and interpreting participant account data

There were two main types of talk data generated in the course of the study: talk in action, and participant accounts. After Lofland et al. (2006), ‘talk in action’ was the term I used to categorise naturalistic data: talk between participants in the course of their activities; overheard or recorded utterances. Participant account data, on the other hand, was the generic term I applied to comments directed at me, whether oral or written; these were not naturalistic data, since they were generated through obtrusive methods (Lee, 2000), my participation in the research setting. Participant accounts were prompted by a variety of interactive settings, from more formal researcher-led interviews (e.g. with the REB Head) to ‘informant-led’ interviews (Powney & Watts, 1987), to participant-initiated accounts, in which I played a mostly passive role, simply noting what was said, and asking

⁶ There is an expectation that ethnographers develop fluency in the language of the community of study during fieldwork (although not always, e.g. Wolcott, 1967). In my case, the need to collect data intensively hampered my language development in the field. Agar (2008) asserts that even in anthropological research (he cites his own experience from fieldwork in Karnataka, India), ethnographers often make use of interpreters and translators, but the literature is ‘eerily quiet on the subject. I get the impression of nervous ethnographers who are far from fluent trying not to bring up the subject’ (p.150).

⁷ Ball (1984) notes a systematic neglect of ‘non-academic’ subjects in his own work (1981) and that of Lacey (1970), Hargreaves (1967) and others. I was reading Ball’s (1984) essay during 1PDC, and his observation probably influenced me.

for occasional clarifications. As an example of this, the following FN extract is taken from my second morning in school.

I joined a stream of students walking towards the school. Teacher Gebreselassie stood a few feet from the gate, white-haired and wearing his white technician's coat. He held a stick – almost a metre in length, and thin, the width of a traditional toothbrush. With this he physically directed students towards the gate, touching it on their sides and shoulders while verbally encouraging them to move faster.

I approached him, '*Ato* Gebreselassie!' I said. He told me he had seen me yesterday, but was busy with something. Why had I come back? he asked. I told him I had returned to research the school...He gave up guarding the gate and accompanied me through to the playground, complaining on the way about the situation in school. 'We work hard, but there are challenges,' he said. He raised the issue of 'pre-promotion' – promoting students even when their grades are insufficient.

'This is in the First Cycle?' I asked him.

It happens in both cycles, he said. But it is 'illegal, we cannot say this...we cannot let the students know.' As he said this I was looking out at the students assembled for Flag Ceremony. (FN4)

The above account resulted from obtrusive methods (my physical presence in school with a notebook and a manifest interest in recording people's comments), yet it was initiated and led by Gebreselassie. I requested clarification at one point, since I was familiar with the policy for automatic promotion in Grades 1-3 (First Cycle) (MOE, 2005), but not in later grades. This request for clarification signalled my engagement with what Gebreselassie was saying, which prompted his elaboration that this policy was a secret, 'we cannot let the students know.' Although I asked a single question in this exchange, I could have asked many more, since much about the situation was unclear to me. To give some context, I had not spoken to Gebreselassie since the scoping trip almost 6 months previously, yet he immediately came out with this 'secret'. It was an issue of importance to him, but I was not in a position to understand it yet. Even if we had we talked all morning, I would have been little the wiser, at this stage, because there were too many gaps in my knowledge. It was necessary for me to fill these gaps before I could understand his perspective on the student promotion policy (which he evidently *wanted* me to

understand). Before this, there was more fundamental knowledge for me to acquire: why was he standing at the gate when I arrived? Why did he accompany me to the flag ceremony when he did? To have asked *these* questions would have prevented Gebreselassie from expressing his own concerns; and even had he answered them, I would only have been left confronting different areas of ignorance. It was not until some months later, when I had a better understanding of assessment practices and the promotion policy in school, that I could grasp the point Gebreselassie had been trying to make on my second day of fieldwork. My practice was to write down what people told me as accurately as I could, and trust that meanings would become clear with time.

People often brought issues to me, which I recorded in this way. I sought clarification, or asked for examples or explanations, but let conversations develop as informant-led, joint constructions (Powney & Watts, 1987). This was an orientation to inquiry which aimed at facilitating, without overly influencing, participant accounts. I found that simply ‘being there’ was enough to provoke such accounts. For example, on one occasion I sat beside a young teacher for 15 minutes without saying a word, before he told me that he would leave the profession at the end of the year to get a job as a driver, because his brother earned four-times his salary despite having only a Grade 8 education. The issue of teachers’ salaries was initially peripheral to my research focus, but understanding teachers’ attitudes towards their job was fundamental to understanding their perspectives (Prus, 1996). Unprompted by any verbal cues from me, this teacher’s explanation and rationalisation of his intended course of action seemed to express what was running through his head at that moment – the verbalisation of an interior monologue. When he said that his brother earned four times his salary, this was not only an explanation to help *me* understand, but the very issue he was grappling with at that time.

When I asked direct questions, they were ‘structured’ by my interest in mapping the social world of the school, which included information about individuals (Who are you? Who’s he?), their biographies (How long have you been teaching? Where did you teach before this?) and basic expectations attached to different roles in school (Tell me about your work as a tutor. How did you come to be teaching this subject?). A lot of personal information was subsequently available to me from naturalistic sources (e.g. internal documents) but this did not render these initial conversations meaningless, as the intention was not only information-gathering, but also establishing my position in school as someone interested in understanding teachers’ perspectives (Wolcott, 1980). Asking

teachers to describe or explain an everyday object revealed networks of meaning and relationships from their perspectives (Giddens, 1984; Agar, 2008). For example, sitting outside the staffroom one day I asked Teacher Mossa what he was holding.

It's an attendance register, he shows me. One page is stamped with the School seal. He points to one week and tells me that attendance was not taken then because it was the exam period. He shows me that today no students are absent, but four are marked late.

What happens if a student is late? I ask.

'If they are twice late we ask the parents here to solve the problem...With the parents we solve the problem together.'

Mossa turns to the back of the register and shows me a page called *zetsegum allewom* (problems they have). He translates one comment for me: 'These [four] students played football around the class and broke the window.' In a column beside this are the students' signatures. I say that a window is expensive and ask him what happened. He says it cost 80 or 100 Birr.⁸ He informed management, and the parents of each student paid 25 Birr.

He shows me the next row: 'Here, students late many times – they sign.'

He explains (without my asking) that as *kifle halafi* (tutor) he holds regular meetings with parents: 'Once a month all parents come on Saturday or Sunday. I tell them the background of their students. I give advice, and the parents put their signatures...'

Teacher Fanta (*sitting nearby*) interjects: '[This is] to change their children's performance for the next month. If the student doesn't change, he may be given a punishment for one year.'

Mossa gives an angry look and says emphatically: 'We do not say like that. We give them advice continuously by different methods: advice. We give them advice by calling their parents, we do not reject them.' (FN79)

Here the conversation focused around an object: the attendance register for Mossa's tutor group. Any object in school (an examination paper, a toy) could lead to similar insights about the wider social world – the relationships between different groups in school (parents, teachers, students), their concerns and capacities. When I typed my FNs at home,

⁸ During the fieldwork period, the exchange rate was roughly 30 Birr/£1.

reading and reflecting on the events of the day, I identified areas of ignorance, which I tried to articulate in the RL as a guide for future data collection and analysis. For example, questions provoked by the extract above include:

- Why was the register stamped with the school seal? What else is stamped/not stamped? What does it mean when a document is stamped?
- What other paperwork is involved in being a tutor?
- How did Mossa know that the students had been playing football in class? How were the funds collected for replacing the window? What processes and people were involved?
- Do all parents/teachers come to school for 'monthly meetings'? What happens at these meetings? How do parents respond to reports about their children's performance?
- Mossa referred to giving 'advice': what does 'advice' mean? Who gives/receives advice? What does 'punishment for one year' mean? What punishments are administered to students, officially, unofficially?
- Why did Mossa and Fanta offer such different accounts of the school's response to students whose behaviour doesn't improve?

These kinds of questions served as leads for future data collection. As Agar (2008, p.62) describes, the process of data collection and analysis is dialectic:

In ethnography...you learn something ("collect some data"), then you try to make sense out of it ("analysis"), then you go back to see if the interpretation makes sense in light of new experience ("collect more data"), then you refine your interpretation ("more analysis"), and so on. The process is dialectic, not linear.

In my case, I made physical and mental movements between the field, the FNs, the RL, the field, and so on, from the start to the end of my fieldwork. My analysis often started with questions, like those above, which pointed to aspects of the field as yet unclear to me. Agar (ibid., p.31) refers to such lacunae in an ethnographer's hermeneutical resources as 'rich points':

When a rich point occurs, an ethnographer learns that his or her assumptions about how the world works...are inadequate to understand something that has happened. A gap, a distance between two worlds, has just surfaced in the details

of human activity. Rich points, the words or actions that signal those gaps, are the raw material of ethnography, for it is this distance between two worlds of experience that is exactly the problem that ethnographic research is designed to locate and resolve.

To take the above extract as an example, one rich point for me was how Mossa and Fanta could express such divergent views about school policy. My initial assumption was that neither teacher was intentionally misleading me, but telling me what they understood to be accurate – so how could I account for such differences in perspective? This rich point required further data collection and analysis. The following aspects of their background and status emerged:

<u>Mossa</u>	<u>Fanta</u>
Male Muslim, mid 20s	Male Christian, mid 20s
Grade 5 Science teacher	Grade 8 PE teacher
Science diploma from teacher college	Economics BA from university
Permanent teacher	Contract staff
Salary: 1400 Birr/month (approx.)	Salary: 1100 Birr/month
Joined the school start of 2013/4 year	Joined the school 2014

An important distinction between these two was that Fanta was a contract teacher, who would leave the school at the end of the year, whereas Mossa would remain at school for the foreseeable future. Contract teachers are on the look-out for better paid work elsewhere; they tend to avoid coming to school to meet parents on the weekend, are less familiar with school policy, and tend to be less personally invested and integrated in the social life of the school, compared to permanent staff. Mossa's repeated use of 'we' at the end of the extract highlights this distinction (*we* Ketema teachers do this – with the implication that Fanta was not part of this 'we'). Fanta's use of the tentative modal 'may' ('he *may* be given a punishment for one year') also suggests a lack of familiarity with school policy, compared to Mossa's more confident assertions.

I have gone into contextual detail to illustrate the non-linear, incremental processes of data collection and interpretation in the field. By lingering over participant accounts in this way, identifying and trying to fill gaps in my understanding, I gradually came to make sense of life at school. Familiarisation with the social life of the school required my participation in a range of social contexts – attending Christenings, weddings, funerals and religious ceremonies; visiting family homes on saints' days; meeting teachers for

lunch, coffee, beers or *sewa* (homebrew) in town, individually and in groups. In this way, over many months, I not only established social legitimacy and friendly relations with many teachers in school, but developed perspectives to bring to bear on interpreting data of more direct relevance to my inquiry.

Getting nosy: strategies for supporting the development of participant accounts

In the context of education research, the interview has been described as a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984, p.102), a conversation ‘initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives’ (Powney & Watts 1987, p.6). Wolcott (1995) also highlights the difference between data elicited through interviews and other kinds of talk data generated through the process of participant observation:

It is the difference between passively accepting what comes along, information that is virtually handed to us, and aggressively seeking information by “getting nosy”... In the simple act of *asking*, the fieldworker makes a 180-degree shift from observer to interlocutor, intruding into the scene by imposing onto the agenda what he or she wants to know...[There] is a quantum difference between taking whatever happens to come along and taking charge of the agenda. (p.102)

I take interviewing to include any situation in which a fieldworker is in a position to, and does, attempt to obtain information on a specific topic through even so casual a comment or inducement as “What you were telling me the other day was really interesting...” (p.106)

According to these definitions, an interview is a conversation initiated by the researcher, and focused by his or her research interests. This notion of the interview is not particularly helpful for describing the processes for developing data in much of my study. I do not recognise a *sharp* distinction (as Wolcott does) between data elicited as a result of my physical presence in the field, and data elicited as a result of researcher-initiated questions. For example, when Gebreselassie shared his view of the student promotion policy he did so without my asking a question or expressing an interest in any particular topic. This was not, then, an interview, according to the definitions above (Powney & Watts, 1987; Wolcott, 1995). Yet this particular encounter with Gebreselassie occurred in a broader social context, in which I had positioned myself as a researcher and Gebreselassie as an insider whose perspective I sought to understand. Since developing

intersubjectivity was an agenda underlying my presence in school, and in this sense *all* talk with participants, did this make every conversation an interview? This would rob the term ‘interview’ of its descriptive power, when I think the term is usefully applied to more formal contexts of data elicitation in which I led the agenda – ‘getting nosy’, as Wolcott put it. The distinction between different discourse contexts in which participant accounts were elicited is subjective, and problematic to say the least, which is why I have treated *all* talk directed at me as part of the ‘participant accounts’ datasets, and why I have not drawn a firm line between interviews and the more informant-led conversations discussed above.

Several times during the familiarisation phase of the study I formally interviewed teachers. In preparation, I printed my notes from lesson observations and gave these to teachers, accompanied by questions relating to details in the lesson (an example is included, see Appendix 3). I asked teachers to look over the printouts, and to discuss them with me at their convenience. Teachers usually agreed to this, and I recorded our discussions as formal ‘stimulated recall’ interviews (Lyle, 2003). These interviews presented me with the opportunity to hear teachers’ explanations of their actions, and test my interpretations of events against teachers’ views (i.e. respondent validation) (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Agar, 2008). Teachers told me that my notes were accurate, expressing polite surprise at how faithfully I had described events. They corrected me on students’ names (which I had anonymised) but otherwise told me that my accounts were correct, and answered my questions about different aspects of the lesson. I stopped conducting these stimulated recall interviews when I realised what an imposition it was for teachers to read my notes. Teachers handled so much paperwork as part of their job that the last thing they wanted to do in their free time was deal with more paperwork (this was an example of relational ethics in action; see also the discussion of ‘bureaucratic burden’ in BERA, 2011, p.7). However, these early stimulated recall interviews demonstrated to me – firstly, that teachers recognised and largely validated my representations of their work; and secondly, that teachers responded positively, and even *welcomed*, the opportunity to discuss their practice with me.

I was not a natural interviewer. The printouts had served as a prop (diverting attention away from myself, and onto what was written on the page), but once I knew teachers were willing to tolerate me ‘getting nosy’, I became more confident in asking them to comment on their activities – Why did you make him kneel? Why did you pick her to answer? I

found that using humour and ‘acting out’ encounters between teachers and students, stimulated conversations. That said, asking about *anything* can make it a sensitive subject (Wolcott, 2008). For example, when I asked one teacher what he thought about the student network system (discussed in Chapter 5), he was astonished – why, it’s a great system, he said, what did I think was wrong with it? Another time I killed a conversation by asking a question. A teacher was recounting students’ criticisms of teachers during a *gim gima* (public evaluation) meeting. I was particularly interested in this topic and my companion was talking freely; but to spur him to further disclosure, I asked what had been said about one particular teacher. This suddenly made my interlocutor conscious that he was gossiping, and he stopped talking altogether. At other times, I found that teachers didn’t want to be hampered by my questions, effectively telling me to keep quiet and let them explain.

Working in a politically sensitive context

Some aspects of school life relevant to the study required a cautious approach – the Party was one such area.⁹ I did not refer to the Party without considering with whom I was speaking, who was within earshot, and how our conversation might be construed if it was discussed by others. This hypersensitivity resulted from what was an unlikely but potentially serious threat to the study if I were perceived to be investigating politically sensitive areas; an equally remote but potentially more serious scenario was that my fieldwork might engender a situation in which *someone else* said or did something which subsequently got them into trouble. For these reasons, I was especially cautious in how I explored the participation and influence of the Party and its members in school. What I did *not* want to say was: ‘Tell me how the Party affects life in school’ – yet I needed to develop my understanding in this area. My partial solution to this problem was to raise the issue with individuals from *outside* the school – Party members and non-members who had worked as teachers and civil servants in other schools and institutional settings. Through discussions with these individuals (and my past experience of working in a government college) I was made aware of ways in which the Party operated in other institutional settings, and might potentially operate in the school (for example, the patterns of Party membership; the frequency, format and agendas of Party cell meetings). Once I had a fairly good idea of how the Party *might* operate, I tested my assumptions

⁹ ‘The Party’ is the TPLF (Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front).

against participant accounts and observational data in the school – opportunistically, as situations arose. I did not request permission to attend Party cell meetings or see the monthly reports on Party activities made to the WEO, in case granting such access might have unforeseen negative consequences for institutional gatekeepers. However, through the oblique strategies outlined above, I had a good idea about the kinds of things discussed at Party meetings, and the contents of these reports – enough, I hoped, to serve the purposes of my study.

Progressive focusing

I entered the school with RQ1: *What range of interests and agendas are pursued through the school by different groups within the school community?* This question required the identification of different groups in the school, the most obvious being the ascriptive categories: teachers, students, management, parents. The interests and agendas of these groups had to be identified in relation to some thing or things in school. The object of focus varied at different points in my fieldwork. By the end of 1PDC, students' learning was my focus, encapsulated in the question: 'what student learning is valued by different groups in the school?' Over time, my focus extended to conditions in school – the various groups' interests and agendas pertaining to policies, relationships and working conditions.

RQ2: *How are the participation and influence of different groups achieved and mediated by structures and processes in the school?* It was necessary for me to identify and progressively focus upon key sites in school, 'specific rich contexts' (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p.540), in which to explore the participation and influence of different groups. During 1PDC, I identified the tutor group, and 'the meeting' as important social contexts for studying the participation and influence of different groups.

i) *The tutor group: Section B.* From the perspective of students, who spend the school-day in a classroom with their peers, the tutor group is the most pervasive and encompassing social context in school. I could have focused on activities across the school, to develop a broad, but perhaps superficial account of social relations within the tutor group; but instead, I sought to develop a more nuanced and contextually-sensitive account. I considered picking two tutor groups for intensive study, but since I needed to know each student by name and appearance in order to accurately collect data on activities over time, I settled for a single class. This necessarily limited the insights that could be offered on, for example, the monitoring system, through a comparative case study. For

this reason, I decided not to *limit* observations to my focal class, but observe lessons in other classes to get a sense of the representativeness of phenomena. This allowed me to recognise the representativeness of, for example, the organisation of students in lessons, and the activities of monitors and network leaders (reported in Chapter 5).

After observing lessons from the range of subjects and grades in Second Cycle, it was in the 4th week of 1PDC that I expressed the intention in my reflexive log to start focusing attention on a single tutor group, 'such as 6B' (RL44). I had not yet firmly decided on Section B, but in the same entry I noted that the richest background data I had was for this class. Personal factors affected my decision to focus on a Second Cycle tutor group. I had worked in the UK as a secondary school teacher, and have most experience working with students aged 11-16. When I worked at the teacher college in Tigray, I also focused on teachers of students in this age range. Second Cycle comprises Grades 5-8. I was reluctant to pick a Grade 5 group, since the class size was more than 50, and conditions were cramped, which would have made things uncomfortable for me and any students with whom I shared a bench. Although I was particularly interested in Grade 8 lessons, I did not want to select a class from this grade, as the students would be leaving at the end of the 2013/4 school year. This left me with Grades 6 or 7. Of these, the richest data I had related to 6B, largely because their tutor, Yerga, was a key informant during 1PDC. I discussed with him my intention to make a detailed study of 6B, and he supported the idea, providing me with documents I requested, and sharing his views on individual students. He also invited me to attend his weekend meetings with the parents of 6B. I spent the last 6 weeks of 1PDC observing 6B's lessons, and sat with them while they took their final exams. The students invited me to their end-of-year party, but unfortunately I could not attend, as it occurred a few days after I flew home.

ii) *The Meeting*. Meetings proved to be a crucial site for studying the interests, participation and influence of different groups in school, since it is in these forums that differing views are expressed, rationalised, contested, accepted and/or rejected. I was interested not only in which side 'won' in head-on confrontations of interests, but also in the capacity of different groups to set the agenda in meetings and have their views heard. Other social contexts could have been reported more thoroughly – for example, religious and secular events in school, about which I collected data through participant observation – but space limitations led me to focus on meetings, which I identified as a crucial site for exploring the participation and influence of different groups. A list of meetings from

which data were collected is provided in Appendix 4: Meetings Log, which includes a synopsis of each meeting.

I did not attend my first staff meeting until the 6th week of fieldwork, and immediately recognised their strategic importance for studying the participation and influence of different groups. I had been unprepared for this first meeting, and did not make the best use of potential data sources available to me. I collected observational data (noting seating in the room, who spoke, for how long, the topics discussed); participant accounts (during and after the meeting); and the minutes from the meeting, which I photographed and had translated the same day. On reflecting on what I had learned – and *not* learned – from this first meeting, I realised that in future it was imperative for me to collect talk in action data, which would be best achieved by making an audio recording and having this translated. Two days later there was another staff meeting, and through audio recording and translation I was able to develop a much fuller account of the event. From then on, I attended as many meetings as I could, made audio recordings on each occasion, and photographed the minutes. As time passed, I was able to refine my data collection methods, and collect increasingly detailed, and relevant data. A quick turnaround on translating the minutes was important to guide my data collection, since I relied on this information to discuss topical issues with participants while they were still in the memory. Audio translations took longer (sometimes up to a month). Over time I was more selective, and identified sections of the recordings for translation, focusing especially on points of contention.

Working with translators and translations

Squires (2009) makes methodological recommendations for maximising the trustworthiness of translated qualitative data in ‘cross-language’ research – research in which there is a ‘language barrier’ between researcher and participants (p.277). She highlights the importance of identifying how and why translators were used, their credentials, and the steps taken to achieve ‘conceptual equivalence’ between languages. I worked principally with three translators, all of whom are native Tigrigna speakers, former colleagues and close friends. One is a professional translator, another a languages specialist, and the third is neither, but has an excellent command of written English. Since my fieldwork created daily demands for translation (of minutes, notices in school, attendance lists), I sought to increase my pool of translators, but others did not

demonstrate the same accuracy, and one even made a serious error. My three translators were familiar with the study and my needs, and took pains to faithfully translate Tigrigna speech and texts into English, providing clarifications, interpretations and asides in square brackets, to aid my understanding without contaminating the translation. Talk in action contains ambiguities, unfinished statements and missing referents, which I needed to be conveyed faithfully, without the translator imposing clarity, or meanings not present in the original utterance. Translations were not one-off transactions, but relied upon back-and-forth exchanges between myself and the translator, to standardise terms, and develop my own understanding of Tigrigna concepts. For example, the English word ‘evaluation’ can be used to translate the Tigrigna terms *gim gima* (evaluation, public critique) and *sirah afetsatsima* (work evaluation, performance appraisal); yet it was crucial that these concepts and practices were not elided in translation. I never accepted a translation as-is, but required often lengthy explanations (What is this word in Tigrigna? Do you mean *this* or *this*?) which I recorded in the RL or in square brackets in the text. This was another reason why I relied upon the patient assistance of close friends who were emotionally invested in the project.

Post 1PDC

On my return to England after 1PDC I set about re-reading my FNs, which had now reached 200,000 words. On reflecting on the data I had collected, I decided that I was developing a good sense of teachers’ perspectives, but had paid inadequate attention to the views of students, management and parents, which I would need to re-balance in the second period of data collection (2PDC).

3.2.3 Second period of data collection

2PDC spanned 15/09/14 – 02/12/14, which corresponded to the first three months of the 2014/5 school year. In this period, I spent 177 hours collecting data through participant observation in and around the school (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Hours of participant observation during 2PDC

Week	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Hours	6	14	22	14	18	12	10	14	17	19	19	12

Improving data collection through deepening relationships in the field

I returned to Ketema prior to the start of lessons for the new school year 2014/5. I brought some donations to the school (a keyboard, calculators, stationery and some money) and small gifts for teachers (cameras, sunglasses, watches) which were the kind of things expected from a friend returning from a foreign country. My relations with teachers were noticeably improved, partly due, I believe, to my keeping my word and demonstrating my commitment to the school by returning; but also because teachers had had a break, and received a 20-30% pay-rise over the summer, which brightened their moods. I developed an increasingly close relationship with Director Dawit, meeting him socially outside school every week or two at a bar or coffee shop, visiting his family home and talking with his wife and his children. Dawit told me about his life, from his schooldays to the present, and I developed a sense of what he wanted for himself, his family and the school, as well as his motivations for supporting the study. Aside from sensing that the research might benefit schools in general by informing policy, Dawit believed it was good for the students to have contact with a foreigner who took an interest in their views, gave them an opportunity to practise English, and connected them to a world beyond their town. Students expressed similar sentiments towards the end of my fieldwork, which demonstrated that I had reciprocated to my hosts in ways that I had not planned for or fully recognised at the time.

Dawit enriched the study not only by sharing his insights, but by granting access to data from ‘closed’ spaces in school (Gaventa, 2005). In October 2014, a year after my first visit to the school, Dawit asked if I wanted to translate the minutes from the meetings of the PSTA and the Management Committee, the highest-level bodies in school (FN671). I did not *request* these documents, but willingly accepted his invitation to include them in the case data. I had resisted asking for these minutes, reasoning that I could always ask for them later, but could not un-ask for them. A researcher from a university in Tigray twice visited the school during the fieldwork period without being given the internal documents he requested. Had I, too, been *denied* access, it might have damaged my relationship with the Director (like the sign says: ‘Don’t ask for credit, as refusal often offends’). These documents were sensitive, offering scope to portray participants in a bad light by taking comments out of context. Over the course of the year I had demonstrated not only my benign intentions, but also my competence at handling and interpreting such data. Through *dialogue* spanning weeks and months, Dawit had guided and informed my

understanding, to ‘minimise risk and error [in the] “handover” of concepts and principles’ (Alexander, 2008, p.34); he was now satisfied that I could both understand and be trusted with the minutes from these meetings.

It was necessary for me to supplement the minutes (institutional texts) with participant accounts to get a fuller understanding of the issues under discussion. On familiarising myself with the translations of the minutes, I jotted down points to follow up with participants. In this regard another member of staff became an increasingly important key informant: Teacher Haile, who had been a unit leader in the 2013/4 school year, and thus had an insider’s perspective on the workings of the Management Committee. His relationship with the Director was somewhat adversarial, which meant that he offered a particularly useful counterpoint to the Director’s perspective. As Ball (1990, p.164) points out:

The key informant offers a perspective; it is not the only perspective. It embodies its own distortions and partiality. The accounts of events, or history, or people to whom the researcher has no direct access sponsored by key informants will be biased and limited by the roles and commitments the informants hold.

In private, Haile grumbled about the Director, highlighting his failings, and suggesting ways in which he himself could do things better. Since Haile often sought to portray the Director in a negative light, when his accounts corroborated Dawit’s, I regarded this as an especially strong validation.

2PDC was more focused than 1PDC. From the outset I was investigating meetings as spaces of participation (Gaventa, 2005, 2006). I attended as many and as wide a range of meetings as I could, including meetings of students’ parliament, parents’ meetings, Pedagogy Committee meetings, and staff meetings (see Appendix 4: Meetings Log). If I was not able to attend a meeting in person, I collected minutes and observed activities from a distance; where possible, I also discussed issues with the participants.

A fluid identity: ‘one of the staff’

The changing access to data discussed above reflected the fluidity of my identity and position in school over time (Thomson & Gunter, 2011). I had gone from being a stranger, to a guest, to ‘one of the staff’, as Dawit said (FN198). Of course, I was *not* one of the staff: I did not receive a salary, and could come and go as I wished; but there was a sense

in which my sustained participation in the social life of the school granted me status within the community, similar to the foreign teachers who had previously worked at the school (Adams, 1999). My status as ‘researcher’ was not the most prominent aspect of my identity, and is insufficient to explain my position in the school community. For example, my own status as researcher can be contrasted with that of the Tigrayan researcher (mentioned above) who was studying the implementation of the nationally-mandated CPD programme. After visiting the school twice to gather documents, conduct interviews and distribute surveys, he told me that he had abandoned his plan to interview teachers because they viewed him as a ‘spy’:

If I ask them...why they didn’t take part in [the CPD programme] they might not be happy, because they think I am the one who is going to inform the officials: “This school is not taking part in [CPD]” and they might think that officials will come and force them to do [it]. (Researcher from a university in Tigray, FN260)

Since this researcher’s agenda was associated with that of the government, he was made to feel like an outsider. As described in 3.2.2, I also felt unwelcome at first, and my acceptability increased as it became clear that I was not evaluating the school according to external criteria, but trying to understand activities from the perspectives of the school community. Teachers recognised this, and consciously helped to shape the study by directing my attention towards things which they thought were important: come over here, look at that, write this down, read this.

Thomson and Gunter (2011) problematise the notion of fixed researcher identities and binary notions of insiders/outside, researchers/participants. In the course of their engagement with a single school they describe their identities as liquid, ‘confusing and messy’ (p.18), meaning different things to different people at different times – consultants, change agents, advocates, report writers: ‘we were neither inside nor outside of the school, but rather were engaged in continuously shifting relationships’ (p.25). I, too, experienced my position as fluid. Amongst staff I was variously perceived as a confidant, ally, fellow teacher, spy and ambassador; my fieldwork did not chart a linear progression through these identities, but a constant movement between them, in the course of which I became emotionally involved with the school (discussed below).

Studying Section B: becoming 'the 46th student'

Whereas in 1PDC I spent most of my time with teachers, from the start of 2PDC I began spending a large part of my time in school with students, especially Section B. One teacher referred to me as the '46th student' in 7B. Teachers teased me about this: 'You always attend class, like a student!' '2 hours with the students!' They viewed what I was doing – spending hours on end in the classroom, writing page after page of notes – as a kind of punishment. Sometimes they were right, because the benches were not good for my back, and 2 hours was the limit of my endurance; but I enjoyed sharing time and experiences with the students, and being there helped me to see school from their perspective. I was interested in students' regular activities, their relationships with classmates and teachers, and the patterns of participation and influence within the tutor group. I made a total of 76 observations of Section B during timetabled school activities, including 63 lessons and 11 examinations (see Appendix 5). It was necessary to recognise each student by name and face in order to collect data at the student-level and synthesise information from different sources, including observational data, participant accounts, and institutional documents. I used spreadsheets to track students' attendance and attainment data, misdemeanours, teacher-parent meetings, and so on.

In lessons I was a non-participant observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), although I could hardly escape being a social participant on some level, and found myself applauding correct answers and catching yawns as lunchtime approached. I selected a table and remained with it for the duration, positioning myself so that I could see what was happening elsewhere in the room. I used a shorthand seating plan template to monitor the attendance and movement of individuals, and the stability over time of student networks (the groups of 6 or 7 students who shared a desk). I noted who was watching the teacher, who sought to answer questions and who was picked; who hadn't brought a pen or textbook; who was doing homework for another subject. During group work activities I moved between groups to monitor what was happening.

My Tigrigna was insufficient to understand much talk in action beyond topic words and simple questions and statements. I used my voice recorder to record lessons in their entirety, and noted the time of specific student-teacher interactions for translation. When individuals spoke in turn, dialogue could be translated; but when multiple voices spoke simultaneously (e.g. during group work), the ambient noise made individual voices

impossible to translate accurately, and so a valuable data source was lost to me. Between lessons and at breaktime, I spoke with students in a mixture of Tigrigna and English. Boys talked to me about football, their friends and family. They made fun of each other, shared their hopes and plans, showed me tricks, and involved me in their disputes. Girls were curious about my family, and what students were like in England. Some students refused to use English with me, such as Jerusalem, the top ranking student: she addressed me slowly in Tigrigna and offered simple explanations and alternative phrasings to help me understand. Others wanted to practise their English, which was sometimes an unwelcome diversion from my work. I was indulgent up to a point, but then would explain that I was working, and others would support me in this. I reciprocated to the students in small but meaningful ways, for example, by lending them pens, or sharing useful knowledge, such as changes to the timetable which they had not been informed of. In addition to photographing classrooms activities, I took portraits of students with their friends, which I printed and gave them – they liked this.

Ball (1990) argues that '[the] nature, limitations, and possibilities of data can be fully appreciated only when we begin to know how the actors' perceptions of the researcher have influenced what they have and have not said and done' (Ball 1990, pp.160-1). I endeavoured to understand what students made of me. When I first appeared in school, most students assumed I was a teacher. In the first few weeks of 1PDC one student told Micheal, my assistant:

Rafael is working on education and helping with English, because he speaks only English – he doesn't speak Tigrigna. There was [an English teacher from Germany] who used to be here. He's like that. (Grade 6 student, interview, FN176)

Section B students knew that I was a researcher from England writing a book about Ketema School and their class in particular, which would contain photographs and descriptions of what people said and did. This was so I could 'share experiences', as one female student put it, so that others could understand about life at Ketema. Section B students did not treat me like a teacher or a student: they were not deferential like they were with teachers, but showed me more respect than other students. For example, they were less physically intrusive, and dusted my seat before I sat. They laughed with me, more like a social equal. When I asked students' permission to use their photographs in

reporting my research, one wrote: ‘Yes, because...he spent 2 years with us and has grown up with us like our friend or brother.’

Although I was not a teacher, the students recognised that I was favourably disposed towards the school. They sought my approval of their work, and when their exam papers were returned they ran to find me to show me their best marks. Despite wanting my good opinion, they did not hide offences from me: cheating in tests, doing homework for another subject in lessons, pretending to write using a finger. Although I tried not to register disapproval on my face, most of the time students would probably have preferred me not to see this; yet they knew from experience that I would not report their actions to the teacher, and so they did what they had to do. Duneier (1999) describes this tendency of participants to act as they would normally do despite the presence of a researcher as the ‘Becker principle’:

most social processes have a structure that comes close to insuring that a certain set of situations will arise over time. These situations practically require people to do or say certain things because there are other things going on that...are more influential than the social condition of a fieldworker being present. (p.338)

I could not have conducted this study without students’ willing participation in the research process, as I was reliant on them sharing their views, as well as their time and space with me. I acted on the assumption that what people were willing for me to report what they said. Although I did not seek individual students’ permission for observing their classes, I did so before taking photographs of their work. Only on one occasion did a student deny me permission to photograph his homework, because he said it was wrong; he let me *see* the work, but told me not to photograph it, which indicated that he was concerned at how his work might be perceived by others. I asked students in writing for permission to use their photographs in reporting my research. Each student in Section B responded to this request, and 41 out of 45 gave their consent, sometimes with comments which showed that they understood that I was making a request which they could decline. For example, one student bargained with me: ‘If you promise to give me one photograph, then yes I will.’ Four students (3 male, 1 female) refused permission. The female student called me over to check if it was okay for her to write ‘no’, which I assured her was fine. All four of these students were Muslim, and there are restrictions on the use of photography amongst Muslims in Tigray, which mean that the purpose of a photograph

affects whether or not it is permissible. Each of these students posed for photographs with their friends, and were happy to receive a copy; but using their image in a publication is another matter, and I have respected their wishes.

Developing strategies to elicit students' accounts

I planned to conduct interviews with a third of the students in 7B. Micheal and I both read Spradley's (1979) guidance on descriptive questioning, and developed a loose schedule for the interviews. It was important to work together on this to ensure that the interviews addressed my concerns, and did not 'lead' students, so that I could have confidence in the quality of the data. For example, it was important that probes for clarification of meaning or examples used students' own words. We conducted a pilot during 1PDC, in which Micheal interviewed three students individually about their experiences in school that day, their feelings about peers, and their likes and dislikes about school. I had planned to begin interviews with 7B students one month into the 2014/5 school year, but Micheal was unwell, and so I postponed the interviews. I could have recruited another assistant to help, but was hesitant to do so: having piloted descriptive questioning interviews with Micheal, I was reluctant to expend time inducting another assistant, and I was also concerned in case a newcomer, whose work I was unfamiliar with, might do something to jeopardise the relationships I had developed with students. By the final month of fieldwork, it was clear that I would be unable to conduct the interviews as I had planned, and so I opted to use a questionnaire to elicit students' accounts. I developed this in English and Micheal translated it into Tigrigna. The questionnaire asked students what they liked and disliked about school, their career aspirations, and their ideas about how students, teachers and parents could make the school a better place (see Appendix 6i). The questionnaire was checked by the Director and others in school management, and the Director not only offered to print it for me but also visited 7B to read the questions aloud to the students, and ensure that they understood how to complete the questionnaire.

Exploring classroom life from multiple perspectives

To get a sense of the representativeness of patterns of classroom organisation and activity in Section B, I observed lessons and examinations in other classes (see Appendix 5) which satisfied me that the basic patterns of lesson structure and student groupings in Section B were common to all Second Cycle classes. Observing other classes also offered a comparative perspective from which to consider the reactive effect of my presence in the

classroom. In classes unaccustomed to my presence, I noted that students were curious about what I was doing – whispering, nudging and turning around to look – all of which Section B had done at first, before accepting me as a regular feature in the room.

During 2PDC I observed students' activities in the classroom in the absence of a teacher. This had not occurred during 1PDC since I had largely been tracking *teachers* rather than students, and so had not observed the classroom without a teacher being present. Observing students' activities in the absence of a teacher gave me a different perspective on students' agendas and relationships, since their conduct was not subject to direct teacher supervision. In these conditions it became even more important for me to understand if and how my presence was affecting students' behaviour. I took a number of steps to test the representativeness of my observational data, which I will explain in detail here, since the same steps to assess the validity of my knowledge claims were used elsewhere in my fieldwork (Hammersley, 2007).

My observational data suggested a pattern of activity when no teacher was present: monitors took charge of the room, ensuring that their peers stayed in their seats, and fostered conditions in which students could get on with their work. 'How representative is this pattern?', I wondered. 'Is it a show for my benefit?' I made a number of checks to satisfy myself that this was not a 'show', but a routine feature of school life.

- I checked observational data from Section B and other classes, which consistently revealed this pattern of monitor activity on multiple occasions over a period of months. This occurred when I was physically present in the room, and also when I observed the classroom from a distance.
- I reviewed talk in action data for interactions between teachers and students, which signalled that teachers expected monitors to control their classmates' behaviour in this way.
- I elicited teachers' and students' accounts about monitors' activities, which supported the observational and talk in action data sources mentioned above, and gave me a sense of *why* it was important for monitors to act in this way (i.e. to enable students to pursue their studies, and prevent disturbance to lessons in neighbouring classrooms).
- I reflected on my direct experiences of monitors' activities in the absence of a teacher, since they had also regulated *my* behaviour. For example, 7B's male

monitor, Yonas, told me not to let another student use my camera; he directed a boy I was talking with to return to his designated seat; and he removed and destroyed some origami toys which two girls had given me. Thus, I too had experienced the monitors' supervision and authority in the absence of a teacher.

In these ways I developed and tested my knowledge about the function of monitors, and satisfied myself through the weight of evidence that my presence was not the defining factor in influencing observed behaviour.

Key participants

It is problematic to specify the participants of institutional ethnographies which involve many thousands of interactions with hundreds of individuals over many months. This study involved collecting data from more than 1300 students, 50 staff and many hundreds of parents and other relatives. The voices of some individuals feature more strongly than others in the case data. Based on participant account data (i.e. transcriptions of conversations) I identified the top contributors to the study in terms of the length of their accounts in the FNs. Table 3.3 offers details of the six most prominent participants whose voices feature in the following chapters.

Table 3.3 Details of key participants

Name	Types of data collected
Director Dawit Male Christian, 50s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations of work in office, meetings, interactions with teachers, students, parents and others - Several formal office interviews in school during 1PDC - Regular extended conversations outside school during 2PDC (e.g. over lunch, in the evenings, visiting family) - Translations of talk in meetings and institutional texts
Haile Male Christian, mid-30s, unit leader, PE teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations and situated discussions about his work - Regular extended conversations outside school (e.g. over lunch, mountain climbing, socialising) - Left the school early in 2PDC, remained in regular contact - Translations of talk in meetings and institutional texts
Yerga Male Christian, late 20s, contract English teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations of work, including 7 lesson observations, a class <i>gim gima</i>, and meetings with family members - Regular extended conversations about his work inside and outside school (e.g. in the staffroom, in town, at his home) - Left after 1PDC, after which occasional contact
Mossa Male Muslim, late 20s, Science teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations of work, including 2 lesson observations - Regular staffroom conversations about his work and school life; provided a commentary during staff meetings
Fanta Male Christian, late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations of work, including 7 lesson observations - Regular conversations inside and outside school (in staffroom,

20s, contact PE teacher	over coffee or lunch, visiting his home) - Left after 1PDC, after which occasional contact
Gebreselassie Male Christian, 50s/60s, English teacher	- Observations at work, including 19 lesson observations - Regular conversations about his work and school life (generally initiated and led by him, my elder) - Translations of talk in meetings and institutional texts

This list includes the youngest short-term contract teachers and the oldest, longest-serving teacher in school; the most junior and most senior members of staff. As mentioned previously, my own status affected the relationships I developed with others, and the balance of voices in the case data. All of the ‘top ten’ participants in the study are male, and seven are from the younger generation. Among the ‘top 20’ participants there are two female teachers, and one male student from Section B, Gebremedhin.

Leaving the field

Leaving the field was complicated by the close attachments I had formed with people in the school. As Coffey (1999, p.159) notes, ‘having no emotional connection to the research endeavour, setting or people is indicative of a poorly executed project.’ Because I had shared experiences with individuals over many months, I anticipated that leaving the field would have emotional implications for others in the setting, as well as myself (relational ethics) . As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, p.138) explains:

[A] single encounter with an actor that is brief and largely informational will not have the same depth, complexity or resonance as a research relationship that spans several months where the participants meet frequently and talk about matters of great personal meaning.

Since I was concerned that the students in 7B might be upset by my departure, I prepared them in the final weeks by frequently reminding them that I was leaving, and I told them that I would return to the town in 2 or 3 years, by which point most of them would be in the local high school. The Director organised a farewell party for staff and the PSTA, and I was presented with a traditional costume and told that I would be an ambassador for the school and for Ethiopia.

To avoid interference with my fieldwork at Ketema I had scheduled formal interviews with the Heads of the *Woreda* Education Office (WEO) and the Regional Education Bureau (REB) in this final week; however, I was so emotionally affected by the experience of leaving the school that I ‘fluffed’ my interview with the REB Head, using

only half of the 20 minutes that had been allocated to me. The interview with the WEO Head was more successful, and provided me an opportunity to thank my former colleague for his support, and offer some initial feedback from the study. My feelings of loss on leaving the school were compounded by concerns for some of those I was leaving behind. I knew that by the time I returned many people would have moved on, and the school as I had known it would no longer exist. Due to limited internet service and the temperamental telecommunications system, communicating with people in Tigray from the UK is expensive and unreliable. Since leaving, I have used skype, SMS and email to stay in contact with staff and students. At the start of the 2015/6 school year I spoke to Director Dawit, who excitedly told me that the Grade 8 pass-rate had risen to 86%. A few weeks later I received news that he had transferred to another school.

3.3 Post-fieldwork

3.3.1 Data processing and analysis

Conceptualising and processing data

Although analysis occurred throughout the fieldwork, informing the process of data collection, it entered a more formal phase on my return to the UK in December 2014. I began by thoroughly familiarising myself with the case data, ‘the materials assembled by the fieldworker studying the case’ (Stenhouse, 1978, p.37). I began by re-reading the FNs file in its entirety, which was now almost 500,000 words. The FNs contained different types of data (e.g. lesson observations, school documents), which were recorded chronologically. I developed a conceptual map of the different types of data (see Figure 3.1), so that I could deconstruct the FNs, and analyse its constituent parts.

Having developed this conceptual map of the case data, I began processing the data (Wolcott, 1994), copying and pasting participant account data into a separate Word file. My intention was to continue using Word for formal analysis, but on the advice of my supervisors I trialled the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti, which, amongst other things, allows the coding of data segments (‘quotations’), the organisation of codes into families, the creation and development of memos, and offers various tools for visualising data segments within a code, and the relationships between codes (‘network maps’). After attending a few online webinars, I decided to fully migrate the case data from Word to Atlas.ti. At this point I could have added the FNs file in its entirety into an Atlas.ti project,

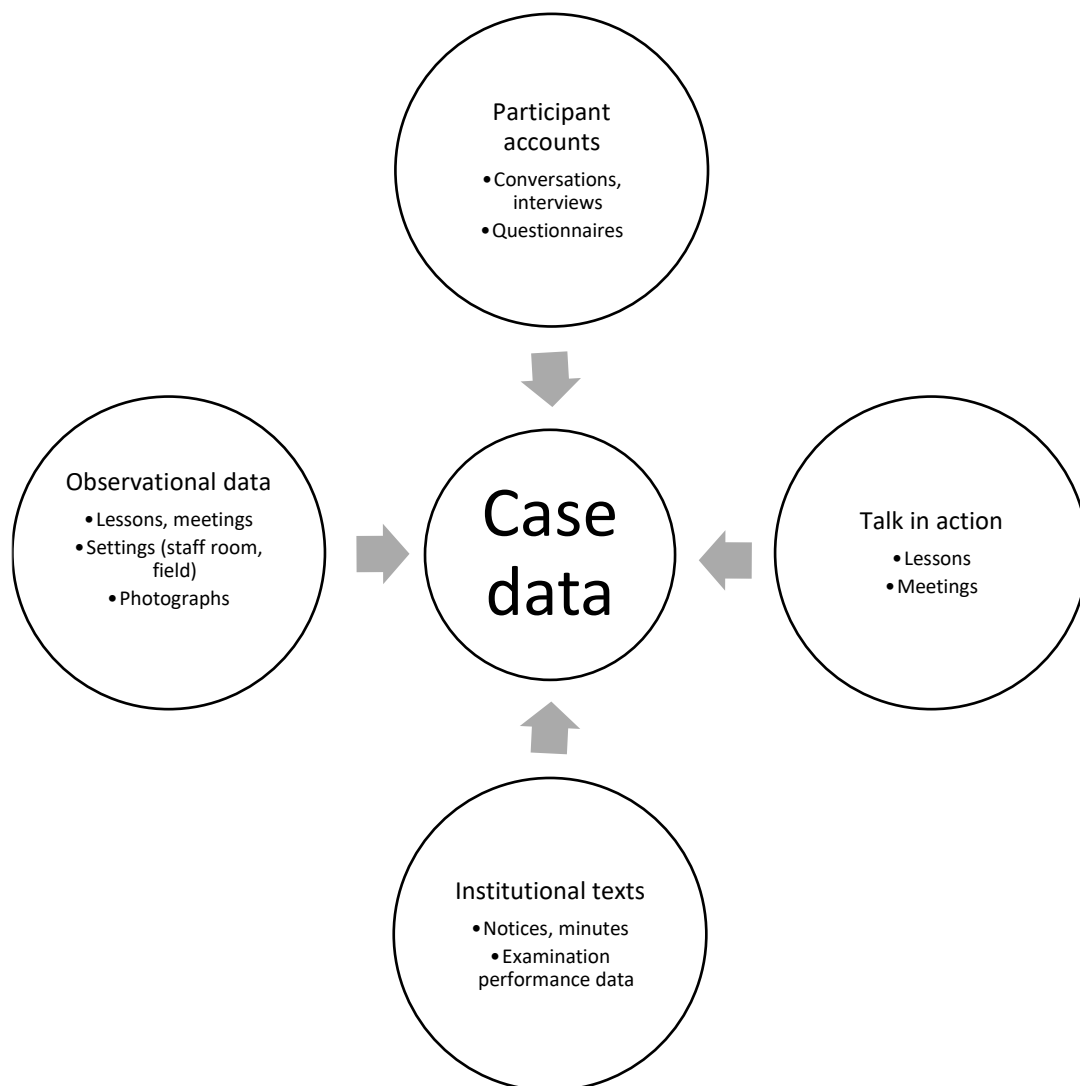


Figure 3.1 Conceptual map of types of data collected

but this would have elided distinctions between different types of data which I had identified (see Figure 3.1). To enable a more fine-grained analysis within and between the different datasets, I continued deconstructing the FNs into separate documents, and entered these into Atlas.ti. This process resulted in 385 ‘primary documents’ (PDs) for coding in Atlas.ti, which included:

- 98 PDs containing participant account data: one for each teacher, manager and student whose accounts featured in the case data.
- 111 PDs relating to lesson and examination observations: one for each event.
- 45 PDs relating to meetings in school: minutes, audio translations and observational data for meetings were gathered in a single ‘PD family’, which was subdivided for different types of meeting (e.g. staff, PSTA, Management Committee, etc.).

- 24 PDs for observational data ‘by the week’: the FNs were divided into weekly segments, to enable a more contextualised analysis of data, and facilitate analysis of activities in school which were not lessons or meetings.
- 59 PDs containing photographs of institutional texts, and 38 from activities in school.

The way I divided data into PDs for Atlas.ti had implications for the subsequent analysis, and my decisions were based on a number of factors. For example, I decided to include separate files for the participant accounts of each individual, but not separate files for each interview or discussion with each individual – as this would have added several months to the data processing phase. Additionally, I decided to include only 100 out of more than 2000 photographs amongst the PDs, because I found it slow to code images using Atlas.ti, and the inclusion of large numbers of photographs made the project file unwieldy. For this reason, I viewed photographs using generic software, and added (and coded), only selected and representative images to the project file (see Appendix 7 for an example).

Developing codes and themes

By this point I had already read through the case data at least twice, and now began the process of open coding (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I started with the participant accounts since I wanted to prioritise what people had made the effort to tell me. I worked on a case-by-case basis, starting with the first individual and coding the PD in its entirety, before moving on to the next individual and coding his/her account data (for screenshots from different types of PDs coded in Atlas.ti, see Appendix 7). My analysis was inductive, focusing on constructs used by the participants. I moved forwards and backwards between the PDs as I noticed regularities and sought to standardise the coding terms. I used visualisation tools in Atlas.ti to help me specify and refine codes. For example, one tool allowed me to call all of the ‘quotations’ (i.e. data segments) for a particular code onto the screen simultaneously (see Figure 3.2).

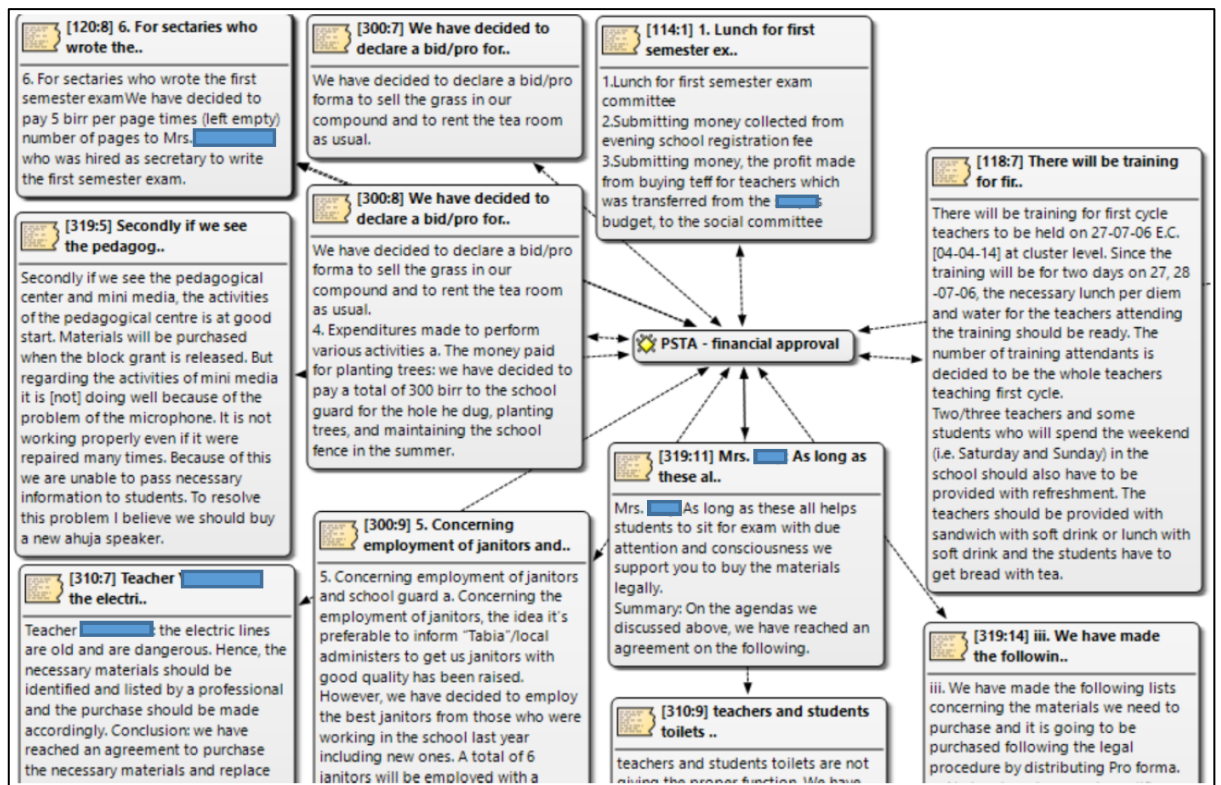


Figure 3.2 Using Atlas.ti to visualise quotations within a code

After visualising the data in this way, I used the memo utility to describe the code, which was a case of describing what I saw in the visualisation, accounting for each of the elements.

I spent weeks exploring the codes I had developed, moving back and forth between the codes and the data, and developing concepts through memo-writing. I was looking for patterns or ‘themes’ in the data:

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82)

As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) argues, the first themes identified in analysis are often the ones which are:

clearly and persistently articulated by the actors in the setting. The portraitist hears the same refrain over and over again, from a variety of people in a variety of settings. Actors give voice to this refrain... We also see it represented in signs and symbols in the environment. The refrains, audible and visible, proclaim: “This is who we are. This is what we believe...” (p.193)

To give an example, one such refrain related to the function of the school in terms of *shaping students ethically*. The issue of students' ethics surfaced again and again in participant accounts. For example, the Director initiated a conversation by asking, 'So, Mr Rafael, how do you find our students ethically?' Teachers and students repeatedly raised the issue of students' ethics, which suggested it was a pre-eminent concern. I found evidence of this theme in other datasets – in paintings around the school, and in institutional texts, such as a *Woreda* Education Office (WEO) leaflet which described the function of the school as: 'shap[ing]...students in terms of their academic competence and ethical aspects.' The eventual title of this theme, *shaping students ethically*, is a re-working of this quotation which clearly conveys both the formative function of the school, and the nature of students' development (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93). Having identified this major theme, I continued investigating and specifying its contents, which involved reviewing codes relating to students' ethics and looking for explicit statements from teachers, students and others, as well as evidence of their implicit expectations. Within this theme I identified different sets of ethical norms, one grounded in traditional expectations of raising students as 'young Tigrayans', and the other based in the modern Party conception of students as 'future citizens'. I identified these as sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) within the overarching theme of shaping students ethically (reported in Chapter 5). The process described here is not entirely one of 'discovery' (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) or 'emergence' (e.g. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), but of active meaning-making grounded in my interpretations of the data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

3.3.2 Reporting

After 5 months devoted almost exclusively to data processing and formal analysis, I started working up my emerging analysis into reports in May 2015. Reporting at this stage was not a culmination but a continuing aspect of the analytic process (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), allowing me to consolidate and share my thinking with others and receive feedback (Wolcott, 2008). I took the opportunity to present and discuss aspects of my fieldwork, analysis and reporting at research conferences on ethnography (Mitchell, 2015b) and education (Mitchell, 2016), and I also developed my reflections on the ecological and relational ethical aspects of my fieldwork into podcasts hosted by the University of Leicester (Mitchell, 2015c, 2015d), all of which informed my account of the research in this present chapter.

Sharing draft chapters with my supervisors led to further developments in the analysis. For example, in an early report on the patterns of participation and relationships between students in Section B, the narrative fixed on formal student leadership positions (monitors, network leaders) *as mechanisms of social control*. My supervisors suggested that my analysis risked over-emphasising these structures of control to the exclusion of agency. On re-examining my data in the light of these comments, I was more sensitive to the issue of ‘agency’ and so able to develop a more balanced account of structure-agency relations that shape patterns of participation within the tutor group. Another example of feedback informing my analysis and reporting relates to the foregrounding of differential perspectives and experiences associated with gender and religion. After reading draft reports, my supervisors and others in the faculty asked questions I had not considered: Is there a relationship between students’ gender and career aspirations? How does religion affect participation in school? In subsequent analysis I paid closer attention to patterns in the data associated with gender and religion, which offered greater subtlety in the analysis and a more finely-grained portrait of life in school.

Chapter 4: Ketema School in context

The findings of this study are presented shortly: Chapter 5 focuses on the interests and agendas of management, teachers, students and parents; Chapter 6, on their participation and influence. By way of a preface, the current chapter introduces the case study school and its community.

Location and facilities

Ketema School is located on a dirt road on the outskirts of town.¹⁰ The town centre is a small network of asphalt roads lined with one and two-floor concrete buildings: clothes and shoe shops, single-room breakfast and juice houses, mechanics' workshops where men in blue overalls work on autorickshaws in the road. Heading north, the asphalt gives way to cobblestone roads recently constructed through a government/INGO-sponsored youth employment scheme. There is an open market where women sell vegetables, grain, chickens and plastic goods from China. The cobble road rises towards Gebrel Church, with its tin roof and chimes jangling in the breeze. A hundred meters further, the white and green minaret of the mosque stands not quite as tall as Gebrel. The cobbles turn into a dirt road. Trucks and horse-drawn carriages throw a fine Red Sea dust into the air. Every day, a man with a shovel works this stretch of road, scraping and patting it back together. The school is here, at the junction of two dirt roads. 'It's not lucky, this school,' teachers say: 'Our school doesn't have a chance – all around it is bad!' 'It's a dust area – the government isn't concerned with us.' For most of the day, the dust stays outside the school's dry sandstone walls, but the late afternoon winds blow the dust all over – in the eyes and mouth. Then even Gebreselassie, Ketema's oldest and longest-serving teacher, complains: 'This area is not all right. Always dusty.'

Most students live within 500m of the school, an area which also contains government offices, small shops, the mosque and Orthodox church. They live with parents and other family members, generally in a single room in a shared compound. Lower grade housing is made of wood and *medeb* (mud) or dry stone, but most are cemented and sit beneath a corrugated iron roof. There is electric lighting, and more affluent households own a television. Compounds are communal areas where people wash and prepare food together. If there is a tap then this is in the communal area, and families keep a barrel or

¹⁰ Ketema (a pseudonym, meaning 'town' in a Tigrigna) is pronounced with the stress on the first syllable.

bucket of water indoors. Water scarcity in the *tabia* (neighbourhood, council) affects life at home and school. During rationing, water is only turned on for a few hours twice a week; students bring jerry cans from home to water the trees in the compound. Transmission problems regularly knock out the electricity supply for hours at a time. A powercut at night means that homework and marking have to be done by candlelight; during the day, it silences the TV in the staffroom and the 'air raid siren' bell which marks the start and end of lessons.

Ketema is a purpose-built school dating from the 1960s, the last decade of Emperor Haile Selassie's reign. The school comprises six blocks of four classrooms built from stone and mortar with wooden rafters and metal roofs (see Figure 4.1).

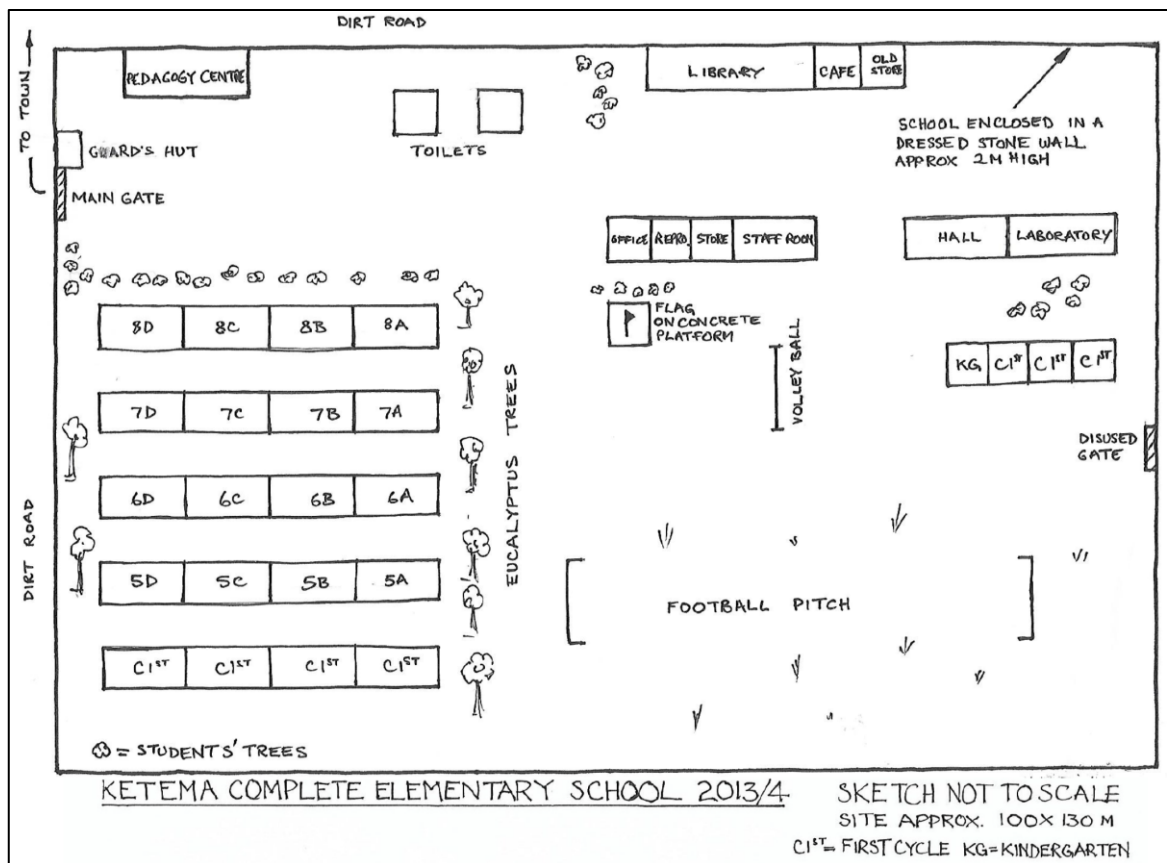


Figure 4.1 Map of Ketema Elementary School Compound

The administrative block contains an open plan office which the Director shares with two Vice Directors (VDs) and a secretary. The reprographics room is adjacent to the office, followed by the textbook storeroom and staffroom (see Plates 4.1 and 4.2). Quarterly exams are printed in the reprographics room, which also serves as the venue for the fortnightly meetings between the Director and the PSTA (Parent, Student and Teacher

Association). Teachers mark work and plan lessons in the staffroom, and watch ETV (Ethiopian Television, the government broadcasting network). One of the VDs occasionally appears in the staffroom carrying a pot of glue to post a notice, or else to visit the registry office, a locked annex containing school records dating back to the 1970s. Outside the staffroom, under the shade of the roof, teachers spend free time chatting and joking (cf. Woods, 1979). Ketema is a friendly, sociable place (see Plate 4.2).

The toilets and laboratory block were built using *Woreda* Education Office (WEO) funding shortly after Dawit was appointed Director in 2008. It's a good WEO, he told me: most of the officials used to work as teachers, so they understand the needs of schools.



Plate 4.1 Students return textbooks to the storeroom at the end of the year



Plate 4.2 Monthly coffee ceremony in the staffroom with homemade bread

The school community

Staff use the word ‘community’ to refer to parents and sometimes the *tabia* (the neighbourhood council). I use the term ‘school community’ to refer to groups affiliated with the school as sole employees, students or their family members.¹¹ The school community includes managers, teachers, office staff and cleaners, students, parents and other family members. In 2014/5 this included 52 regular staff, a guard, half a dozen cleaners, 1365 regular students, around 150 ‘night students’ and their families.¹² Visiting Regional Education Bureau (REB) officials are referred to as ‘guests’. WEO officials are not guests, but have similar ties with other schools in town: the WEO supervisor works with all 8 schools in Ketema’s cluster, and the WEO Head is responsible for all 18 elementary and 2 high schools in town. Figure 4.2 shows the constituents of the school

¹¹ I was a temporary member of the school community during the fieldwork period. My position was similar to that of foreigners who had worked at the school in the past (see 3.2.3). I was the fourth foreigner to have joined the school community since Director Dawit arrived at the school.

¹² Night students are young people from the town, generally in their 20s, who work during the daytime and study in the evening.

community, with its mix of the public and government employees, in relation to the superordinate tiers of the civil service.

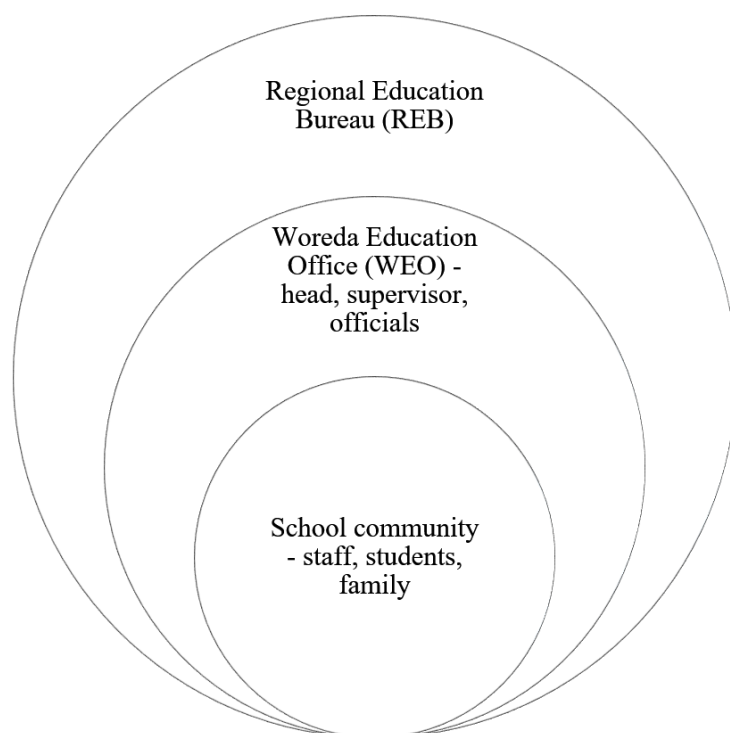


Figure 4.2 The school community and the civil service

Staff: gender, experience and mobility

At the start of the 2014/5 school year, Ketema had 52 regular staff (see Table 4.1). Although there were equal numbers of male and female teachers, seniority of position was associated with gender; a greater proportion of females work in the traditionally lower-qualified First Cycle, and more males in the higher status Second Cycle; all management positions were occupied by men. The gender divide was more pronounced amongst informal workers: all cleaners were female, and the guards and labourers were male.

Table 4.1 Regular school staff, 2014/5

	Position	Male	Female	Total
Management	Director	1	0	3
	Vice Director for Curriculum	1	0	
	Vice Director for Teacher Development Programme	1	0	

Teachers	Kindergarten	0	1	46
	First Cycle (Grades 1-4)	7	13	
	Second Cycle (Grades 5-8)	16	9	
Auxiliary staff	Storekeeper	0	1	3
	Guard	1	0	
	Secretary	0	1	
	Librarian	0	0	
Total				52

The mean length-of-service for teachers was 25 years, and almost half had taught for 30 years or more, making the staff at Ketema unusually experienced (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Frequency distribution for teachers' length of service, 2014/5¹³

Years of service	Frequency	% of total teachers
5 – 12	10	22%
13 – 20	2	4%
21 – 28	10	22%
29 – 37	23	51%

The unbalanced experience profile resulted from regional recruitment and transfer policies. Teachers tend to join the profession young: 31 of the 45 teachers had started teaching between the ages of 18 and 24, and the modal age was 20. There is a long-standing practice of assigning newly-qualified teachers to remote rural areas where extreme heat and water scarcity can make life difficult. After serving for 6 years, teachers become eligible to transfer to another school, but there is a long waiting list to transfer to an urban *woreda*. A teaching post at an easily-accessible urban school, such as Ketema, is highly prized, which partly explains the experience profile at Ketema: teachers wanted to stay where they were.

Staffing decisions are made by the WEO. In filling a post, the WEO considers candidates' qualifications, length-of-service and performance appraisal score. In shortage subjects

¹³ The KG teacher is not included in this table.

(Science, PE), teachers may transfer to an urban area while still in their 20s or early 30s (which was the case for several teachers at Ketema). When a school has its quota of staff, positions only become available during the year through retirement or death.¹⁴ These positions are temporarily filled by ‘contract teachers’ – young men, often with several years’ teaching experience, who have *not* gone through the waiting list to receive a permanent post in the *woreda*. Contract teachers are ineligible to have their contracts renewed, and consequently are only temporary members of the school community.¹⁵

There is a high degree of stability amongst staff in the First Cycle, none of whom left during the eight-month fieldwork period. In the same period, 12 out of 25 Second Cycle teachers left the school:

- 5 graduated with a bachelor’s degree and transferred to the high school
- 3 contract teachers were replaced by permanent staff
- 2 requested transfer to another school in the *woreda*
- 1 left the profession to pursue another career
- 1 absconded while under police investigation

The dominance of the Party in school management structures

Ketema School is located in the heartland of the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), henceforth ‘the Party’. Twenty-five out of 52 regular staff (48%) were Party members (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Party membership amongst staff, 2014/5

		# of Party members / total positions	% of positions filled by Party members
Staff category	Management	3/3	100%
	Teachers	21/46	46%
	Auxiliary staff	1/3	33%
	Staff members in PSTA	3/4	75%

¹⁴ The legal age of retirement is 60. If a teacher turns 60 during the year, he or she retires at the end of that calendar month.

¹⁵ An experienced teacher informed me that this is a means of controlling the movement of teachers within the region: were contract teachers given permanent contracts then this would encourage rural teachers to leave their posts in the hope of gaining a permanent post in the town.

Committees and elected positions	Management Committee	5/6	83%
	Unit leaders	2/3	67%

Although less than half of the staff were Party members, these members occupied strategically important positions including all three management posts, and most seats on the PSTA and the Management Committee: high-level bodies responsible for overseeing activities in school. The dominance of the Party in these school management structures helps to ensure the political compliance of staff, discussed in the following chapter.

Teaching as a livelihood

One teacher advised me to find a job outside education: ‘If you’re a teacher you don’t give a chance for your child.’ As we walked around town he pointed to retired teachers who now lived by begging. ‘When I look at these teachers I see my future,’ he said. Recent years have seen a decline in teachers’ salary relative to other sections of society and the cost of living (Sarton et al., 2009). Before the movement toward universal primary education, teaching was a high status profession, celebrated in an Amharic wedding song: ‘Bride, you should be happy because you’ve got a teacher!’ Nowadays, they say: ‘Bride, you got a teacher? *Wheew!*’ A cooperative organisation enables teachers to buy *teff* (the staple grain), bedsheets and some other essentials at a reduced rate, but this does little to alleviate the pressure of living within a teacher’s means. The salary affects men and women differently. Female teachers marry young, and a dual income makes their households comparatively affluent. Unmarried men find it harder. Breakfast is a dry bread roll and a small cup of tea. The salary of the younger teachers is lower still, and they are often partly-dependent on the support of relatives. In 2013/4, when I first arrived in the school, permanent teachers’ salaries started at around 1400 Birr a month (around £42), and contract teachers earned 1100 Birr/month. On such an income there is no prospect of marrying or improving one’s life.

Students and parents

The school serves around 1360 students from a broad cross-section of society living within one kilometre of the school. Parents include merchants, domestic workers, civil servants, autorickshaw and truck drivers, and those without formal employment. Most students live with both parents, but many with a sole parent or relatives. For example, the

mother of one boy in 6/7B had travelled to Saudi Arabia to work as a maid and left him with his grandparents; another had been sent to live with his grandparents because his parents thought he would receive a better education in town. Around 180 students (13% of those enrolled) were registered as full or 'half-orphans'. These and certain other vulnerable students were exempted from the annual school fee, and received exercise books, pens, soap and nutrition supplements through the school. One interest underlying this study was whether students from such diverse backgrounds shared similar agendas in school, or whether they held divergent preferences, priorities and aspirations.

Located halfway between a church and a mosque, Ketema has a mixed religious intake, but as a secular government institution, the school does not collect data on students' religious background. Director Dawit told me that Ketema is the only school in town which is 'more than 50%' Muslim. This makes it unusual in a region which, overall, is 96% Orthodox Christian and 4% Muslim (CSA, 2007). Despite the large Muslim student population, only 5 out of 52 members of staff were of the same religion. This reflected the fact that Muslims are a minority in the region, and – as described above – teachers have little influence over where they are posted.

Chapter 5: What range of agendas are pursued through the school?

In this chapter I set forth the range of agendas pursued by members of the school community. My fieldwork reveals a diverse set of agendas competing for visibility and influence within the school. These agendas are embodied in the perspectives and practices of four distinct stakeholder groups: management, teachers, students and parents. The focus of the current chapter is to clarify and explore the agendas of these four groups, highlighting similarities and differences in their priorities and preferences. The relative influence of each group is addressed in Chapter 6. I cannot claim to have captured in my data the full range of concerns, especially those unrealised agendas which may have been unarticulated due to conditions in school, or factors relating to my own role. Acknowledging these limitations, I report here on the themes I found in the data.

5.1 Management agendas

Ketema School management comprises Director Dawit and his two VDs (Vice Directors). I use the term ‘management’, since this is how they are referred to in school (that, or ‘the office’, ‘administration’, ‘the directors’). I present the agendas of these three individuals as a single group, since their concerns are largely shared.

5.1.1 Schooling for national development

This theme contains the agendas of management in relation to the official purposes of school, described in terms of what I call the ‘national development script’, a government-promulgated discourse linking the policies and activities of the government to the national interest. This involves instilling a sense of national identification, discipline and order in the students; promoting unity and respect for difference; and fostering a sense of individual and collective responsibility for each other and the success of the school. Given the importance of schooling for national development, management takes a firm line on inclusion, recognising no viable alternative.

The National Development Script

In written statements, Director Dawit expresses the purposes of the school in terms of national development, linking the work of the school to human capital development as an

aspect of the government's national poverty reduction strategy. This message is encapsulated in a hand-painted sign beside the school gate:

Vision of the School

To produce students with the capacity and skill to be competitive and productive at national level; to produce active students who contribute to the national poverty reduction endeavours to create a prosperous nation. (FN862)

The Director expanded on this theme in a document he gave teachers as a model for them to produce their own mission statements. I have abridged and paraphrased his words slightly:

Education is key to the development of the country. The school aims to produce well-developed citizens through Civics and Ethical Education, who have acquired scientific knowledge, and who are prepared for the next stage of education and training. It is our vision that by 2022 the citizens we are teaching will have all-rounded personalities, democratic mindsets, and ensure gender equality. They will have the ability to use technology, and knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention. (FN855)

These sentiments are adapted into student-friendly slogans painted on signs around the compound: 'Education is the foundation of all progress.' 'Brave students are a resource for the country.' The discursive link between schooling and national development is not Dawit's personal invention; there is a field of research which explores the connections between education and development (Harber, 2014; McCowan & Unterhalter, 2015), discussed further in 7.1.1. In Ethiopia, the discourse which links the activities of the government to the notion of national development circulates through the state institutions of the civil service and Ethiopian Television (ETV). At Ketema, I came to view this discourse as the 'national development script' (NDS).

The NDS promotes compliance with the government and its development projects. School directors and teachers are positioned as soldiers in the Education Development Army, which has 'an irreplaceable role in striving to achieve the government's policy and strategy' (WEO pamphlet, FN244). The notion of an army, as one government source puts it, suggests a large group of people acting 'in an organised manner' in the war against poverty (Ethiopian Civil Service University, 2014; see also de Waal, 2013, p.150); an

army also suggests discipline and compliance with authority.¹⁶ The NDS establishes a binary opposition: on one side is the government, commanding the development armies for education, health and agriculture (Seger et al., 2009; Maes et al., 2015), on the other side is poverty, chaos and destruction. A central aim of schooling, as described in a WEO pamphlet, is to ‘produce citizens...who strive for development rather than destruction’ (FN244) – in other words, citizens with the capacity and disposition to support the government’s development agenda. When the Director rhetorically links the purposes of the school to national development, he makes use of this script, familiar to everyone in the civil service. The notion of a ‘script’ suggests the transmission of a government message, spoken *through* school management. I sought to look beneath this script, to better understand the connections between schooling and national development for the Director and his colleagues.

Instilling a sense of discipline and order

Since management has limited engagement with students, the direct contact which does occur offered me clues to management’s concerns and priorities. The only regular interaction between management and students is the flag ceremony, which Director Dawit leads each morning. In describing this before I visited the school, he told me with evident pride that his students were ‘very good’; he could ‘control 2000 of them with one finger.’ At 7.45 each morning, the students stand in lines facing the Director, who leads them through a three-step drill – a display of discipline and order (see Plate 5.1). After the drill, the students sing the national anthem, *March Forward, Dear Mother Ethiopia*, while three students pull a cord to raise the flag.

*Respect for citizenship is strong in our Ethiopia;
National pride is seen, shining from one side to another.
For peace, for justice, for the freedom of peoples,
In equality and in love we stand united. [...]
We are people who live through work. [...]
We shall protect you – we have a duty.
Our Ethiopia, live! And let us be proud of you!*¹⁷

¹⁶ For a discussion of discipline and obedience in relation to the Health Development Army, see Maes et al., 2015, pp.466-7.

¹⁷ Lyrics from Wikipedia.

This daily ritual is a display of discipline and order, and a demonstration of the students' commitment to the country and its development. Similar displays occur at annual ceremonial events to mark the defeat of the Derg and the anniversary of the TPLF, which suggest a disciplined student body, proud of their country and committed to the government's development agenda.



Plate 5.1 Flag ceremony

Promoting unity and respect for difference

Uniform is a means of ‘suppressing external social distinctions’ (Goffman, 1961, p.112). Outside school, the social status of students is distinguished by their dress: affluent students wear expensive clothes, female Muslims wear headscarves. For Dawit, uniform is a means of neutralising differences of wealth and religion. He told me:

If you look at students from a higher income family, and students from the lower income family there is a physical [difference], because of nutrition in the womb...But you cannot differentiate them in the class. Since they are in uniform, they look from the same family. (FN596)

The numbers of Muslim and Ethiopian Orthodox students are approximately equal, and Dawit is determined to keep religious clothing out of the school. Parents are divided on this issue: some criticise the school's policy, while others defend it.

Dawit: One day some two or three Muslims at the Parents' Ceremony told us: *"According to the Koran, girls should wear headscarves."* So, one *Hajji*¹⁸ stood up: *"Look, before they wear headscarves they should have to wear their...clothes properly."* That's what he said: *"Our children are going step by step without [proper] clothes, so how can we say 'wear that [headscarf]'?"*

Rafael: The *Hajji* said that?

Dawit: The *Hajji* by himself. *"In school the [Muslim] students should wear the same as Christians, and Christians the same as Muslims. Out of the school, they can wear their headscarves."* So after the *Hajji* said this, all of the parents said *"Okay! Okay! Okay!"* By now, if you look, no-one can wear this [headscarf]. But outside of the school, I told them, you can wear it. Do you know the problem? If they wear it, then too the Christians may [start to] wear Christian religious church clothes. So the school becomes, what? Is it a school or a church or a mosque? (FN596)

Dawit explained that the restriction on religious clothing in school encourages unity and respect between the religions, and religious clothing would otherwise cause divisions. In contrast to domestic and other non-government spaces, management ensures the school remains religiously neutral, as befits a secular government institution (TGOE, 1994). Religious imagery in school is limited to a single wall with paintings of a pagan obelisk, a church, a mosque, a feudal castle and a TPLF monument; the effect is to acknowledge and value all religions equally.

Structures promoting individual and social responsibility, participation and agency

Management wishes students to take responsibility for their academic learning and feel ownership of their marks. The Director monitors these areas, and reported a decline in cheating in tests in recent years (Staff Meeting 21, FN435). Management also promotes students' sense of social responsibility to peers and others by means of peer monitoring and support systems in the classroom, and the traffic club and student parliament.

¹⁸ A *hajji* is a man of wealth and influence who has gone on the *Hajj*, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.

Students share responsibility for maintaining the compound, planting and tending to trees, arranging furniture for events, and cleaning classrooms. On public occasions, such as parents' meetings, the Director identifies and praises 'model' students who are socially responsible (FN853).

Management seeks to socialise students into forms of democratic participation. Students appoint monitors and parliamentary representatives with formal responsibilities to classmates and the wider school community. Students are also required to evaluate their teachers as part of the performance appraisal system, and to participate in *gim gima* (public evaluation sessions, discussed in 5.3). By participating in school as voters, representatives, and evaluators, students are not only subjects to be shaped by the school, but civic agents in their own right.

Towards an inclusive ethos

Management aims to make schooling opportunities at Ketema available to all, irrespective of family income. Some 15% of students are exempted from paying school fees. In recent years, with support from a USAID programme, management was able to provide the poorest students with a breakfast of tea and bread, as well as soap, nutritional supplements and stationery.¹⁹ Management has instituted a policy of *not* excluding students for behavioural issues – not only at the school level, but also at the classroom level. Rather than excluding students for disciplinary issues, management seeks to 'bring them to the right track' through advice and pressure from all sections of the school community. At a parents' meeting, the Director described the school's response to a persistently disruptive Grade 8 student:

We have been following [this boy] for four consecutive years. The mischievous things he did was: he forcibly took the lunches from other students; he beats female students; he repeatedly doesn't come to class; and he doesn't do homework and classwork. Furthermore, he was accused of a crime by the police... What the school did was advise him – through monitors, unit leaders, and Vice Directors, and then I, myself; but we couldn't bring him to the right track. (Grade 8 Parents' Meeting 38, FN853)

¹⁹ The funding for this programme ceased in 2013/4. The following year, the PSTA decided to continue providing poor students with exercise books and pens; however, the school's budget seems insufficient to continue this practice.

The Director raised this issue in the hope that parents would assist the school in changing this boy's behaviour. From Dawit's perspective, schooling is the only means of providing the ethical citizens required by the country:

If the student has learned ethics in school, starting from here, then...when he becomes old, he'll become a good researcher, a good leader, an ethical soldier – who isn't corrupt, and who is not tainted by corruption in government work, if he learns ethics well. (FN853)

As we have seen above, management conceives its role in term of shaping citizens for the purpose of national development, and does it this by fostering individual and social responsibility, democratic participation, and socialisation into the religious and gender-neutral spaces of the state.

5.1.2 Engaging with the external policy context

In this section I report on how management engages with the external policy context, complying with WEO directives, and attempting to excel at the competitive measures by which Ketema's performance is ranked against that of other schools in the *woreda*.

Complying with external policy requirements

Before presenting management agendas in relation to the external policy context, it is necessary to outline the relationships between the school and the wider educational bureaucracy. Within the civil service system, the REB (Regional Education Bureau) issues directives to the WEO which is responsible for supervising all schools in town. The WEO relays these directives to Ketema School management, which is vertically accountable to the WEO for implementation, and for evaluating and reporting on activities in school according to WEO-provided templates and quality frameworks. The WEO is not the *author* of these frameworks, but oversees activities according to the published criteria, which reflect the focus of its attention, and the limits of its jurisdiction. The WEO monitors schools to ensure that:

- The requisite management bodies and committees are established and their meetings recorded in minutes
- Planning documentation is prepared according to the templates provided (e.g. budget, school plans, lesson plans)

- Teachers wear gowns in class, and possess the necessary equipment and paperwork
- Monthly reports are submitted to the WEO containing student enrolment and attainment data, staff attendance, and reports on the activities of the various committees, departments, and the Party

For the most part, the WEO uses paperwork to monitor compliance, visiting the office to check internal documentation, and receiving monthly reports from management. Consequently, management is concerned that paperwork is in order. Monthly reports require management to collect and collate information from staff. Since the directors are keen to demonstrate their efficiency and competence, teachers must submit their paperwork on time. As the submission date for a monthly report approaches, abrupt notices appear in staffroom:

Those who fail to submit [their paperwork] on the specified date will be regarded as deliberately delaying the activities of the school, and so appropriate measures will be taken. (Staffroom notice, FN272)

In seeking to demonstrate compliance with WEO policy requirements, external quality criteria substantively shape the concerns and priorities of management. The internal supervision system is designed to promote compliance with these external quality criteria. For example, Heads of Department (HoDs) are asked to remind their colleagues to wear their gowns to class; and students are asked to report teachers who fail to do so. Beyond the *content* of this particular directive, the overarching management agenda is one of bringing the school into alignment with external requirements (Elmore, 2005a). This is not motivated by a sycophantic desire to please WEO officials; indeed, the Director is content to oppose their wishes (such as when he refused their request to transfer two computers from the school to their office). Rather, management wishes to strictly fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the rules of the system – the same system which both enables and constrains the authority of the WEO.

Tensions in complying with external policy requirements

A recurrent tension in complying with external policy requirements is the challenge of making sense of precisely *what* is being requested. Directives cascade down the system, from MOE to REB to WEO to school, and may contain unfamiliar concepts and practices. Two examples of this are the balanced scorecard (BSC) and teacher networks.

i) *Balanced scorecard*. BSC is a management tool, developed in the context of USA business management which links organisational goal-setting to technical planning and evaluation procedures (Kaplan, 2010). In Tigray, the requirement to use BSC was introduced in 2013/4. Director Dawit complied with this directive by completing the BSC template provided by the WEO. But he told me: ‘It is very hard in practice, because this is new. We have discussed it before, but even the supervisors at the *woreda* don’t have a deep know-how on BSC.’ (FN841)

ii) *Teacher networks* are another recent initiative. Although the school had received instructions to begin implementation of the teacher network system, nobody at Ketema knew exactly *what* this entailed. This was awkward because the school had already received a positive rating for its introduction! At one staff meeting, Director Dawit shared his ideas about how the networks might be organised, and what functions they might serve, but he conceded ‘what I’m telling you might be wrong. When the experts [from the REB] come and tell us...what we are going to do, we will amend it accordingly, because this is not like $1 + 2 = 3$, so we will amend it. But let’s *try* it!’ (Staff Meeting 24, FN563)

These are two examples of top-down mandates which management sought to implement without a clear sense of what was being asked for. In these, and in similar cases, the Director responded as above – ‘let’s *try* it!’ – even when the meaning and purpose of directives remained unclear. The overarching management agenda is to bring the school into alignment with external policy requirements. When challenged by a lack of knowledge or other resources, management is nevertheless determined to show a *willingness* to comply.

Being a model school

Ketema was designated a ‘model school’ in the years prior to my fieldwork, but this title was lost in 2013/4, when the school’s performance was overtaken by others’. A model school is a regular school which, based on external evaluations of performance made by the WEO or the REB, is designated as a centre of excellence. Model schools exist at the levels of the region, the *woreda*, and the cluster. They are visited by staff from neighbouring schools as an example for others to emulate. A school is deemed ‘model’ in relation to others; it is a comparative judgement, involving an element of competition. The three principal measures by which schools are compared and ranked are:

- Grade 8 pass-rate
- Income generation
- Building the Education Development Army

Director Dawit was anxious to regain the school's model status, which motivated his desire to excel by these competitive measures, as explained below.

Grade 8 pass-rate

The Grade 8 pass-rate is the headline figure, symbolising the overall success of school. As such, the Grade 8 exams are not only high stakes for the students who sit them, but for the school itself. Anyone visiting the office for the first time during the 2013/4 school year would have noticed the bright felt-tip poster above the Director's desk (Plate 5.2). (From the left, the columns show the year²⁰; the number of candidates in the Grade 8 exams; the raw number who failed and passed; and the overall pass-rate.) The Director would direct guests' attention to this poster and point out that, since his arrival in 2008 (2001 EC), the pass-rate had risen from 50% to 90% and above. He took pride in this evidence of his own personal effect on the school's performance.

1995	516	152	364	70.5%
1996	332	40	292	22%
1997	314	118	196	62.4%
1998	471	207	264	56%
1999	466	144	322	69.1%
2000	327	58	269	82.3%
2001	370	185	185	50%
2002	322	18	324	94.4%
2003	225	45	240	25.90%
2004	209	13	196	93.8%
2005	190	19	171	90%

Plate 5.2 Office poster showing Grade 8 pass-rate

²⁰ N.B. These dates are in the Ethiopian Calendar (EC). 2005 EC corresponds to the 2012/3 school year.

The pass-rate dropped to 73% in 2013/4 (2006 EC), and management labelled this a 'failure'. They raised this issue in the first staff meeting of the new year:

VD Yesuf: We have to work hard in collaboration so this will not be repeated in the future...The students' problems will be resolved if we have a good relationship with parents; otherwise, it will be difficult for us to handle it by ourselves.

Director Dawit: Regarding the Grade 8 results, even if all teachers are responsible [to some extent], the person with the greatest responsibility, in the end, is the teacher who is teaching them that year...This year is lower than all [the previous] years. All of our efforts are gone in vain. We have to work hard on our failures. We have to think how we are going to improve the weaknesses we have observed last year. We have to support the weak students by identifying them. We did assign the better-performing teachers for Grade 8, but because of our failure to continuously provide [after-school tutorials], we ended up like this. (Staff Meeting 21, FN435)

Management responded to the falling pass-rate by identifying mistakes at the levels of management, teachers and students, and planning cooperative strategies with parents to improve performance in the 2014/5 year. As indicated in the extract, management prioritises this grade over others by appointing the 'better-performing' teachers, and organising after-school tutorials. There are numerous other ways in which management prioritises this grade over others. For example, when there were timetable clashes, the Director personally took charge of scheduling for Grade 8, to minimise disruption to their lessons. He also called a meeting for the parents of Grade 8 students, in which he explained that the poor exam results had partly resulted from behavioural problems, and appealed to parents to advise their children to focus on their studies, and not disturb others. Of course, management is concerned with the pass-rate across all grades and subjects, but the special focus on Grade 8 exams within the *woreda* rankings encourages management to give these students special consideration.

Income generation

Ketema School receives less than 30% of its recurrent non-salary budget from the government, and is reliant on parental contributions for purchasing stationery and other essentials (see Box 5.1). As well as being necessary for meeting the school's basic

running costs, income generation is also a competitive measure by which the school is ranked against others in the *woreda*; for this reason, management seeks to boost revenue as a means of pursuing model school status.

Box 5.1 Ketema School budget, 2014/5²¹

<u>Income</u>	Money (in Birr)
Money transferred from the 2013/4 budget	19,329
Block grant to be allocated by government in 2014/5	20,000
School grant to be allocated by government in 2014/5	18,000
Fees from parents (1100 x 60 birr)	66,000
Lease for the school tearoom	2,000
Selling grass	1,000
Hosting evening school	3,000
Providing transcripts (to former students)	500
Others	1,400
Total income	131,229
<u>Expenditures</u>	
Stationery	50,229
Printing services (certificates, bills)	5,000
Office materials	3,000
Transporting materials	1,500
Refreshments for training and exams	20,000
Building and office machine maintenance	24,000
Electrical services	10,000
Telephone	3,500
Water and postal services	2,000
School furniture, materials	11,000
Contingency	1,000
Total expenditure	131,229

While management wishes to increase the school's budget, it faces a tension between generating sufficient funds to meet the school's running costs, and respecting parents' financial capacities. Fees are not legally enforceable, and so management must *persuade* parents to make these annual payments. In raising the annual fees from 40 Birr in 2013/4 to 60 Birr in 2014/5, management was anxious in case parents withheld payment, or criticised the school at a *tabia* (council) meeting. Management was careful to discuss the issue the PSTA (Parent, Student and Teacher Association) before hosting a public consultation. It was important for the community to reach consensus on the level of fees, and for parents themselves to support the increase.

²¹ This budget was produced by the Director in consultation with the Parent, Student and Teacher Association (PSTA) and reported to parents at a public meeting.

Income generation is not only a matter of survival, but a means of complying with external expectations, and management's desire to outperform other schools is a distinct motivator. For example, when I made material donations to the school I was asked for receipts so that their value could be tallied in the school's account. Management's wish to excel by this external measure of performance is distinct from its desire to provide for the material needs of the school.

Building the Education Development Army

Success at 'building the Education Development Army' is another measure by which the school is evaluated by the WEO. A WEO pamphlet described the Education Development Army as:

The collaboration starting from the REB to school teachers and administrators, which is working to assure quality of education, and which has an irreplaceable role in striving to achieve the government's policy and strategy. (FN244)

This conceptualisation of the education workforce as an army, 'striving to achieve the government's policy and strategy', has professional and political compliance at its core. Building the Education Development Army means ensuring that staff comply with external professional and political expectations; schools are ranked accordingly.

The WEO's assessment in this area draws partly on the school's internal performance appraisal system, wherein teachers are evaluated by students, parents and management, and receive an overall score out of 100 (see Ababayehu, 2005, p.621). In making its evaluation, management considers teachers' performance against 27 professional standards, including:

- 03. Quality weekly and daily lesson plans prepared and employed.
 - 09. Clubs and committees established to support the teaching and learning process.
 - 23. Readiness to accept work from school leaders.
 - 27. Group and individual projects carried out to achieve school goals.
- (Performance appraisal template, FN269)

Since the WEO's evaluation of the Education Development Army is based on these scores, management is concerned that no teacher achieves an unsatisfactory rating, as this would work 'against our aim to be a model school' (Director, PSTA Meeting 11).

As well as evidencing professional alignment, management is keen to demonstrate the political compliance of staff through participation in public events such as Martyrs' Day and *Yekatit* 11 (the Party's anniversary):

All teachers and students have to be active participants in the celebration of *Yekatit* 11 which will be celebrated by parading from the school to town. This will be made to recognise the opportunities we have enjoyed as the result of the struggle. (PSTA Meeting 5)

Political compliance is also demonstrated through financial contributions to government projects. In staff meetings, the Director encourages all teachers to buy bonds for the Renaissance Dam, make donations to the Meles Zenawi Foundation, and pay monthly subscriptions to the TDA (Tigray Development Agency), a Party-administered development organisation (Bahru et al., 2010) (Staff Meeting 7). The Director was pleased to report that all teachers had done so.

In this section I have reported on management's engagement with the professional and political dimensions of the external policy context. In a bid for Ketema to achieve model school status, management aims to comply fully with directives monitored by the WEO, and to excel at measures of performance by which the school is ranked against others.

5.1.3 Mobilising the school community

Management seeks to 'mobilise' the school community, coordinating the actions of teachers, students and parents to fully comply with external directives. This involves communicating expectations to all sections of the school community, and establishing internal monitoring and evaluation systems to determine whether responsibilities are being fulfilled. Those not meeting expectations are 'brought to the right track', especially through the use of public criticism.

Establishing collective expectations

Management seeks to shape norms regarding the responsibilities and practices of students, teachers and parents (cf. Abelman & Elmore, 1999, p.40).

Students. Management agendas regarding student attitudes and behaviour have been discussed already (see 5.1.1). The Director communicates expectations to students at the flag ceremony, reminding them to wear uniform, bring equipment and be punctual. He

explains that it is reasonable for students to arrive in school by 7:30 since they live nearby, whereas teachers have further to travel (FN480). Direct contact between management and students is generally limited to these assemblies, although expectations are also communicated through paintings on the walls of the school. For example, Plate 5.3 indicates appropriate conduct: the girl is studying beneath a tree, while the boy is carefully reading the question and thinking before writing his answer to a test.



Plate 5.3 A wall painting communicating expectations to students

Teachers. Management's principal means of communicating expectations to teachers is through staff meetings, where the dominant mode of talk is uninterrupted top-down communication from the Director. The Director gives information about forthcoming events (e.g. exams, meetings), explains new policies, and reinforces expectations around issues where there have been recent problems (e.g. attendance, punctuality).

When introducing a new policy, the Director explains what he wants people to do, anticipating possible misunderstandings or errors. For paperwork, he says how each section should be completed, and he talks it through with examples. He stresses the rationality and reasonableness of the policy; how it supports common efforts and concerns, such as saving time, or how it improves student behaviour or safety. A frequent justification for a policy is its use elsewhere, particularly at Hadinet, the model school in town. The Director explains how the policy relates to the activities of others (e.g. unit

leaders, students, the PSTA), and stresses the negative consequences which could arise from failing to act as instructed. Failure to fulfil expectations can lead to a teacher *personally* experiencing negative consequences, such as the disapproval of management or colleagues, public criticism, a negative performance rating, a financial penalty, or worse. To secure compliance, management is constantly formalising and extending the internal surveillance and accountability systems (discussed shortly). But above all, management seeks to convey a sense of interdependency, emphasising that everyone is reliant upon each other, and should undertake differentiated tasks towards common goals. These points are evident in the following extract from a staff meeting in which the Director introduced a new policy.²²

Dawit explains that the school will introduce a rota for teachers to arrange the students into lines at flag ceremony. This task falls to teachers because the directors are needed in the office, and the unit leaders must supervise the gate. Some teachers have already been getting the students into lines (he names two male elder teachers), but from now on there will be a formal rota, so that this task can be shared; later, the task will be delegated to the students.

He continues: ‘I see the young teachers this year. Last year, we were saying: “*You young teachers, why don’t you work?*” and arguing with each other. But now, everybody is striving. Some are organising students to carry the grass, some are arranging students’ lines...So, I can see that we are all good teachers...who work without being told: “*Do this! Work that!*” We are cooperating well...’

He returns to the subject of ‘line duty’, explaining that the appointed teachers should come to school early; by getting the students inside the compound and into their lines quickly they will be safe from traffic outside. They will soon adapt to the programme. For example, at Hadinet (*the model school in town*) students used to hang around in the street, but this has changed. Dawit says that he saw Hadinet staff ushering students inside while he himself was still walking to work. ‘So starting from myself, we should be corrected. We should bring a change like this. In order to follow in the footsteps of the model school.’ He continues: ‘I have seen things such as – water pouring out of the tap, and

²² For space and clarity I have paraphrased sections and used direct quotations (from an audio translation), as indicated.

students jumping over the bundles of grass, and there are some teachers who see them [and do nothing]. Sometimes I speak out: “*You teacher! While you are standing here, water is pouring onto the ground!*” and the like. We should speak it out frankly. If the ground around the tap gets muddy we are vulnerable to mosquitoes. Therefore...we should have a mechanism to check on who is making lines and who is not. We should be able to rank [teachers] each month...How do we rank? Based on the available differences: who comes on time? Who misses class and goes home? Who arranges the lines outside, and does something? Who strives more? Who is joking? In this manner, we should advise him and bring him to the right track. Therefore, some teachers are going to be responsible for the lines, based on the rota...’ (Director, Staff Meeting 24)

Parents. Management organises formal events in order to communicate expectations to parents. There is a ‘Parents’ Ceremony’ each semester, which includes songs and poetry performances, a management presentation and a consultation session. In addition to these, at different points in the year, meetings are held for particular grades. These events are organised to serve specific management purposes, (e.g. raising fees, consultation, improving student behaviour) and provide opportunities to communicate directly with large numbers of parents simultaneously (200+).

Unlike students and teachers, parents are not personally subject to the authority of management, and so establishing expectations requires persuasion. I will illustrate common management tactics using the example of the Grade 8 Parents’ Meeting, mentioned above. This meeting was held on a Saturday morning in the school hall, and around 150 parents attended. The Director opened the meeting by telling parents why he had invited them: Ketema’s Grade 8 results had dropped from the top to the bottom of the rankings. Everyone shared responsibility for this failure: management, teachers, students, and parents. He listed the problems with the staff and students before turning to the parents:

On the parents’ side, there was a problem in following up their children, and thinking that the students are already in the hands of the school, and not looking over their practices...what they have in their bags, where they’re spending their time, and even in doing their homework. As a result of all these factors, 51 students failed...For these students’ future, we have to do something better –

otherwise finally they will end up failing in Grade 10 or Grade 12, and so they will be troublemakers for your house. (Meeting 38, FN853)

Discussion in the meeting was tightly focused around the specific changes Dawit wished to see. Although the meeting lasted almost 2 hours, his message was clear from the outset: to improve the Grade 8 results, parents must follow up their children more closely. He made this criticism more palatable by criticising himself and his colleagues first, but his intention was to change the behaviour of some parents, and the belief that the school alone was responsible for the education of their children. In so doing, Dawit sought to share responsibility for the Grade 8 results with parents, to foster the sense of collective concern and mutual obligation. As in the staff meeting (discussed above), Dawit stressed the potential negative consequences of parents failing to take action: students who were inadequately supervised now, would later become ‘troublemakers for your house.’

Following this introduction, the Director proceeded to identify ‘good’ students by name, referring to their good deeds. He then launched into a far longer list of ‘bad’ students, giving explicit examples of each student’s misdemeanours: stealing another’s lunch, spitting at a teacher, hitting female students. Here Dawit was using positive and negative models as a means of establishing expectations – a common strategy, implicit in the various ranking systems used throughout the school and the *woreda*. A teacher explained to me that one reason for naming good and bad students in this way was to produce an emotional reaction: the parents of good students are proud, the others are jealous, which motivates them to improve their child’s performance (FN185). Of course, having one’s son or daughter publicly criticised can produce a negative response. Dawit anticipated this, and gave explicit guidance on how he intended parents to receive these reports. He told one mother:

Don’t quarrel or exchange bad words with your child at home, or say “*How can you shame me in front of the wider public?*” But instead, tell him: “*This and this has been said about you by your teachers, is that right or not?*” And if he admits it, you will try to bring him to the right track; and if he denies it then you will bring him in after a week, and we will meet face to face with the teacher. Here, the teachers and the school will do its best. (FN853)

Reaching the end of the list, Dawit invited three teachers to share their classroom experiences, and to offer advice on what parents should do to improve students’ behaviour

and results. After this, Dawit invited parents to share their ideas; those who did so largely reinforced the expectations which had been expressed by staff. The meeting ended with Dawit setting an ‘assignment’ for parents to improve their children’s behaviour; he would report back in a month’s time. This was said with self-conscious humour – he had no power to set homework for parents! – but of course, he was perfectly serious, too.

This meeting was an exercise in public relations, designed to establish collective expectations, and was typical of such events held throughout the year. Management draws from a repertoire of persuasive strategies: asserting identification with the school, and a shared responsibility for its goals; warning about the negative consequences when expectations are not met; presenting specific evidence; using public praise and criticism to produce an emotional response; and inviting others to voice opinions, which generally reinforce the views already expressed by management. Management often makes use of *others* to amplify its own agendas and to avoid the impression that its wishes are being imposed on the community.

Mutual surveillance: sharing responsibility for monitoring and evaluation

Having communicated its expectations, management delegates responsibility for monitoring and evaluating conduct within the school community to parents, students and teachers. All stakeholder groups are engaged in mechanisms of mutual surveillance as part of the school’s internal supervision system.

Each semester, teachers are evaluated by parents and students as part of the performance appraisal system (see 5.1.2). In parents’ meetings, the Director asks participants to raise any concerns they may have with teachers or management:

If there is a problem with the teachers, you tell us – we should speak out right here, face to face. If there is a problem with me, with Dawit, I should be told: “*We have this problem.*” If there is a problem with Teacher A** in guiding your children, in controlling them – then we should be told. If there is no transparency, then the students will be in trouble. (Director, Grade 8 Parents’ Meeting 38, FN853)

In grade *gim gimas* (public evaluation sessions), students evaluate their teachers and peers according to management-specified criteria, and the minutes are passed directly to the office for internal supervision purposes. In the classroom, monitors and other student

leaders are charged with recording peers' attendance and misdemeanours. Equally, these student leaders are monitored by their classmates, and evaluated in *gim gima* (discussed in 5.3).

Teacher leadership positions, including unit leader and subject department head (HoD), carry responsibilities for supervising colleagues' attendance, punctuality, and paperwork. In one Management Committee meeting, the Director explained the role of unit leader to three teachers shortly after they had been elected to the position by their colleagues:

We will give you [unit leaders] a reporting form and you will report to us through this, monitoring school work according to the rules and regulations. Check [whether] teachers are making students attend the flag ceremony, improving their discipline, following up on missed classes, and advising them to wear uniform...Inform us when there are irregularities and we can solve the problems together. (Meeting 23, minutes)

This extract illustrates the web of mutual surveillance within the school: teachers supervise students, unit leaders supervise teachers, and management supervises all, from the apex of the pyramid. In *gim gima*, staff publicly evaluate each other; accountability runs horizontally and vertically: bottom-up, as well as top-down. In *gim gimas* in the case data, teachers were criticised for lateness, absenteeism, beating students, and failing to control their classes; members of management were criticised for various misdemeanours, including rudeness, over-stepping authority, timetabling errors, and discriminating for or against particular teachers or students. *Gim gima* is a sophisticated mechanism for internal accountability, an outlet for expressing workplace frustrations and exposing misconduct; it is a means of promoting individual and collective learning from mistakes with a view to making specific changes in individual and collective behaviour, and bringing staff conduct in line with management expectations, as illustrated below.

Reinforcing the school ethos: aligning individual and school expectations

Management seeks to 'correct' the conduct of individuals who breach desired norms, to 'bring them to the right track', and ensure alignment within the school community. In so doing, management strategies typically include the elements described above: the use of public critique, and the identification of mistakes for the purpose of individual and collective learning. Criticising individuals *in public* has an intensifying effect, and is both a negative consequence for the individual criticised, and a stimulus for others to accept

management-identified norms. These points are illustrated in an extract from a staff meeting which occurred one month into the 2014/5 school year. There were more than 40 members of staff at the meeting. The Director began by raising problems identified through internal supervision: teachers' absence and lateness.

Director Dawit: ...We are governed by the Civil Servants' Proclamation and we have to respect that. Everyone wants to go to the church or mosque or visit religious sites, as the case may be, but our job is above all these things. Some teachers said they wanted [to go on a pilgrimage]. This is not acceptable and we cannot do such things again and again against the law. When we [denied permission,] they replied harshly that we could even cut their salary. Cutting the salary for days not worked is not a punishment in itself. If you have a justifiable reason you can bring that; as you know, we believe in reason. So, we don't have to say: *"I am going anyway and you can do whatever you want!"* Because the letters we write and the measures we take following this disobedience will ruin the motivation and commitment of the staff. It is better to do things in harmony, and strengthen ourselves to accomplish our work effectively... [*He criticises a young male teacher who was late to class earlier that week*] Teacher Desta, you have to say sorry when you are late.

Teacher Desta: No, I was in the toilet.

Dawit: Wait, I didn't give you the chance to speak. If we are late the children might fight, and how are we going to handle that? We have told teachers many times that they are late. Unless we do this, we cannot improve students' results. [When I attended a meeting at Hadinet School there were no students outside the classroom, so] what makes us different? We have to be a model.

Desta: The monitoring and regulation system is good, and it has to continue this way. I didn't say I wasn't late, and I even said sorry. Sometimes we might have some problem or some other work. I agree that I was late, but it is not good to blame people and be a fault-finder. A lot of teachers come late. It's a common practice, and there's nothing that I should be ashamed of. Let alone coming late by about 10-15 minutes, even if I missed 3 or 4 classes [this should be handled in the proper way, through the office].

Dawit: You called it ‘blaming’ but we are telling you about something that happened. Whatever words you use to describe it, if you are late you will be told so. We will not compromise the teaching-learning process.

Desta: I have nobody to be afraid of.

Dawit: Sure, you shouldn’t be afraid of anybody, but respect your job.

Teacher Mulu (*an elder male teacher who frequently challenges management in meetings*): I don’t know why you brought this issue here. You already discussed the issue with him yesterday and gave him a warning, I was there. What is the importance of raising it here if it is finished outside?

Dawit: Mulu, if you are late and we discuss it outside, I will still raise it here.

Mulu: Whatever the case, you didn’t let me finish. If you already gave him the necessary advice and comments, then why are you bringing this issue here? Why is this issue being repeated? Or, if you are making an annual evaluation then tell us.

Dawit: Have you finished?

Mulu: Yes.

Dawit: What I am trying to say is, instead of keeping such things hidden from the staff and collecting problems until the end of the year when we hold an evaluation meeting, it is good to raise it here so that others will learn from it. We are raising it here so that it will not be repeated. Telling staff not to repeat others’ mistakes is not a crime – we are talking about government work.

Teacher Yeshereg (*an older female teacher*): You [Director Dawit] have a problem. There are some whose shortcomings you cover. I was late only one day but he [Dawit] criticised me and my reply was polite and good. But you are covering the weaknesses of some teachers and this is your problem. It would be good if you treated us equally.

Dawit: What she has said is good. She is saying: “*You are covering weaknesses for some and exposing for others.*” If this is true, then where is the good governance, and what we are talking about all this time? And Teacher Yeshereg, your problem is you just say these words all the time but you are never specific.

For instance, you could have said: “*You are focusing on me but are loose with Teacher M***.*” Otherwise, it will be difficult for us to make the follow up. No, I am doing well. Our problem is everyone is speaking without raising hands.

Vice Director Yesuf: We have to internalise it. We have to take the strong sides and reject what we can’t accept. If there are things which are not clear for us, and there might be some teachers cheating us, then the staff should be supportive in this aspect: we have to be *revolutionary*.²³

Dawit: If there are teachers that we are covering, it is up to you to expose that.
(Staff Meeting 30)

In this extract, the Director highlighted the impartiality of the system; the fact that this was ‘government work’, bound by the rules of the civil service. He used positive and negative models to clarify expectations: Hadinet School was a positive model, worthy of emulation, while Desta was a negative model, an example of how *not* to behave. In response to a challenge from Teacher Mulu, Dawit asserted the value of public critique as a tool for collective learning. In response to Teacher Yeshereg’s accusation that management was ‘covering’ some teachers’ mistakes, Dawit accepted the *principle* of her critique, but requested supporting evidence. This would have required Yeshereg to denounce her colleagues, which she decided against.

Positive and negative models and public critique are common disciplinary tools for promoting alignment with management expectations. Other tools include financial penalties and legal action. Where possible, management avoids these measures since, as Dawit stated above, they ‘ruin the motivation and commitment of the staff.’ Fines are counterproductive, an ineffective means of ‘bringing teachers to the right track’; they are a last resort, when there is little hope of salvaging a relationship with a teacher. For example, when Teacher Biniam continued to beat students, despite repeated warnings, his salary was suspended for two months; this was an unusual case, which I will return to later. For the most part, criticism, advice and the threat of public censure is sufficient to bring individuals into line.

²³ Revolutionary (*woyane*) is an informal term for the Party and Party members.

Summary

From management's perspective, school serves national development by shaping future citizens who are disciplined, capable of accepting orders, and socialised towards government spaces which are neutral in terms of religion and gender. Given the importance of these tasks, there is no viable alternative to universal inclusion.

Management is subject to the directives and supervision of the WEO, and wishes to demonstrate compliance, and for Ketema to excel against those performance measures by which it is ranked against other schools in the *woreda*. In order to be identified as a model school, management prioritises Grade 8, and encourages staff to subscribe to government projects and attend parades on weekends. Management mobilises the school community around its agendas, establishing collective expectations, and sharing responsibility for ensuring these are fulfilled through universal participation in internal surveillance and accountability systems.

5.2 Teachers' agendas

Teachers' time in school is divided between two worlds, with different inhabitants and concerns. About two-thirds of teachers' time is spent in the classroom; the remainder is spent in or around the staffroom; marking, socialising with colleagues, or attending meetings. There is little overlap between these domains, which are treated separately, below.

5.2.1 The academic programme

Teachers perceive their work in terms of wider national development efforts, and attach a premium to national priority subjects, as well as their own subject of instruction. The primary agenda in the classroom is covering the textbook, a responsibility shared with students through student leadership and support structures. Teachers' desire that students benefit from the academic programme and progress through the grades is in tension with their desire for a more selective system which rewards hard work and mastery of the curriculum objectives.

Subjects, teachers and national development

Teachers told me that Science, Maths and English are the most important subjects. These are national priority areas, which receive a greater portion of curriculum time and are

supported by an after-school tutorial programme. These subjects are ‘necessary for the country for employment, for growth’ (Civics Teacher); ‘English, because it is the world language. Science, because it is the government’s requirement’ (English Teacher). Teachers were able to identify these national priorities with some confidence, since the 2014/5 school year began with a 10-day government training programme (*nay mengisti sil’tena*) hosted by the WEO, which included sessions on government policy and the role of teachers for national development. This training – which took place in the run-up to the May 2015 election, and was compulsory for all government employees – included a walking tour of a factory, so that teachers could witness the industrial development which had occurred under the Party’s stewardship.

In addition to these three priority subjects, teachers tend to stress the importance of their own specialist subject. Teachers express the value of their subject in terms of instrumental benefits for the country and individual students. For example, a Civics teacher told me that his subject promotes the democracy and respect for different cultures which is necessary for maintaining peace in an ethnically-diverse country such as Ethiopia. A Tigrigna teacher explained that his subject is the foundation for students’ learning in all other subjects. A PE teacher said that his subject encourages a healthy lifestyle, which is important when students leave school and enter the workplace.

These views reflect teachers’ preference to teach their subject of diploma specialism, as all teachers did, except a few who taught in the Aesthetics Department, which includes PE, Art and Music. These subjects are taught by a mixture of specialists and non-specialists, drafted in to fill staffing gaps. The latter, who teach Aesthetics subjects in addition to their main subject, attach little value to these unwanted commissions. For example, a Science teacher assigned to teach PE told me that the students didn’t really need a teacher for PE: they could do it ‘by themselves’ (FN271). An elderly Amharic teacher returned to school after a serious illness to find that his Amharic classes had been re-assigned to a younger member of staff, and he had been given Art classes to teach. The Aesthetics HoD explained that, historically, PE, Art and Music had been taught by ‘pregnant women and old people’; but their status had improved in recent years, since diplomas and degrees were offered in these subjects (FN82).

Most teachers enjoy teaching their specialist subject, and argue for its particular importance for national development. This reflects a concern for the country’s future, and

teachers' role in shaping the 'future citizens', as students are sometimes called. Teachers feel they are making a personal investment in Ethiopia's development, which is a source of pride. 'I've had many professors and doctors,' Teacher Gebreselassie told me in his 38th year of service (FN22). Such pride is sometimes mixed with feelings of self-pity, as teachers sense that they are sacrificing themselves without receiving a fair financial reward. The fate of former colleagues fuels these feelings of self-sacrifice. On retirement, since Gebreselassie will have no means of supporting himself in town, he must leave the place where he has taught generations of students, and return to the distant village of his childhood. Younger teachers shook their heads at this prospect. In Tigray, teachers are often compared to candles, lighting the way for those in the dark. One young teacher gave a sardonic interpretation of this popular saying: yes, he said, a teacher is like a candle: he provides light for others while he burns himself out (FN552).

Covering the textbook: a teacher's responsibility

The state-mandated curriculum for each subject is encapsulated in the textbook. Each year teachers produce an annual plan for covering the textbook. This is accomplished by dividing the number of pages by the total working days in the year (as specified in the REB calendar). This annual plan is then used to regulate the delivery. For some subjects, covering the textbook in the given time is no great challenge. A PE teacher told me that the plan helped him to pace himself: 'The textbook is [only] 130 pages. To finish in 1-2 months is simple, but it's for the year.' (FN422) At the other extreme, English teachers struggle to cover the textbook, especially when meetings and holidays encroach on the teaching time available. When management called for Second Cycle lessons to be suspended for three days during the Grade 8 mock exams, the Grade 6 English teacher Yerga complained to me: 'I'm not happy with this decision, we have a lot to cover.' (FN215) Gebreselassie's voice was hoarse from trying to finish the textbook – 'because the time is running out. So many interruptions this semester. We're behind, there's a lot to cover' (FN255). Both he and Yerga arranged weekend and after-school classes in order to complete the textbook within the grade. Covering the textbook is a teacher's primary agenda in classroom.

Mediating the textbook

Teachers do not mechanically implement the state-mandated curriculum: they mediate it according to their own interpretations and priorities. They take into account their

perceptions of students' needs and capacities, organisational norms (e.g. regarding seating plans, assessment practices), and others' expectations. 'Covering the textbook' does not mean a line-by-line adherence to its text, but working through it sequentially, adapting as necessary, and providing students with opportunities to engage with the subject and develop their knowledge and skills.²⁴

The textbook not only specifies what should be taught, but also provides instructions for classroom activities, effectively specifying *how* lessons should be taught. In my observations, the activities described in the textbooks consistently diverged from teachers' ideas about how activities should be arranged, and the organisation and even the purposes of activities were regularly adapted by teachers to better suit their ends. For example, textbooks frequently instruct students to work in pairs: 'Explain to your partner why...' 'Ask your partner the following questions...' (Grade 7 *English for Ethiopia*, Unit 1). In more than 100 lesson observations, I never saw teachers arrange independent pair-work as directed in the textbooks. When teachers did organise pair-work it was for the purpose of whole class instruction (Alexander, 2000), where a single pair of students stood before the class to model a dialogue or enact a scene. In organising peer activities, teachers directed students to work in their networks – the group of 6 or 7 students with whom each student shared a desk – rather than in pairs; in this way, teachers routinely adapted the textbook in line with the established seating and peer-work norms in school.

The issue of teachers' autonomy and constraint in mediating the textbook can be illustrated using the Grade 7 English teacher Gebreselassie as an example. Although his lessons followed the sequence of the textbook, he regularly omitted or adapted activities. For example, when the textbook directed students to do a matching exercise orally, he organised this as an oral activity in the lesson, and told students to write the correct answers in their exercise books for homework. It was the written product which he marked (with a tick and the word 'nice' or 'good', or else 'check'), thus transforming a predominantly oral activity into a written one. This reflected his preferred means of assessment, and the standard practice of other English teachers in the cluster. He felt certain aspects of the curriculum to be of questionable value, such as formal and informal letter-writing. He had studied this as a child some half-a-century before, and found no use for it outside the classroom: if he had to write a letter, he did so in Tigrigna (FN547).

²⁴ Similar findings are reported by Anderson-Levitt and Diallo (2003) in the context of Guinea.

Nevertheless, Gebreselassie taught letter-writing as the textbook directed, treating this as a necessary part of the curriculum. Activities which he judged to be of more peripheral significance, he skipped. For example: ‘Draw a picture of the house you would like to live in. Explain to your partner why you would like to live in such a house.’

As well as omitting and adapting sections of the textbook, Gebreselassie frequently introduced activities of his own. He regularly practised pronunciation with his students – a skill wholly absent from the textbook, but which he considered important. He introduced useful heuristics such as the ‘House of English’, which had 8 pillars labelled with the parts of speech. Another idiosyncratic touch was his habit of starting lessons by writing a proverb on the board: ‘The birth of wisdom is knowing that you know nothing’ (FN6). Students read and discussed the meaning of these proverbs, which served a moral as well as a language-learning function. Like Gebreselassie, other teachers supplemented the textbook with content they felt was important for students’ understanding. A Grade 5 Science teacher explained that many students arrived in his class with insufficient subject knowledge to undertake textbook activities as they were presented: ‘They don’t have [enough] knowledge – how can they do the activity?’ (FN268) He regretted the replacement of the previous textbook, which had been a better reference source for students. He told me that this required him to lecture more than he wanted to, in order to meet students’ informational needs.²⁵

Covering the textbook: limits to a teacher’s responsibility

Teachers do not cover the textbook alone, but with their students: it is a shared responsibility. Whatever efforts a teacher makes to instruct students directly, or to exert an influence on their social environment, meeting the curriculum objectives ultimately requires voluntary action on the part of students. This point is illustrated with an account of a Grade 7 lesson taught by Fanta, a non-specialist PE teacher:

It’s a sunny afternoon the week before *fasika* (Easter), and a lesson on the 100-metre sprint. Fanta has already covered the theoretical aspects of the sprint in the classroom; now he brings the students outside for the practical. At his request, several students clear the larger stones from the starting ground. He estimates it’s roughly 100 meters from here to the wall and back. He arranges the race in

²⁵ Similar teacher concerns were reported about student-centred curriculum reforms in Turkey (see Altinyelken, 2015, p.493).

same-sex pairs. Those waiting to run sit in the shade. Two boys go first, then two girls – one kicks off her sandals before taking the starting position. Fanta appoints a boy to act as ‘judge’ and continue selecting classmates to run. While the judge oversees the activity, Fanta comes over to talk to me.

Some of the students are afraid to run, he says.

Why, because of the stones on the field?

Yes, but also because some female students don’t have undergarments. Also, it’s fasting time for Orthodox Christians; they haven’t eaten or drunk water all day. So some students don’t want to participate.

‘Use your power!’ Fanta calls to the judge, who is encountering some resistance from his classmates.

After the lesson Fanta tells me he felt bad about racing the students, given the circumstances. ‘They are not strong – how could I send them? The field is dust and stones, and it’s not comfortable to run. So, I’m a risk-taker.’

The textbook requires all students to sprint, but ‘sometimes you worry about students’ potential and ability...’ He appointed the judge because he didn’t want to force students who didn’t want to sprint. ‘That’s my philosophy,’ he explains. ‘If they don’t come well prepared, I can’t order them.’ (FN46/57)

In the above extract not all students fulfilled the curriculum requirements, but the teacher discharged his responsibilities in terms of covering the textbook; the lesson was a success by this measure, if not fully in terms of students’ participation. The above account is taken from an outdoor lesson, but the same principles apply in the classroom, when – as lunchtime approaches – a teacher might not intervene to prevent a student from napping, or watching the walls in silence. Some students have not had breakfast or are exhausted; others are daydreaming. Teachers recognise forces beyond their control, and limits to their responsibility and influence.

Sharing responsibility for the academic programme: the student network system

The network system (also known as ‘one-to-five’) is a formal structure through which teachers share with students the responsibility for the academic programme. Each semester, students are ranked based on their academic performance. The highest-ranking students are distributed around the classroom, one per desk. These ‘network leaders’

(*gujiley halafi*) are responsible for supporting the learning of the 5 or 6 peers with whom they share a desk (see Figure 5.1).

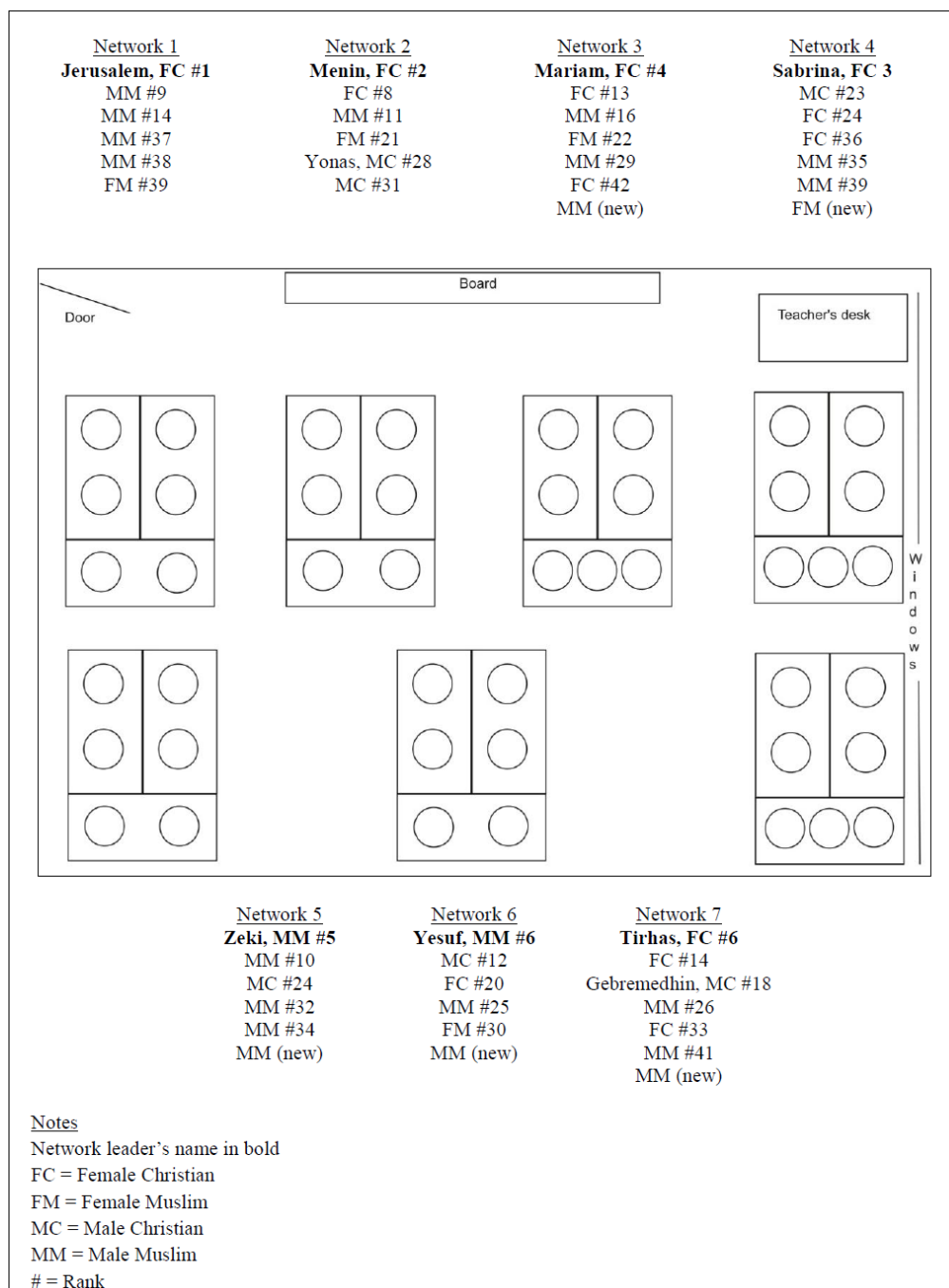


Figure 5.1 The classroom organisation of 7B in 2014/5

Network leaders not only support their peers by sharing work, answering questions and explaining concepts, but also facilitate group work during the lesson, which teachers said encouraged the participation of their peers. The organisation of seating around the network system offers every student a teacher-identified academic model. Even before the teacher enters the class, network leaders take out their textbooks and turn to the

appropriate page; they stand to greet the teacher; copy the date and title from the board; reinforce the teacher's call for silence; and act quickly upon instructions. The network system ensures that all students have such a positive model at their desks.

The network system is one mechanism through which teachers share responsibility with students for reinforcing compliance with the academic programme. Other mechanisms include the monitoring system and parents' meetings, discussed below (see 5.2.2).

Assessment and promotion

The academic programme is formally assessed in each subject as a basis for students' promotion. Quarterly exams account for 50% of a student's overall mark, and the remainder derives from continuous assessments, including marks for individual and group assignments, regular short tests in class, and for participation (judged by oral contributions in class, and work in exercise books). PE includes practical assessments, and some subjects include assessed practical components (e.g. making a periscope in Physics, writing a mock letter to a relative in Amharic); but otherwise, multiple-choice questions are used for all subjects/grades. The internal assessment system is oriented towards *promoting* students through the grades; the barriers to promotion are minimal. To pass the grade, a student must achieve a passing mark (<50%) in most subjects, and fail no more than 4 subjects. Those who fail 4 or more subjects are held back to repeat the grade – an unusual occurrence at Ketema. In 2013/4 the promotion rate across Grades 1-7 was 99.3%; in Grade 8 (which has an externally-assessed terminal exam) the promotion rate was 73.84%, although in recent years this figure had also been in the 90s. Both internal and external assessment systems are oriented towards promotion rather than repetition of a grade. Teachers express mixed feelings about these practices, with tensions between the wish for an inclusive system and one which is more selective.

There are a number of considerations, indirectly related to assessment, which support a low barrier to promotion. As described above, teachers believe in the value of their subjects for individual students and for national development. They want *all* students to participate in the academic programme at Ketema and to continue to high school; a system oriented towards promotion offers this opportunity. Furthermore, teachers favour an equitable division of responsibilities (see 5.2.3); a low barrier to promotion results in similar numbers of students in each grade, and a roughly equal distribution of students between teachers (more stringent promotion criteria would lead to large classes in First

Cycle and dwindling numbers in each successive grade). This results in classes with a wide range of academic attainment, which the network system is designed to support.

Another advantage to low barriers stems from the perceived inadequacies of assessment practices. Teachers tend to view the quality of their assessment instruments with some scepticism. Although teachers themselves produce these exams in collaboration with their subject/grade counterparts in the cluster, they are often unhappy with the finished product. Typed by a secretary from handwritten notes, the exams contain numerous typographical errors (e.g. x^2 is written $x2$, words are misspelled, questions mis-numbered or rendered unanswerable). On exam day, teachers scuttle between classes to warn students about the errors. The ubiquitous use of multiple-choice questions is also seen as problematic, but teachers maintain this practice due to the pressure of marking 200+ scripts within one or two days. Another issue is the level of students' examination skills. When students perform poorly in the test, teachers often reason that this is because they have not read the questions properly. Teachers generally feel that students know more than they are able to demonstrate in the exam. These considerations favour a system in which students are promoted easily through the grades.

At the same time, many teachers wish for a more *selective* system, in which assessment functions as a sorting mechanism, restricting promotion to those who meet the grade-level curriculum objectives. Such a system would be similar to that which teachers themselves had experienced in their childhood. Most teachers had also spent the large part of their professional lives working in a system with more stringent, discriminating promotion policies. They felt that selection encourages respect for work. Furthermore, promoting students who have not mastered curriculum objectives creates problems in later grades. A Grade 8 Maths teacher explained:

Grade 5 and 6 is the base, the ground level. If at Grade 5 and 6 he is better, then at Grade 7 and 8 he will be better. Have you seen in Grade 8? They cannot calculate a simple equation. I am very afraid of them. They don't know multiplication – in *Grade 8!* (FN801)

While teachers may wish for a more selective system, the matter is largely beyond their control.

Teachers particularly dislike awarding ‘group marks’, which they are required to do once or twice a semester (FN116). Teachers complain about this if they feel that a student has unfairly benefited from another’s effort. A teacher told one male student:

Because of [the network leader’s] effort, I think, you have become attached to this mark. So, what can we do? This is the government’s policy; you are benefited as a result of her effort. (Tigrigna Lesson 97, FN712)

Teachers sometimes refuse to comply with the policy. For example, a Physics teacher awarded zero marks to students who did not contribute to their group’s project; he also refused to provide a ‘re-sit’ for a student who missed his exam, despite a personal appeal from the Director (FN737). This teacher was not happy in his work, and resigned from the teaching profession a few months later.

As we have seen in this section, teachers value their subjects highly, and wish all students to study hard and benefit from the curriculum. Pitted against this is their desire to enforce standards, whereby only those who master curriculum objectives are promoted.

5.2.2 Shaping students ethically

Teachers’ classroom agendas are not limited to the academic programme; they also seek to ‘shape students ethically’ (WEO pamphlet, FN244), influencing their values and behaviour in line with teachers’ notions of how students should act in school, and in the future. Students should *look* like students, take responsibility for their own studies, and share collective responsibility for the learning and conduct of their peers. When students fail to meet expectations teachers seek to ‘bring them to the right track’, using public shaming strategies and involving parents, if necessary, in order to encourage compliance.

Looking like a student

Like management, teachers expect students to be punctual, wear uniform, and possess the correct equipment: bag, textbooks, exercise books, pen. Teachers reinforce these rules, while reprimanding those whose conduct is deficient: ‘Punctuality, okay? You are, what? Late.’ (English teacher, FN24); ‘You should have brought your textbook instead of disturbing others’ (Tigrigna teacher, FN712). The personalisation of uniform is discouraged. Hats must not be worn in class, even if a student has a cold (FN126). But teachers pick their battles: during the World Cup 2014, I counted two boys with ‘MESI 10’ written in biro on the back of their jumpers, which (being irreversible) seemed to

evade teachers' attention; however, when two boys put chalk in their hair to impersonate the footballer Paul Pogba, their tutor became so enraged that she beat them with a eucalyptus branch. Personalising uniform on religious lines is more contentious. I never saw teachers act to remove the small wooden crosses which some Orthodox students wore around their necks, but I did witness teachers tell female Muslims to remove their headscarves. According to the Chemistry teacher there was a pedagogical basis for this:

If they cover their ears with a headscarf, the teacher's voice will not be audible for the students who are sitting at the back...If we have to keep telling students to take off their headscarves when they enter and exit, then so much time will be wasted. So in order to avoid these problems...you should advise [your children].
(Grade 8 Parents' Meeting 38, FN853)

It was not only in class that teachers made such objections. After telling one Grade 8 student to remove her headscarf, a male Christian teacher explained to me: 'Out of the campus they can wear it as they like, but inside – is forbidden' (FN103). However, a male Muslim told me there was no such rule, students could wear headscarves if they wished (FN270). This was a rare point of disagreement amongst teachers concerning the issue of uniform.

Taking responsibility for their studies

Recognising that the effort of students is pivotal to the success of the academic programme, teachers encourage in them a sense of responsibility for their learning and progress. I have already mentioned Gebreselassie's practice of using proverbs at the start of lessons. On one occasion, this read: 'Learning is the key word in the world.' After discussing this with the class (to establish that 'key' was not literally *kulfe*, a door key), he explained:

You have to learn, it means: everybody has to learn – being youngsters, starting from this time. Learning means coming with uniform and carrying textbooks and [studying] when you go home. You are coming here to learn, to gain knowledge. Learning is writing, reading, speaking, answering, asking – and so on and so on...Some say: "*I will learn tomorrow.*" You can never say so. You can put [aside a] thing, or money for tomorrow, but *learning* cannot be put for the next. "*I will learn tomorrow.*" We cannot say so: we have to learn right now. So, there are some students who kill time: they come late, they don't do

their homework; they don't write, they don't speak, they don't ask, they don't answer – and so on. This is a problem...So don't kill time, you have to learn starting from here. (FN604)

Through such advice, teachers encourage students to internalise a sense of academic responsibility.

Taking responsibility for each other

Gebreselassie returns students' marks after a short test in which the class has performed poorly. 'This is the result of, what? Disturbing, not getting on with your work. You don't ask, huh? You don't follow attentively in class. Because of this and that you have failed. Even the clever students, or those who are assumed to be clever, have scored 0, 1, 2 – the highest is 3! Compared to the other sections, you are one up from the last. There is a problem. It has to be investigated, this section's performance...Monitors, network leaders: *you* are going to be responsible for this mark.' (FN759)

Teachers seek to build students' sense of collective responsibility towards their peers: to support each other's learning, regulate behaviour, and work together to resolve problems facing the group. As in the quote above, teachers reinforce students' group identity and make comparisons between groups to stimulate competition. One tutor told his class that they were on the 'blacklist' in the office, and asked how would they clear their names? (FN191); another challenged his class to a difficult Maths assignment, saying that the class next door had managed to solve the problem (FN705). The same tactics of asserting group identification and comparison are used at the network level. A particularly successful network earned the title 'Network Hayelom' after a TPLF hero (FN649); another was dubbed 'the accidental network' for failing to answer the teacher's questions (FN658).

The student body is organised in such a way as to facilitate mechanisms of peer support and control. Each class selects two monitors, a male and a female, who are charged with monitoring attendance, recording misdemeanours, and maintaining working conditions in class in the absence of a teacher. By controlling the class in this way, teachers in neighbouring rooms are able to continue teaching, and students can continue their studies. Another important peer support mechanism is the network system (discussed above). Both the network and monitoring systems delegate responsibility to students for

supporting the learning and behaviour of their peers. Teachers also rely on students to undertake other duties, such as cleaning the classroom, organising clubs, and identifying students in need of material support from the school. Such delegation of responsibilities serves the practical function of supporting teachers' work, while fostering students' sense of social responsibility towards their peers and others.

While only a minority of students are appointed to positions of leadership, all students are expected to participate in systems of mutual surveillance and evaluation. Students evaluate their peers in *gim gima* (public evaluation sessions). In sessions I attended, students criticised each other for persistent lateness, cheating in tests and being rude to teachers (FN420). Monitors were criticised for failing to control behaviour in class (FN191), network leaders for failing to support their peers, and others for refusing assistance (FN420). *Gim gimas* function as an internal accountability mechanism (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999), by which students hold their peers accountable for their conduct in line with collective expectations.

Bringing students to the right track

When students fall short of behavioural requirements teachers seek to 'bring them to the right track', or encourage them to internalise appropriate behavioural norms. This can involve the teacher simply giving a look or a few words of disapproval – 'You don't look like a student.' (Tigrigna lesson, FN712), but often it involves an element of public shaming, and being ridiculed in front of classmates. This is illustrated in the following incident from the first week of the new school year.

Gebreselassie announces: 'Everyone has done their homework, except one.

Stand up. What's your name?'

'Zeki.'

'What? Come and write on the board.'

Zeki comes to the front, takes a piece of chalk from the teacher, and writes his name on the board. He tries to return the chalk.

'Make it bigger,' Gebreselassie says, handing him the duster.

Zeki rubs out his name and writes it bigger.

'Zeki is a *special* name,' says Gebreselassie, flashing a wry smile; the class responds with laughter.

Returning to his desk Zeki is told to stand on his bench 'as punishment'. This

he does, but the real punishment has already been dispensed; he is sniffing back tears. (English Lesson 54, FN507)

Bringing students to the right track often incorporates public shaming and the normative social influence of peers. If misbehaviour persists, teachers meet students outside lesson-time to give advice, often in the presence of a parent. Such advice is recorded in the class register.

12/02/06. [Boy 1] continuously failed to do his homework, and so I was given a first warning. *Student's signature*

04/03/06. I, [Mother], put my signature to agree to control and follow up on [Boy 2], who has been continuously absent from class. *Mother's thumbprint*

03/09/06. [Boy 3] is a troublemaker in the class. He disturbed the class repeatedly and left during a Maths lesson, so he is a bad example to the others. In the presence of his mother, ***, he has been given a heavy warning. *Mother's signature*

By involving parents, teachers hope to share responsibility for bringing students into line with their behavioural expectations.

5.2.3 Relationships with teachers

Having presented teachers' agendas in the classroom, I turn to their priorities and preferences in relation to other aspects of the workplace – working conditions and their relationships with colleagues. Teachers enjoy the companionship and support of their colleagues, but also monitor each other's conduct to ensure fairness.

Companionship, commonality and mutual support

Teachers attach a high value to the companionship of their colleagues. They enjoy socialising (*tch'awat*) outside lessons, and many return to school early after lunch to do so. Friendship is expressed through telling stories and jokes, and mutual teasing for losing hair, or getting fat or thin or old, or having bad luck (cf. Woods, 1979). Sitting in the shade and passing the time in this way is enjoyable, and former colleagues return to the school to engage in this activity. One ex-colleague said that the best thing about Ketema was the sociability of the staff – he missed this at his new school. Some long-serving teachers enjoy a special status and reputation as great entertainers; circles form around

them. By contrast, recent arrivals are more peripheral, especially the contract teachers who are transient members of the school community. Contract teachers are sometimes unsure whether or not they are welcome at social events, and tend not to participate in coffee ceremonies. However, they also seek the companionship of colleagues, and group together for this purpose.

Religious and other social occasions are major events in school life: saints' days, weddings and end-of-year parties are opportunities for teachers put on their best clothes, and eat, drink and dance together. In bringing people together for a 'non-work' purpose, these events erode bureaucratic and generational boundaries and emphasise commonality and group identity; teachers, parent governors, the caretaker and the Director dance together in the same circle. Particular attention is paid to demonstrations of respect and commonality between Muslims and Christians, who participate in each other's religious ceremonies. At *Mariam Ginbot*, an Orthodox festival which was held in the school one weekend, Muslim staff participated in the feast and the dance and made pledges alongside their Christians colleagues. One Muslim teacher, a senior figure at the local Sharia Court, compèred the event. This reinforced feelings of community, centred around the school.

There are strong expectations of mutual support and reciprocity amongst colleagues. A teacher who is busy with a college assignment can give his exam scripts to another to mark; he can even ask a colleague to write the assignment for him; or if he needs to leave school early, he can sometimes swap his lesson with a colleague. Teachers freely assist each other, knowing that favours will be returned (see also Elleni Tedla, 1995, p.56; Hendrie, 1999, p.54). In addition to informal, individual arrangements, formal organisations exist for teachers' mutual support, for example, the Teachers' Association and the Social Committee, to which teachers make monthly subscriptions. The Teachers' Association uses collective purchasing-power to secure bulk discounts on essentials such as bedding and *teff* (the staple grain). The Social Committee coordinates labour and materials for social events, provides emergency loans to members, and calls for attendance at weddings and funerals. All teachers are expected to contribute to the civic life of the school for the benefit of all. This includes providing labour and money for social events, accepting unpaid positions of responsibility such as Head of Department (HoD) or unit leader, and undertaking projects to procure ICT or sports equipment for the school.

Competition and mutual surveillance

The desire for personal advantage puts teachers in competition with each other – for a lighter teaching load, a more favourable timetable, or paid external invigilation and marking commissions. These are zero-sum issues: one teacher's gain is another's loss. The pursuit of personal gain is balanced against the desire for harmonious relations with colleagues, and their mutual surveillance is a regulating mechanism, promoting a more equitable distribution of benefits.

Many teachers' salaries are insufficient for their needs. Teachers earn extra money through various means: working as a barber, keeping chickens, coaching a football team – one junior teacher even worked as a shoe-shine. Teachers seek to take on activities in school which carry *per diems* or special allowances (for a similar discussion in the context of Malawi, see Davies et al., 2003, pp.146-147). The school presents limited options for teachers to supplement their income: external invigilation and marking carry *per diems*, and there are occasional payments for bulk administrative tasks, such as copying lists of names by hand. Leadership roles such as unit leader and HoD entail a considerable amount of additional work without an increase in salary or reduction in teaching load. Teachers are nominated to these positions by their colleagues for a fixed term. A teacher might avoid an unwanted appointment by being visibly active in another area – for example, by working on the Social Committee, or establishing an ICT centre (FN435). One small compensation for being made HoD is a seat on the Curriculum Committee, which selects individuals for paid invigilation and external marking. A seat on the committee increases one's chance of selection. Even so, selection is not guaranteed, and HoDs may relinquish these commissions under pressure from colleagues. For example, at one *gim gima* a teacher complained that the Curriculum Committee had simply 'selected themselves' for paid invigilation, without informing others (Meeting 13, FN192). The Director defended the committee members' right to do so, but when the next *per diem* opportunity arose, the committee members nominated others for the work. The sums at stake were small (the *per diem* was around 60 Birr, a teacher's daily wage) and could be regarded as legitimate compensation for the additional unpaid work undertaken by the HoDs, but their colleagues' disapproval led them to forgo their individual interests in this case.

Timetabling was another point of contention. At one staff meeting some teachers complained that unnamed colleagues, dubbed ‘insiders’, had been given lighter schedules and more favourable slots in the timetable. Director Dawit conceded that he had considered personal factors during the scheduling process. Of one teacher he said:

I would prefer it if [she] were free from teaching. We saw her, she walks slowly; the distance that would take us 5 minutes takes her 40 minutes. Since it is a job, she is still coming. But it is preferable to support them before they die.

Otherwise, what is the point of contributing money after they are dead? (FN671)

In a lively discussion, teachers argued in favour of some colleagues receiving a lighter workload, but insisted that *they* should vote on who would receive special treatment. The cases of several teachers were heard and the staff voted, resolving the matter to everyone’s satisfaction. In both cases discussed above unpopular decisions were made in ‘closed’ spaces (Gaventa, 2006), to which access was limited to members of management and other privileged staff. By challenging these decisions in staff meetings, teachers brought closed decision-making processes under collective scrutiny, resulting in a fairer distribution of benefits.

5.2.4 Relationships with management

Management and teaching: separate domains

Teachers want management to focus on what they perceive to be its necessary and legitimate concerns: leadership and governance, including decision-making regarding the budget; the coordination and supervision of all groups within the school community, ensuring that there are clear expectations and effective working relationships; the purchase, maintenance and repair of physical resources (furniture, power lines, toilets), and working to increase the resources available to the school. Teachers attach a high priority to management efforts which improve relations with parents: management should ‘meet with the community to resolve problems in school’ (Tigrigna teacher); ‘establish a good relationship with the school community [because] parents need to play a pivotal role in improving students’ results.’ (Civics teacher) For these reasons, teachers rely on the technical skills of management to communicate persuasively with parents and others, to produce functioning timetables, and to design efficient, impartial systems that regulate the school community. While expecting management to be efficient and impartial, many

teachers also want management to make allowances for them as individuals. What teachers do *not* want is management to involve itself in what happens in the classroom: this is the teachers' domain. Management may communicate expectations regarding the use of group work and learning aids – that's its prerogative. However, in their own classrooms, teachers will use the methods they think best for covering the textbook.

Doing the minimum paperwork necessary

Despite the emphasis management gives to paperwork as evidence of compliance with external policy requirements (see 5.1.2), teachers attach little value to this aspect of their work. Teachers describe lesson plans and the various other planning and reporting documents they must produce as wasted effort, carried out 'for the sake of paperwork' (FN260), 'it only kills time' (FN301).

The *woreda* already has this information, but every year they ask for this document. They just take it, and throw it away. (Gebreselassie, FN801)

Since teachers cannot avoid paperwork, their priority is to complete it as quickly as possible and with the minimum effort. Lesson plans are a good example of this. There is a two-step quality assurance process for lesson plans, which in principle allows teachers to receive feedback and suggestions from HoDs and management. Each week, teachers write their lesson plans for the coming week on a standard template, which is checked by the HoD on Friday, and re-checked by management on Saturday. Despite inspecting a great number of these lesson plans, I never saw any comment other than 'good' or 'seen', and the plans themselves were largely unintelligible, containing limited and superficial information (see Appendix 8: Example lesson plan). Teachers told me that there is insufficient space on the template to write a detailed plan – it would be illegible (FN187); and I observed HoDs ticking the plans without reading them. One teacher contended that, since all the teachers at Ketema are experienced, there is no need for feedback. Furthermore, I never saw teachers use these plans in class; if they need to refer to notes during the lesson, they write them on a separate sheet or in an exercise book. In short, the plans serve no purpose other than providing evidence of their own existence, as per external policy requirements. Teachers' completion of lesson plans and similar paperwork is an example of 'counter-conduct' (Foucault, 2007; Death, 2010; Niesche, 2015), described as 'the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price' (Foucault, 2007, p.75) or 'the art of not being governed quite so much' (ibid., p.45).

In producing largely unintelligible paperwork, teachers effectively invalidate the declared purpose of the paperwork accountability trail, while not escaping the requirement to produce *something*.

As I have argued, teachers largely regard paperwork as a waste of time. An exception to this rule is the paperwork relating to student attainment. Each quarter, teachers calculate the pass/fail rate, and the percentage of students within different ranges of attainment. Completing this paperwork is intellectually engaging, and the statistics themselves are useful: teachers memorise them, and share them with students, parents, and colleagues, to compare performance between classes, grades and subjects. What distinguishes the student attainment paperwork from the plans discussed above is its *utility* to teachers. What teachers regard as a waste of time is paperwork irrelevant to their classroom practice. On this issue, teachers are at odds with management (discussed in 5.1.2).

Summary

Like management, teachers also see the importance of their work in terms of national development. Their primary interest in the classroom is covering the textbook, in line with their perceptions of students' needs and capacities, and their own curricular priorities. Through the network and monitoring systems, teachers share responsibility for supporting the academic learning and behaviour of students; and they also seek to engage parents to the same purpose. While teachers wish all students to benefit from the academic programme, they also favour higher standards for promotion, feeling that this would encourage students to take more personal responsibility for their studies. Teachers' desire for more stringent standards puts them in tension with management, which is motivated to promote as many students as possible, in order to be identified as a model school.

Outside the classroom, teachers enjoy the companionship of their colleagues. At the same time, certain issues bring them into competition with each other, such as the desire for a favourable timetable, and opportunities for additional payments. Teachers are vigilant in case others derive benefits unfairly, and hold management accountable for ensuring the fair distribution of benefits. While management expends a large amount of time and energy on paperwork, teachers regard this as needless effort, unless it serves their classroom agendas. They resist this quality control mechanism by completing paperwork with minimal effort, often rendering it useless in the process. Management is unable to

take effective action against this ‘counter-conduct’ (Foucault, 2007) since teachers *are* complying with the external policy requirements, and yet doing so ineffectively.

5.3 Students’ agendas

This section draws from data collected in over 110 observations of lessons, exams, *gim gimas* and other timetabled activities in school (see Appendix 5), and from one class in particular, Section B, which I tracked closely over an 8-month period as it passed from Grade 6 into Grade 7. The data from 6/7B include observations of 64 lessons, 11 examinations and 2 *gim gima*; daily observations of students’ activities at break-time and flag ceremony; and Tigrigna questionnaires completed by all 45 students in 7B.

Like all tutor groups, Section B was a mixed ability class which studied all lessons together. At the start of the 2014/5 year, 7B comprised 45 students aged 11-15 who were divided into 7 networks (see Figure 5.1). 7B’s weekly timetable is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 7B’s timetable (2014/5)

Time / Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
07.45 – 08.00	<i>Flag ceremony followed by registration with tutor in classroom</i>				
Period 1 08.00 – 08.45	Maths	English	Biology	Maths	Tigrigna
Period 2 08.45 – 09.30	Amharic	Chemistry	Civics & Ethical Ed.	Civics & Ethical Ed.	Civics & Ethical Ed.
Period 3 09.30 – 10.15	Biology	Maths	English	Chemistry	English
10.15 – 10.30	<i>Break</i>				
Period 4 10.30 – 11.15	Tigrigna	Social Studies	Social Studies	Physics	Amharic
Period 5 11.15 – 12.00	Physics	Music	Maths	English	Physics
12.00 – 14.45	<i>Lunchtime</i>				
Period 6 14.45 – 15.30	English	PE	Tigrigna	PE	Biology
Period 7 15.30 – 16.15	Social Studies	Amharic	Chemistry	Physics	Maths
16.15	<i>Clubs / home-time</i>				

The time allocated to each subject is similar throughout Second Cycle (Grades 5-8), with a few variations. For example, Science (studied in Grades 5 and 6) is trifurcated into Physics, Chemistry and Biology in Grade 7; and Art is not studied beyond Grade 6.

5.3.1 Engaging with the academic programme

As demonstrated in this section, students' engagement with the academic programme reflects the general view that formal education supports their future career prospects. Students tend to attach differential value to subjects according to their perceived relevance. Their engagement in the classroom reflects a balance of their long-term interests against more immediate concerns.

Career aspirations

In a questionnaire completed by all 45 students in 7B, I asked: '*What would you like to do when you leave school? What can you do in school that will help you achieve this?*'²⁶

In response to the first part of this question, six students did not state a career aspiration, and a few expressed multiple preferences, all of which are tallied in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Self-reported career aspirations of students from 7B

Future profession	Female Christian	Female Muslim	Female total	Male Christian	Male Muslim	Male total	Network leaders	Total
Doctor	6	3	9	1	3	4	4	13
Engineer	4	2	6	1	5	6	1	12
Mechanic	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	3
Pilot	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	2
Sportsperson	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	2
Teacher	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	2
Captain	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	2
Prime minister	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Bank manager	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Merchant	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Carpenter	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Muslim preacher	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Scientist	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Factory worker	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Total responses	14	5	19	5	19	24	6	43
Total students	12	6	18	6	21	27	7	45

Females made proportionately more responses than males, suggesting that they had given more thought about what they would do when they left school. The most common career preferences reflected national-level priority areas – healthcare and infrastructure

²⁶ If I was writing this question again, I would re-phrase it to remove the leading assumption that students' activities in school are necessarily linked to their future plans. In analysing the responses after leaving the field, I regretted the missed opportunity to learn what else, besides school, students saw as important for achieving their career aspirations, especially those whose ambitions did not require high school education.

development (MOFED, 2010). Engineering was the most popular choice for boys, with girls favouring a career in medicine. Network leaders, the top-ranking students in class, largely favoured these two professions. Gender patterns are evident in students' career choices, with males identifying a wider range of professions than females. However, one third of females expressed the desire to enter the traditionally male-dominated profession of engineering, which reflects a shift in traditional gender expectations as advocated by management and the state (see 5.1.1). Only one response was incompatible with the official aims of the school, that of Khelil who wanted to become a Muslim preacher. The questionnaire did not ask students *why* they wished to pursue a particular career, but many expressed their motivations, which often reflected an eagerness to help others and serve the country: 'I want to make my country proud', to become a 'doctor, to serve the public', 'to provide medicine and treatment for people who are sick'; 'building a school to support others to reach a better standard'; 'I want to be prime minister because I want to help other students to learn like I have.' Doctors and engineers are considered to be well-paid, but no-one explicitly mentioned money as an incentive; only one boy said he would do any job in order to support his family.

Most students (82%) aspired to careers requiring formal education beyond primary school, with most additionally requiring a college or university qualification. Fulfilling these ambitions would require them to remain in school and gain sufficient marks to pass exams. Only 28 students addressed the second part of the question, asking what they could do to help them achieve their ambitions. Most such responses indicated the importance of active effort: 'studying hard and listening attentively in class', 'following attentively', and 'reading what we have done in class'. Ten students also recognised the importance of specific subjects for their ambitions.

Valuing the academic programme: future relevance

Students do not value all aspects of the academic programme equally. One factor which affects their valuation of a subject is its perceived utility. The 7B questionnaire asked students to identify their favourite subject, and any they disliked. Some students expressed more than one preference and their responses are tallied in Table 5.3.²⁷

²⁷ The questionnaire was completed during a Maths lesson in the presence of the teacher, which may have influenced students' responses out of a desire to please him or because it put the subject more firmly in mind. For similar reasons, my presence may have encouraged students to write English. However, students' preference for Maths, English and Physics also came up often in conversations with students around school.

Table 5.3 Students' favourite and disliked subjects

	Favourite	Dislike
Maths	21	0
English	13	2
Physics	7	0
Chemistry	4	0
Tigrigna	4	1
Biology	3	0
Amharic	3	1
Social Studies	2	2
Civics	2	1
PE	2	3
'Science'	1	0
Total responses	62	10

n=45

Most students felt positively about the academic programme: favoured subjects exceeded those disliked by a factor of six. Most often, students reported there were *no* subjects they disliked. A female student who ranked #2 in class explained: 'If we hate education it will not be good for our future.' As Table 5.3 shows, the most popular subjects were Maths, English and Physics, which teachers also told me were the most important (see 5.2.1). In 7B's responses there was a direct correlation between the curriculum time allocated to a subject and the frequency of stated preference. Table 5.4 shows the number of lessons per subject per week against the order of students' preference.

Table 5.4 Students' favourite subjects against curriculum time allocation

Subject	Order of preference	Curriculum time allocation (lessons per week)
Mathematics	1 st	5
English	2 nd	5
Physics	3 rd	4
Chemistry	4 th	3
Tigrigna	4 th	3
Biology	5 th	3
Amharic	5 th	3
Social Studies	6 th	3
Civics	6 th	3
PE	6 th	2
Music	N/a	1

This indicates that students preferred subjects they were taught most often, or to put it another way, their priorities were aligned with those of the Regional Education Bureau (REB), which established the curriculum. The most common explanations given for favouring a subject were: 'because it is easy for me to understand,' and 'because I

understand it well.’ Students want to understand their subjects. The second most common reason for favouring a subject was its perceived utility, often in relation to aspirations: ‘English, because if I have to go outside Ethiopia then I will need to know it.’ ‘Science, because I want to be a doctor.’ Less common were responses indicating that students favoured a subject for its intrinsic qualities: ‘Tigrigna, because I want to know the language in depth’; ‘English, because listening and speaking it pleases me.’

Only ten out of 45 (22%) students expressed dislike for a subject; eight of these were male. Half of the negative ratings were directed at school-level factors, extrinsic to the subjects themselves, for example: Amharic, because the teacher had been absent that week; English, because it was difficult to find reference materials (the library had been closed for several months). Where students’ dislikes *were* targeted at the subjects themselves, responses stressed their perceived irrelevance:

Civics and Ethical Education because I don’t want to be a lawyer or a judge or anything associated with law. (Male Christian)

Social Studies because it is all about history and nothing else, which bored me most. (Male Muslim)

English, because it’s not my language. (Female Muslim)

The questionnaire responses indicate a low regard for subjects in the Aesthetics Department. Music and Art received no mention, and PE attracted the most negative comments: ‘I hate activities like running’; ‘it hurts our physical parts’; ‘it is practical all the time and we don’t write about sports’. The comparatively low status of these subjects echoes the views of the non-specialist teachers assigned to teach in the Aesthetics Department (see 5.2.1). However, PE was favoured by two students, including one boy who reported nothing else he *did* like about school.

Patterns of engagement in the classroom: balancing long- and short-term interests

I have reported on students’ long-term interests, their differential valuation of subjects in the academic programme, and how, in the majority of cases, the fulfilment of their career ambitions required studying hard, exam success, and continuing their education into the secondary and tertiary phases. In the daily round of classroom life, these long-term interests were balanced against more immediate concerns, resulting in different patterns of engagement.

About one third of students in 7B (13 out of 45) were enthusiastically committed to the academic programme. Their behaviour was consistent with the dominant long-term agendas mentioned above, and their immediate concerns in the classroom were focused on *deriving knowledge* and *seeking the teacher's approval*. They responded quickly to teachers' instructions, and only got into trouble through misunderstandings, or their desire for more than their fair share of attention (FN534). They followed their lessons attentively, completed their classwork and homework without getting bored, and were respectful and polite to teachers and others (FN176). They received 'A' ratings for their behaviour.

At the other end of the spectrum were students whose engagement was 'oppositional'. This mode of participation included intentional disobedience, or wilful defiance, such as listening to music through an earpiece, vandalising furniture, or throwing things behind the teacher's back. The short-term concern was to derive personal entertainment from mischief-making while avoiding serious personal consequences. In 7B, only two students were oppositional (depending on the context), and both received 'C' ratings for behaviour.

More common than opposition was 'withdrawal'. A handful of 7B students regularly withdrew from lessons, including Khelil (mentioned above), whose ambition to become a preacher was inconsistent with the secular aims of the school; and others, whose engagement was inhibited by factors such as fatigue and poor nutrition. Withdrawal entails doing the least possible amount of work without attracting attention. The avoidance of boredom and punishment are ongoing concerns.

Avoiding boredom. 'The avoidance of tedium' was a concern for many 7B students, just as it was for their counterparts in the UK (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007, p.59; see 2.2). Towards the end of Grade 6, my assistant Micheal interviewed Gebremedhin, the male monitor for Section B.

Gebremedhin: We dislike Science because of the teacher, who is not teaching us very well. The way he's teaching is boring, so we shun away from the lessons.²⁸

Micheal: What makes the lessons difficult?

²⁸ The Science teacher in question told me he wished to leave the profession. He was waiting to transfer to a high school, but did not plan to remain in that post for long, as he was studying engineering part-time, and wished to join the construction industry at the earliest opportunity.

Gebremedhin: You're asking me why it's boring? And why we shun away? He's not properly making us understand, and his voice is not very clear, so we just start to play. (FN176)

Students associate liking a subject with understanding it; failure to understand a subject is associated with dislike, disengagement and displacement activities. Gebremedhin's words indicate that avoiding boredom is not a passive occupation, but one requiring actively pursuit. Boredom-avoidance strategies vary between grades. In Grade 6 and below, students use paper-based diversions including solitary games of 'imaginary football' and multiplayer games such as 'squares' (FN153); they also hide each other's books and hit each other. A less risky pastime is to spend a lesson drawing ornamental margins in the exercise book (FN140). Each of these strategies is less evident from Grade 7 onwards, by which point students are more likely to avoid boredom by napping, or quietly getting on with homework for another subject.

Avoiding punishment. The desire to avoid punishment can inhibit students' engagement in lessons. Not doing classwork often goes undetected; as long students are not being *ribushti* (disturbing), they are likely to avoid negative consequences. Conversely, it is difficult to hide not doing *homework*, since teachers check this at the beginning of each lesson, and there are serious consequences for non-compliance, such as a formal warning in the register, a public shaming, being beaten, or a parent being called. To avoid this, students who have not done their homework at home tend to catch up during lessons. This is convenient because classmates' exercise books are readily at hand, and network leaders and others tend not to challenge peers who are quietly getting on with their homework.

As described above, students' engagement with the academic programme reflects a situational balance between long- and short-term interests. Most students are committed to the academic programme – up to one third, zealously so. Only two of the 45 students in 6/7B were regularly, if intermittently, oppositional to the official programme as defined by teachers. While it is unusual for students to take an oppositional stance, intermittent disengagement from lessons is common; a handful of 7B students regularly withdrew, and others joined them according to prevailing circumstances.

5.3.2 Engaging with peers

Students' engagement with peers reflects their need for play, protection and other forms of mutual support. There are expectations of assistance with academic work, especially from students occupying formal leadership positions. Students use *gim gima* to hold each other to account for complying with collective expectations and the school rules.

Mutual support: play, protection, study

Students play with age-mates in single-sex groups: boys play football and marbles, girls play skipping, hopscotch and 'dodge' (see Plates 5.4 and 5.5). Besides physical games, students tell each other riddles and 'tell stories sitting on the shadow of a tree or wall' (7B student, male Muslim). In describing what they liked most about school, 'playing with friends' was 7B students' third most common response in the questionnaire (see Appendix 6ii, Table A6.1). As well as companionship, friends offer protection. Students don't like being alone at breaktime. If they remain in the classroom to work they move seats to share a table with others, and they go to the toilet and the tap in twos or threes. In describing what they disliked most about school, fighting was mentioned by 20 out of 45 students (see Appendix 6ii, Table A6.2). Around school I witnessed a number of fights, with boys hitting or dragging each other. Sometimes sides are unequally matched, two against one. If a victim complains to a teacher, the attackers are made to kneel and apologise (FN133), but if they are very much bigger than the victim, they are brought to the unit leader or a member of management who beats their hands with a stick (FN621). Amongst girls quarrels and insults sometimes develop into physical violence, but this is less common (FN868). Theft of books, money and lunch is another problem, reported by more than a quarter of the students in 7B. Again, students rely on each other for security, leaving books, bottles and other valuables in the keeping of classmates. When I briefly left my own bag out of sight, a student with whom I was friendly shouldered it himself, for protection.



Plate 5.4 Girls playing hopscotch



Plate 5.5 Boys playing marbles

There is a strong expectation of mutual support amongst students, who share snacks, books, work, pens and other equipment. They not only play together and protect one another, but habitually work and study together, both inside and outside of lessons. In the 7B questionnaire, one third of students reported that their favourite thing about school was ‘learning with friends’:

Playing and studying together, and we question each other. (Male Muslim)

Playing with friends and sharing skills among us. (Male Muslim)

The skills I have got from friends. (Female Muslim)

Scoring better grades by cooperating with my teachers and friends. (Female Christian)

Outside lessons, students work together, either at their desks or sitting in the shade. In lessons and for specific assignments they work in their networks, which are formal structures for peer support, to which I turn now.

Sharing responsibilities: student leaders

In class, and at the desk-level, there are formal mechanisms for delegating responsibility to students for supporting the academic learning and regulating the conduct of peers. These include the leadership positions of monitor, and network leader (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Student leaders' responsibilities: monitors, network leaders

	Monitor	Network leader
Number per class	2 (one male, one female)	7
Level of responsibility	Class	Network (desk)
Means of appointment	Elected by classmates each year	Tutor appoints the top 7 ranking students based on academic attainment (each semester)
Main responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Record attendance for each period- Ensure quiet working conditions in the classroom in the absence of a teacher- Record names of students who are disturbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Support the academic learning of peers (share work, explain concepts, answer questions)- Facilitate group work during lessons (e.g. scribe, chairperson)

These roles entail significant responsibilities, as described below in vignettes of monitoring and network leadership in 7B.

Monitors. At the start of 2014/5, 7B elected two monitors, Mariam and Yonas, both of whom had received an 'A' rating for behaviour. Mariam was committed to improving the discipline in class. In an interview shortly after her appointment she explained: 'the major problem in this school and in the class is disturbance, being noisy, standing on the desk, and like what you have noticed: students missing classes and being disrespectful.'

(FN719) When teachers were absent (which often occurred at the start of the year, due to timetable clashes and teacher transfers within the *woreda*), Mariam and her male counterpart ensured their classmates remained seated and got on with classwork or homework, or else sat quietly without disturbing others.

In Poluha's (2004) ethnographic study of a low-fee private school in Addis Ababa, monitoring was identified as a violent and gendered role:

Male monitors...often beat [students] with their hands or with sticks; they sometimes made them kneel in front with their hands in the air...Although girls were elected as monitors, they took no part in keeping order in the classroom...From my observations the female monitors did not seem to have any particular duties, but were elected or appointed more as a token of equality.

(p.90)

In 7B I did not find significant gender differences in the ways that Mariam and Yonas enacted the monitor role, and in no sense was Mariam a 'token of equality'.²⁹ In the absence of a teacher, the pair worked cooperatively to maintain working conditions – she at the teacher's desk, he at the back, or vice versa. Each carried a slip of paper on which they wrote the names of *ribushti* (disturbing) classmates who were being noisy, fighting, or moving between desks. Neither carried a stick, but both occasionally used light physical force, hitting or pushing *ribushti* students back to their seats. Others assisted their efforts, encouraging their peers to sit down and be quiet. Requests to use the toilet or use the board were directed to the monitors. During teacher-free periods, the monitors sometimes permitted students to teach mini-lessons to the class (see Plate 5.6). On the two occasions when I observed such an activity, a pair of students led a whole class Maths lesson for about 15 minutes; the student 'teachers' based their lessons on the textbook, wrote problems on the board, and selected volunteers to answer. During these mini-lessons, the monitors maintained a standing vigilance over the room, suppressing disturbance with the visible threat of the *ribushti* list. In regulating the classroom in this way, the monitors put the collective interests of the

²⁹ There are many factors which may contribute to the differences between Poluha's (2004) findings at Birabiro School and my own. The Ketema fieldwork was undertaken 15 years later (and thus further into the current reform period) and in a regional town, rather than Addis Ababa. Furthermore, the Grade 4 class Poluha (2004) studied contained 105 students aged 9-15 from diverse ethnic backgrounds. 7B students were further advanced in their schooling, ethnically homogenous, with a narrower age range (11-15), and they occupied less cramped conditions.

class above their own; they did not personally benefit from the working time made available to their peers, and there was sometimes a noticeable conflict in balancing these interests. The monitors sometimes attempted to continue with their own work until rising noise levels compelled them to put down their pens and intervene. Students appreciated the order which the monitors brought to the classroom. One student described the monitoring system as something he liked most about the school: ‘What makes me happy is the monitoring [system]...They make us do our homework, and if we don’t they ask why.’ (Male Muslim, questionnaire) Monitors who neglect their responsibilities are held to account by their peers in *gim gima* (described below).



Plate 5.6 Students teach a mini Maths lesson in the teacher’s absence (N.B. Yonas monitors the class from the teacher’s desk, writing names on the *ribushti* list)

Network leaders. The network system is a peer support structure in which top-ranking students are assigned to a table of 5 or 6 peers (see Figure 5.1). There were 7 network

leaders in 7B, 5 females and 2 males.³⁰ Mariam, who was a network leader as well as a monitor, explained the role:

As a network leader I support students to help each other understand what is not clear from the lesson...To support the poor students, and make the noisy and disturbing students be disciplined, and to advise them to be a good student.

(Mariam, interview, FN719).

Students react differently to these demands of network leadership. This is illustrated with reference to three network leaders from 7B: Jerusalem, Mariam and Zeki.

Jerusalem (rank #1) was enthusiastic about every subject. Although one of the physically smallest students in class, she dominated her table with her constant activity and competitive spirit. Inside and outside lessons, her tablemates questioned her about their work. She acted as a table-level authority, a source for copying, and an expert to be consulted. During group work, she served as a facilitator, eliciting inputs from others:

Jerusalem is the scribe – the textbook is facing her. She gets the boys to speak by facing each in turn, and writes their answers on a sheet of squared paper. She hits one boy on head with pen to get attention. Is now up to Q4. She makes each of the students talk – except W***, who is copying homework. She taps one boy on head with frustration – shows her teeth. (6B Tigrigna, Lesson 26)

Jerusalem always wanted to be the scribe, and thwarted others' attempts to take this role.

Mariam (rank #4) was less physically domineering. Like Jerusalem, she was the focal person in the group, to whom students gravitated in discussions, but she was more of a facilitator than an authority. She was respectful of her tablemates, and did not prod or tap them like Jerusalem. Students in her network were comfortable sharing their ideas, which they did by taking turns, sometimes with non-verbal cues from Mariam. One member of this network was the lowest-ranking student in class, whom I never heard speak in whole class contexts, but who was confident enough to share her ideas in the safety of Mariam's network (see Plate 5.7).

³⁰ This reflected the fact that female students tended to outperform males in Section B. In Grade 6, the average female score was 74.1% (as a composite measure of attainment across all ten subjects), compared to 70.1% for males. In rural Tigray, this picture is reversed (Mjaaland, 2016), but the pattern in Section B is consistent with findings from urban areas elsewhere in the country (Piper, 2010).



Plate 5.7 Students working in their network during an English lesson

Zeki (rank #5). A deeper appreciation of the relationship between network leaders and their peers was made possible by considering a negative case, Zeki. Like other top-ranking students, he frequently volunteered to answer in whole class contexts, but he was the only network leader rated ‘B’ for behaviour, and had received a formal warning for not doing his English homework. He was not confident or proud of his work in this subject. On one occasion he let me read his English homework but refused a photograph, because he said it was wrong; however, he permitted a peer to copy it, verbatim. Like other network leaders, Zeki facilitated group discussions, and others turned to him for support; but on a few occasions (when he thought the teacher wouldn’t notice), he abandoned his group to join another. In his absence, the students in his network were at a loss, and requested help from a neighbouring table.

Zeki was unwilling or unable to control his group. For example, in one lesson, Teacher Gebreselassie told the network leaders to stand and watch their groups to ensure that no-one cheated while he turned around to write the questions on the board. While his back was turned, two boys in Zeki’s network misbehaved:

[In Zeki’s group] R** stands up and smiles; N** does too, sticks out his tongue and giggles. [In Jerusalem’s group] M** makes to stand, but Jerusalem pre-

empts him with ‘*Ata!*’, a furious look, and an arm motion to lower him. (7B English, Lesson 84)

Owing to the lack of behavioural regulation, students in Zeki’s network were in trouble more often than those in other groups – for being late, not doing homework, not paying attention. The tutor moved Zeki’s network to the front of the class, and when behaviour did not improve he sent Gebremedhin to join the network, an older student rated ‘A’ for behaviour. After two months of poor performance, Zeki’s ‘accidental network’ was disbanded, and its members divided between the remaining six networks. Zeki joined Yesuf’s network, as he had wanted all along. Although he ranked higher than Yesuf (rank #6), he did not replace him as network leader, and thus succeeded in relieving himself of leadership responsibilities.

The positions of monitor and network leader entail significant responsibilities towards peers, which sometimes require student leaders to put others’ interests before their own. In rare cases, students are appointed to these positions against their wishes or capacities. However, in most cases, students are happy to help their peers, seeing this as a perfectly reasonable social obligation. These student leaders are not lone, pro-school agents, dragging and pushing their classmates through lessons; there are others who support the network informally. They sometimes identify themselves as the ‘number 2’ and take on an informal academic role, or they may adopt a behavioural control function, as Gebremedhin did in the example above. These informal leaders intervene when peers step out of line (talking out of turn, making noises, damaging school property), and peers may be corrected by *others* in their group, in addition to the network leader.

Holding peers to account

In *gim gima*, students hold each other to account for failing to uphold their own collective behavioural expectations and the official rules of the school. *Gim gima* is a forum for exposing misconduct and correcting individuals’ behaviour. While criticism in itself serves as a negative consequence for breaching social expectations, students also decide on punishments for classmates in these sessions. There are two main types of *gim gima* in which students participate.

- Grade *gim gima* occurs quarterly and is facilitated by one male and one female teacher who invite students to evaluate their peers and teachers according to an agenda provided by management. These sessions are a component of the

school's internal supervision system, and minutes are logged and passed directly to management.

- Class *gim gima* occurs more frequently, generally at lunchtime before afternoon class and in the presence of a teacher, although they can also be called and led by the students themselves.

At the one grade *gim gima* I attended towards the end of the 2013/4 school year most of the hour-and-a-half session was occupied with students' criticisms of each other. The desire for fairness was at the heart of their discussion. The following comments are typical of those recorded in the minutes:

A** and B** are always latecomers, but these students equally sit the exams with the rest of us and pass the exams. Therefore, strict and stringent follow-up and control should be made for these students in the future...C** never attended, yet he sat the mid-semester and 2nd semester exams. (Grade 6 *gim gima*, Meeting 18, FN420)

These criticisms not only concern the named individuals, but the policies which permit students to take exams despite persistent lateness and absence; many students consider this to be unfair. In addition to lateness and truancy, students were criticised for not doing their classwork or homework, for cheating in exams, and for being disrespectful to teachers. In each case, students argue that stricter follow-up is needed for the following year. In addition to these misdemeanours, students were criticised in relation to the network system – for refusing support, and for being disruptive during group work activities. In Section B, one network leader was singled out for criticism: Zeki, of whom the students complained '[he] is our network leader, but he cannot support us.'

Gim gimas serve as a bottom-up accountability mechanism through which the conduct of student leaders is scrutinised by peers for the purpose of making improvements. Monitors are a frequent focus of criticism. On one occasion, the Section B monitors were criticised when a teacher was absent because they failed to prevent a classmate from running home for lunch (FN191). At another *gim gima*, a student complained that the monitors were not keeping thorough records of misdemeanours in class. Jerusalem argued that the monitors recorded others' transgressions, but not their own (FN94). Again, the desire for fairness, as well as improving discipline, was central to concerns raised by students.

5.3.3 Students' expectations of teachers

Students value teachers who promote subject understanding, who are respectful and apply the rules consistently, and who control behaviour in the classroom.

Promoting understanding

Students want their teachers to help them understand the subject. This requires skill, motivation and empathy on the teacher's part (cf. Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, discussed in 2.2). Students value teachers who are knowledgeable, and who communicate clearly, using simple words for difficult concepts (FN468). They want teachers to be patient, to provide multiple examples and opportunities for them to practice their subject skills; and to evaluate their understanding and recognise when further explanations or practice are needed. The minimum expectation of a teacher is that he or she will cover the textbook, but students additionally want their teachers to capture their interest in the subject:

Before the lesson starts, a teacher should attract students' attention and concentration. For example, the Chemistry teacher tries to bring the attention of the students to the lesson, but some [teachers] just write down notes and lecture and finish with that. (Gebremedhin interview, FN720)

The Chemistry teacher mentioned above would begin lessons by selecting volunteers to recall what they had learned so far, prompting others to build on their classmates' responses, and praising students' contributions. He encouraged students to make links between the subject content and practical applications in everyday life (FN580). This teacher had high expectations of students: he set a significant amount of homework which involved reading and understanding rather than copying, and had zero tolerance for those who failed to complete the assignment: such students were shamed in front of the class, and their parents called (FN705). In the quotation above, Gebremedhin contrasts this Chemistry teacher's approach to that of teachers who 'just write down notes'. This was not a total dismissal of note-taking. Students appreciate high quality notes, but become disengaged when teachers rely too heavily on this approach.

You've got to be strict with us

Most students want teachers to take their role seriously, ensuring high standards of engagement and behaviour in the classroom. They want sanctions for students who fail to meet academic or behavioural requirements. Preferably, parents should be called:

‘when there are disturbing students who do not study properly then teachers should inform their parents’ (Female Christian, questionnaire); ‘Teachers [should] reveal students’ problems to parents and resolve them through discussion’ (Male Christian, questionnaire). I attended a class *gim gima* at which students argued for parental involvement after a male classmate ran home for lunch during a session supervised by the monitors (the Civics teacher had been absent). Yerga, 6B’s tutor and English teacher, facilitated the discussion. After criticising their classmate who had run away, the students complained about their teachers – the Civics teacher whose absence had caused the problem, and another who was late in returning their exam marks. Finally, the discussion turned to the tutor:

A female student says that Teacher Yerga had vowed to call the parents of the students who failed the English exam, but had not followed this up: ‘You should compel us to call our parents. You are too lenient with us; you’ve got to take tough measures.’

Yerga explains that 53 students failed the exam, and he wanted to see all of their parents, but was concerned that some might be punished at home as a result. ‘Some of the students even begged me to release them from bringing their parents, since they are dependent on their relatives, and if their parents hear of their results then they will be kicked out of the house. None of these students brought their parents, and I preferred to keep silent since I sensed their problems. You should not think that I forgot.’

Yerga explains that he is not naturally lenient, but ‘as an English teacher, my facial expression needs to smile, otherwise it is not possible to attract students to the subject matter. If I become aggressive you will not only hate the teacher but the subject matter as well; this is the main problem. If you love the teacher, you will love the subject matter.’

Another female student argues: ‘In [our former English teacher’s] class no-one disturbed and shouted; everyone was attentive and kept silent. But in your class students started to disturb.’

Yerga: ‘I pledge, I will not allow a single student to disturb. I will kick and beat these disturbing students. Even I will kick until their 32 teeth fall out, and then let them bring their parents. Please, sit down! From this day onward, please let me tell you, do not blame me “*I was beaten and kicked,*” I will show you.

There is no freedom from now on. There will not be a minute of freedom...'

A male student argues: 'You said earlier: "*Unless I have smooth relationships and a good facial expression,*" you said, "*you will hate the teacher, and then you will hate the subject matter.*" But the reason we come to school is to learn: our goal is education, not for joking. And so you have to be strict and tough in dealing with us.'

Another student adds: 'You said: "*If I make you bring your parents, the parents will put the students in trouble.*" But it is the *parents* who will be in trouble if their children's results are not being communicated.'

Yerga: 'Keep silent now. I will smack these disturbing students – from next week you will see my behaviour: I will not laugh and be funny anymore...Enough for today, that is all.' (FN191)

In this extract the students corrected their teacher for what they perceived to be misguided leniency. They unpicked each of his arguments to show that he was acting in no-one's interests by permitting disturbances in class, and failing to call the parents of students who were failing. This preference for strictness is a general one; students want their teachers to discipline disruptive classmates (FN289), and criticise those who do not control the class (FN183).

Follow the rules, show respect

Just as students wish their classmates to obey the rules or face consequences, they wish the same for their teachers: 'If we beat or insult, we get punished and it should be the same for them, too' (Male Muslim, questionnaire). Following the rules is a question of fairness, which is highly-prized by students; but the question of *whose* rules should be followed is the subject of some disagreement. *Gim gima* is an internal accountability mechanism through which students are encouraged to raise complaints against their teachers. In grade *gim gimas*, which are formally documented in minutes, students evaluate their teachers according to management definitions of acceptable conduct. For example, at one grade *gim gima*, students were given the following management-specified criteria:

- Punctuality
- Monitoring students, regularly taking attendance
- Setting homework, class and group work and giving feedback

- Using gown, textbook, notebook and duster
- Recording corrective measures in the register
- Providing tutorials and special support for students
- Resolving ethical issues as a parent (FN420)

In accordance with management wishes, students identified teachers who failed to wear their gowns, and who skipped morning attendance. But the students went beyond the formal consultation agenda. For example, two students raised the Music teacher's persistent absence:

Student 1: Teacher A** did not teach us as the exams approached.

Student 2: Teacher A** has a big problem, he didn't teach us Music at all. He didn't give us short tests [i.e. continuous assessment], but only the mid-semester and final exams, so we were not able to know our results. It should be thought over for the future. (FN420)

Fairness is at the heart of this criticism: as a result of the Music teacher's unethical conduct, the students were left with gaps in their results. A unit leader explained to me that he often investigated students' complaints, for example: Teacher X came to school drunk, Teacher Y used bad language against students in class (FN871). These criticisms go beyond the consultation agenda, and reflect students' own sense of acceptable conduct.

There are grey areas in the rules. In the 7B questionnaire, three male and two female students reported that they disliked corporal punishment (see Appendix 6ii, Table A6.2). There are mixed feelings amongst students as to whether beating students is necessarily wrong: in some cases, it is felt to be fair (e.g. a teacher beating a student on the hand in front of the class for failing to do his homework); in others, it is unwarranted, and disproportionate (e.g. a teacher hitting a student on the head with the duster and kicking him on the floor). As Mariam explained: 'I feel that students should be punished for what they did, but the way they are beaten should be considered' (FN719). Management is equivocal on this issue: officially, corporal punishment is forbidden, yet members of management sometimes administer beatings on the hand in the manner described above. In a high profile case, a group of Grade 5 students complained in *gim gima* about Teacher Biniam beating them. The Director publicly criticised the teacher at a staff meeting (FN241). This would have been the end of the matter, had not Biniam subsequently beaten those students who had criticised him, saying: 'How on earth could you evaluate me in

this manner?’ (FN813) At this, Biniam’s salary was suspended for and he was reported to the police (at which point, he absconded). Several times now I have alluded to acts of violence committed against students by teachers and peers. The use of violence at Ketema – whether casual or formal – is not incidental, but intrinsic to the culture and systems of control in school which require acts of violence for their continuation. Links between violence and authoritarianism in schools have been documented in SSA and elsewhere in the world (Harber, 2004).

The complaints raised above (about teachers swearing, beating students, skipping classes) reflect students’ desire to be treated with respect. They are generally happy to act on teachers’ instructions, but feel disrespected when ordered to do things for which they see no rationale.

I hate Director Dawit when he makes us go to the [after-school] clubs. (Female Christian, questionnaire)

[I dislike it when] teachers force Muslim girls to take off their headscarf. (Male Muslim, questionnaire)

The students quoted above disliked the element of compulsion, which suggests a lack of respect for students’ wishes.

Summary

Most students wish to pursue a career which requires a high school, or university education. Like staff at the school, many students view their future career in terms of national development. Students balance these long-term interests against immediate concerns in the classroom, where engagement is variable. Students expect their leaders (network leaders, monitors) to help them with their studies, and to keep them on-task; they agree with their teachers on this point. In rare cases, students are appointed to positions of leadership against their wishes. Those who break the rules or fall short of expectations are challenged in *gim gima*.

Fairness is an over-arching concern for students, and many deem it unjust that classmates who are regularly late or absent are allowed to sit their exams. On this matter, they disagree with management, which is concerned to maximise the pass-rate and thus raise the school’s standing in the *woreda*. However, regarding many aspects of teachers’ conduct, students and management are in agreement: teachers should arrive on time, mark

work regularly and avoid using corporal punishment. Students report cases of teacher misconduct to management through *gim gima*, which functions as an internal accountability mechanism. For its part, management intervenes when teachers' conduct falls short of expectations, as illustrated in this chapter in relation to Teachers Desta and Biniam.

5.4 Parents' agendas

The data used in this section draws largely from observations of meetings in school, and from translations of audio recordings and minutes, and it reflects the interests and agendas expressed by parents in these forums. Power relations 'shape the boundaries' of these participative spaces, affecting 'what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests' (Gaventa, 2006, p.26). For this reason, it is appropriate to question whose voices are heard, and whether certain agendas remain unexpressed. In addition to the constraining (and enabling) structures of school meetings, it should also be noted that not all parents attended meetings, either because they had other commitments, did not receive notification, wished to register their protest, or any other reason which cannot be determined here. Parents' agendas in the case data include: influencing other parents, holding management to account, and engaging with the partnership role.

5.4.1 Influencing other parents

Given the opportunity to speak at meetings, parents have a lot to say to each other, much of which is critical, aimed at changing others' conduct. This occurs whether the audience consists of parents from a specific tutor group, grade, or the entire school. The intention underlying such comments is to influencing others' behaviour and/or attitudes through advice and criticism.

Parents seek to increase the regulation of children's activities at home. The following comment is typical:

The problem is not with you teachers, it's with the parents. We have great problems in teaching and guiding our children at home... You know what our children are doing at home, and our neighbours' children? They spend their time watching films, that's true. I can see it in my own children, and the others in the neighbourhood. In fact, beating the children is not good, I can say; but

controlling and guiding your children to do the right thing is a good thing.

Children are spending their time watching unnecessary films and other corrupted things; this is [due to] the parents' weakness. (Father, Grade 8 Parents' Meeting 38, FN853)

In addition to complaining that students are spending too much time watching television or playing games, parents blame each other for not ensuring that their children study at home. Interestingly, it is unusual (although not unknown) for a parent to defend a student's right to pursue their own interests outside school (FN94).

As well as seeking to regulate children's activities at home, parents urge each other to monitor children's activities in school. They advise each other to check school bags in the morning in case they are carrying clothes so they can sneak off elsewhere; to inspect their exercise books to ensure they are doing their work: 'If we do this, children will be afraid of us – if we always check these things' (Father, FN853). Parents advise each other to visit the school in order to monitor progress. Those who regularly do so report improvements:

I always come here; I always follow up whether or not my child is attending class in the afternoon; and so he is better this year than the last year. (Father, FN853)

Such comments seem to contain an element of approval-seeking, as well as the wish to share effective practices.

It is partly concern for *their own* children which leads parents to offer such advice. Parents fear that children who are given too much freedom can exert a negative influence on their peers. For example, one mother urged parents not to give children money to take to school, as they spend this on sweets which sets a bad example for others: 'it contaminates, like bad fruit' (FN599). Mobile phones, too, are said to be a problem: 'They listen to music, they watch videos and they disturb the class' (FN853).

At most parents' meetings, approximately half the students were represented by a parent or other family member, and females outnumbered males by about 2:1. Parents repeatedly call for greater participation at these events. At one meeting a father complained about the lack of male involvement:

I can see here most of the parents are females. What we should know is these children are very young, and most of them are afraid of their fathers, not their mothers. The fathers of these children have little interest in coming to the school; this is one great problem. (FN853)

To encourage participation at meetings, parents consistently seek financial penalties for those who are absent or late – at one meeting, participants agreed upon fines of 10 Birr and 5 Birr, respectively (FN94). Such penalties are legally unenforceable, but reflect the strength of feeling that attendance should be compulsory, and that parents should be accountable for their involvement in school affairs.

5.4.2 Holding management to account

Parents seek to hold management to account for the exam results, the conduct of students and staff, and – through the PSTA – the school budget.

Exam results

Parents hold management responsible for exam results, especially the Grade 8 pass-rate, which is the single-most important measure of the school's performance. After a number of years in which the Grade 8 pass-rate exceeded 90, parents raised concerns when this headline figure dipped to 73%. At the first staff meeting of 2014/5, the PSTA Head asked the teachers to work 'in a stronger and more efficient way' to increase the pass-rate. At the Parents' Ceremony a few weeks later, the opportunity was given for parents to express their views (see Plate 5.8). A father directed his comments at Dawit:

It was said that the school is a model, and so, this should be reflected in the amount of students who succeed in the Grade 8 exam...What is planned to increase the number of students who will pass the exam [this year]? (Father, Meeting 27, FN598)

Parents attributed the low pass-rate to the 'failures' of teachers (who had suspended the afterschool tutorial programme) and students (for their poor discipline), and wanted to know how management would improve things. While the annual results are discussed in these open forums, the PSTA monitors the pass-rate in each subject/grade through reports from the Director throughout the year (PSTA Meeting 5, FN813).



Plate 5.8 Participants share their evaluations of the school at the Parents' Ceremony

Students' behaviour

Individually and collectively, parents feel a large share of the responsibility for students' behaviour. They expect management to keep them informed of any disciplinary problems so that action can be taken: 'Students who fail to respect the school rules must be reported to the parents and made to improve.' (Father, FN598) Parents want management to protect the interests of the majority of well-behaved students; as one father expressed it, 'you should take measures against the bad students while saving the majority' (FN853). Parents also argue for management to exclude students who persistently fall short of behavioural expectations: 'For students who are disturbing – why aren't they dismissed from the school?' (Mother, FN598) Exclusion is incompatible with the inclusive policies of management (discussed in 5.1.1), and the interests of some parents who work hard to keep their children in school. Opposing calls for inclusion and exclusion can even occur within the same family. Dawit told parents about the case of one student who had been in and out of trouble for the past three years – 'he created a lot of problems for us, but we endured him.' Whenever there was a problem, the boy's mother visited the school to resolve the issue, but when the father came he told Dawit to exclude the boy (FN853). In response to calls for exclusion, Dawit asserted the institutional line:

Dismissing students from school is not an option, they will only spend time in bad places...[Rather,] through consultation with parents we will attempt to improve their behaviour. (FN598)

The Director is uncompromising in his view that the wider school community shares responsibility for improving the behaviour of difficult students.

Staff conduct

Parents hold management responsible for the conduct of staff. Participants at the Parents' Ceremony complained about 'undisciplined teachers' who had not marked homework, or failed to conduct the afterschool tutorials as planned: 'The undisciplined teachers must be identified and made to mend their ways; otherwise our teachers will be spoilt.' (Father, FN598)

Behind the scenes, the PSTA is active in overseeing management's supervision of staff. This body includes four parent representatives, and is headed by a male parent. Each semester, the Director reports on the performance appraisal process and identifies teachers who have received a negative rating. Generally, this information is simply presented at meetings, and the PSTA does not intervene beyond ensuring that the appraisals occur. However, in unusual cases – when the safety of students is at stake – the PSTA can challenge management decisions, as happened in the case of Teacher Biniam. The following extract is taken from the minutes of a PSTA meeting:

Director Dawit: Regardless of the comments and criticism he was given, Teacher Biniam hasn't made any behavioural change. He is still using physical punishment on students...For this reason, the school should bring his case to the Discipline Committee and an appropriate disciplinary measure should be taken. In addition, the school has to stop the physical punishment of students by making the necessary continuous follow-up.

Mother 1: Since the students learning in this school are children these acts should be stopped and forbidden. Concerning Teacher Biniam, I was present when the criticism was made of him. If he is not in a position to correct himself by learning from his mistakes and bad acts, then on top of the measures taken by the Discipline Committee, he should also be warned through the community police.

Mother 2: The act of this teacher is not what we expect from a member of staff. Since he may have some other mission it is good to investigate this problem closely. (PSTA Meeting 8, FN813)

While Dawit was treating Biniam's conduct as an internal disciplinary issue, the parents on the PSTA believed that further action was necessary; they recommended that the police be informed – a step which was subsequently taken.

The budget

At open days, management renders an account of its spending to parents, who as a whole contribute more than 50% of the school's recurrent non-salary budget (see Box 5.1). On such occasions, the Director is keen to display equipment which the school has bought, such as the photocopier, and he also gives details of the school's many expenses – for water, electricity and the telephone. At one event, the Director announced the annual budget to the parents, before inviting them to vote on raising the annual school fees from 40 to 60 Birr (FN598). There is little scope for challenging management for its use of the budget in these open meetings. By contrast, at PSTA meetings each and every demand made upon the budget is scrutinised. Not only does the annual budget require PSTA approval, but clearance is required for buying basic materials such as paper and pens, and for auctioning the grass grown on school land over the summer. If the Director wishes to fix the photocopier or buy a new door for the toilets, he must first convince the PSTA of the need for this expenditure.

Some management requests relate to incentives for staff. For example, each semester the Management Committee nominates a few teachers to receive financial awards (around 300 Birr) 'based on their capacity in managing students, providing tutorials, beautifying the school, and participating in the activities of the Pedagogical Centre' (PSTA Meeting 6, FN813). Small prizes of stationery are also presented to the top-ranking students in each class. In addition to these awards, the PSTA occasionally makes discretionary payments to teachers for exceptional work. For example, the Director suggested that the PSTA compensate two teachers' expenses who, through petitioning government institutions in town for many months, had secured the donation of more than 30 computers. The PSTA was extremely grateful to these teachers: '[they] have done an incredible job and they deserve to receive reimbursement [of 250 Birr each] for the transportation and telephone costs they have incurred through the process' (Mother, PSTA Meeting 11, FN229). Several times a year management requests funding to provide lunch to teachers receiving training in school on the weekend. Food is prepared by the woman who runs the tearoom, and costs up to 16 Birr per head. The PSTA approves such

uses of the school budget, but not without internal debate and inspection of the accounts – ‘Earlier it was said that the school doesn’t have money. Do we have money? We have to see this. Otherwise, providing refreshments sometimes is good.’ (Mother, PSTA Meeting 36, FN813) The PSTA may also refuse management requests for funding. On one occasion, a VD arranged to host exams for a public utility company on school premises. He and two colleagues invigilated the exams, and the company paid a fee into the school account for classroom rental and services. When the VD and his colleagues requested a *per diem* for invigilation, the PSTA rejected the request.

Male teacher: Our school is trying to maximise its income through every means, and these teachers have contributed their share in achieving it; however, they should not ask for payment. [...]

PSTA Head: Generally, while we have guards and janitors who should ask for payment, it is not appropriate to raise payment requests from teachers. (PSTA Meeting 11, FN229)

The PSTA not only rejected this management request, but established a precedent that such demands on the budget were ‘not appropriate’. In overseeing the budget, the PSTA generally accedes to management, but not without evaluating each claim, and balancing competing interests – between repairing the crumbling wall and buying a door for the toilet; or, as in the case described above, between compensating individuals for their effort and retaining funds for the good of the school.

5.4.3 Engaging with the partnership role

Expectations of parents as partners

There are strong collective expectations regarding specific areas of parental responsibility at Ketema. Their partnership role is shaped by the external policy environment and the expectations of others within the school community. Parents’ responsibilities include:

- Contributing fees towards the school budget
- Supervising children’s studies at home, and advising them on behaviour
- Voting on whole-school issues (e.g. the level of fees, electing representatives to the PSTA)
- Evaluating individuals and activities in school

- Sharing ideas for improvement

A minority of parents are elected to formal positions on the PSTA or the tutor group council. Serving on the PSTA carries significant responsibilities, including overseeing the budget and management processes (discussed further in 6.2.4). It is rare for parents to decline the partnership role presented to them. Parents view their responsibilities at school as a way of advancing their own interests, and routinely express a desire for greater involvement, as discussed below.

Pedagogical agendas

Previous studies in Ethiopia have found that parents regard pedagogical issues to be ‘beyond the purview of their knowledge and responsibilities’ (Swift-Morgan, 2006, p.355). I had anticipated this at Ketema, but found parents to be vocal on pedagogical issues, seeking to influence the conduct of teachers in line with their own notions of quality. Parents’ suggestions at meetings are frequently aimed at preventing what they regard as bad practice. Copying notes from the board or the textbook is a recurrent issue, and parents regularly urge teachers to avoid this practice:

There is...a problem with teachers. They give a lot of tasks that students write at length. I can give my daughter as an example. She’s a good student; she stands third [i.e. #3] in the class, but I always see her writing a lot of things, up until midnight. I usually see her just copying notes. What is this? This is a problem with the teachers. I talked about this last year with Teacher F***, but there was no solution to this issue. I asked [him] whether these students should spend their time at writing or studying? (Mother, FN853)

Parents advocate greater use of learning resources, such as using the laboratory for demonstrations and practicals in Science lessons. Many feel that their children require additional support, beyond the timetabled lessons, and value afterschool tutorials delivered by subject teachers. Many parents tutor their children in specific subjects at home, and some request support from the school in order to do so – for example, by providing past exam papers in preparation for tests (6B Parents’ Council Meeting 3, FN94). After copying, the second-most common complaint against teachers is a failure to mark students’ work. This is an impediment to parents supporting their children at home, as one father explained:

Our children are always given homework, and we support them – but the teachers are not correcting their answers. How can they be sure of whether they are wrong or right? (FN598)

Some parents seek greater involvement in supporting the academic programme at home. For example, one father suggested introducing a system whereby parents and teachers could cooperatively monitor students' work:

If the tutor and subject teachers put some signs on the tasks of the students, morning and afternoon, and if we parents put a signature on our children's exercise books as confirmation for what they have done – it will be easy to check and control our children. I think a great solution could be made, if we did this. (Father, FN853)

Such suggestions at public meetings indicate parents' willingness to engage with the 'partnership' role set forth for them, and their desire to bring changes in school in line with their notions of quality.

Failing to engage as expected: unable, unwilling

For many reasons, some parents are unable or unwilling to fulfil their side of the partnership. For example, a significant minority of parents cannot afford to pay fees towards the upkeep of the school. In 2014/5, management estimated that 15% of parents were in this position. Work commitments can also prevent parents from supporting children at home and preclude attendance at meetings (FN273). Some parents may also be disaffected, or alienated from the school, but from the data available, it is not possible to determine how many parents deliberately refuse to cooperate. Evidence is limited to a few examples. When Yerga called a father to the school following an incident in class, an older sister came in his place. When Yerga asked why the father hadn't come, she told him that he had said: “*I am not coming if it's for something bad.*” (FN273) Similarly, the Director reported that when he asked a father to help improve his son's behaviour, the father had told him to exclude the boy instead (FN598).

Summary

In meetings, parents express similar views to management and teachers regarding parental responsibility for supporting students at home. Parents urge their counterparts to take greater responsibility for monitoring their children's schooling: to follow up attendance,

behaviour and school work. They criticise those who over-indulge their children by giving them money for sweets and letting them watch television, instead of studying.

Like management, parents see the Grade 8 pass-rate as a reflection of the general health of the school. Many wish the school would take a firmer approach to behaviour by excluding persistently disruptive students. Management opposes exclusion in principle, and counters such comments with justifications of its own position. Parents criticise teachers who fail to mark students' homework, and some object to the prevalence of copying tasks set as classwork or homework. Although management seeks to promote the use group work and learning aids, no action is taken against teachers who set copying tasks.

As illustrated in this chapter, the preferences and priorities of the four stakeholder groups – management, teachers, students and parents – relate to their positions within the school community and the contextual factors which bear upon them as a result. The next chapter builds on the data and analysis from this chapter to address the question: *Whose agendas are realised in the school, and whose are not?*

Chapter 6: The participation and influence of the key stakeholder groups

6.1 Introduction

As reported in Chapter 5, the four key stakeholder groups – management, teachers, students and parents – pursue varied and sometimes conflicting agendas within the school. The success or otherwise of their agendas is shaped in important ways by processes, structures and power relations internal and external to the school community. This chapter explores whose agendas are realised in policy and practice, and whose are not. At issue, is the scope for different stakeholder groups to influence conditions in school in line with their notions of quality and improvement.

This chapter introduces limited new data, and focuses on advancing the analysis from Chapter 5. I begin by recapitulating some major points of divergence and convergence amongst the key stakeholder groups, before considering the influence of each. The chapter closes with a discussion of meetings and the classroom as spaces for negotiating agendas, and the success with which the different stakeholder groups are able to do so.

Convergence and divergence in stakeholders' agendas

There is convergence and divergence in the agendas of the four key stakeholder groups, as represented in Figure 6.1. On the whole, there is more agreement than disagreement within and between each of these groups, for example, regarding the importance of schooling for national development, and upholding the reputation of the school. Management is closely aligned with the external policy context, and seeks to comply with external requirements, and excel at the performance measures by which Ketema is ranked against other schools in the *woreda*. Teachers also aspire for model school status, but disagree with management over the value of paperwork and blanket directives on classroom practice. Many teachers' position on this issue is inconsistent with the external policy context, and is represented by *point A* on Figure 6.1. Management agrees with students' and parents' expectations of teacher conduct regarding attendance, punctuality and marking; these are subject to external regulation (*point B*). However, many students, parents and teachers desire a more selective system, which excludes students who are persistently disruptive, late or absent (*point C*). *Point C* also represents the position of a

minority of stakeholders who feel that female Muslims should be permitted to wear headscarves; these views are inconsistent with the external policy context and the wishes of management.

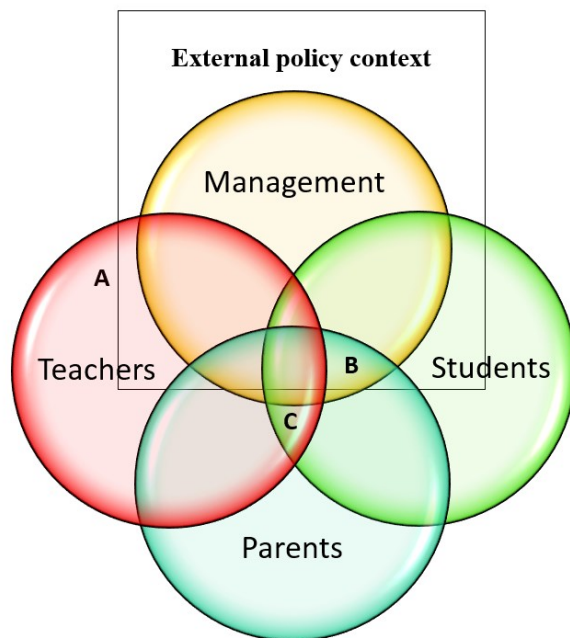


Figure 6.1 Convergence and divergence within and between stakeholders' agendas

Where interests diverge, what scope do different stakeholder groups have to realise their agendas in school? And through what processes and structures do they do so? It is to these issues I now turn.

6.2 The influence of the four key stakeholder groups

This section explores the scope for each group to influence school conditions in line with their preferences. As in the previous chapter, I consider each group in turn, before developing an integrated picture of each group's influence in contested sites in school.

6.2.1 Management's influence

Management has at its disposal the bureaucratic apparatus of control: committee and departmental structures for delegating tasks and surveillance mechanisms for monitoring compliance. Decision-making forums raise the potential for opposition to management

agendas. Management uses the power of the chair to dominate these spaces and realise its agendas.

The bureaucratic apparatus of management control: structures for delegating tasks and mutual surveillance

The various departments and committees of the school are part of its formal structure, as established by the Tigray Regional Education Bureau (REB). Meetings of these bodies are not forums for policy deliberation, but a means of delegating management tasks, and cascading instructions through the organisation. As such, they are part of the bureaucratic apparatus of management control, serving to extend and amplify management's influence across all levels of the school. The Pedagogy Committee is a typical example of this. Its mission is to promote the use of learning aids, in line with external directives and the Director's target for '85% usage of student-centred methods' (School Plan, FN841). The committee includes a representative from each department who is required to promote the use of learning aids, and to support management systems for monitoring policy implementation. The chairperson of the Pedagogy Committee makes monthly reports to management, and a member of the management team occasionally attends a meeting, to offer support and ensure that everything is running to plan (FN769). These same processes of delegation and surveillance operate across all the committees and departments.

The internal supervision system uses mutual surveillance to promote compliance with management agendas. For example, unit leaders record the names of teachers who absent themselves from lessons or who send students out of class; in *gim gima*, students report teachers who fail to take attendance or mark work. These structures and processes are designed to ensure compliance with external policy requirements, and facilitate management control.

Management influence in decision-making forums: the power of the chair

Meetings are a means of communicating management expectations and instructions (see 5.1.3). They are also decision-making forums in which parents and teachers participate in establishing policy. Such forums can be thought of as 'participative spaces', which Gaventa (2005, p.11) defines as 'opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships which affect their lives and interests.' Given the potential for parents and others to favour policies which

run counter to policy requirements, management uses various strategies to dominate meetings and ensure compliance. According to Lukes' (2005) conceptualisation of power, *one-dimensional power* is exercised in observable acts of decision-making, such as nominating a representative or voting on a motion: asserting preferences within boundaries established by others. *Two-dimensional power* consists in the capacity to shape decision-making arenas – deciding who may participate, and which issues are open or closed for debate. At Ketema, management exercises two-dimensional power: organising meetings for its own purposes; setting the agenda and enforcing the rules of engagement; deciding who speaks, when, for how long, and to what end. In these ways, management exerts a dominating influence over decision-making forums in school.

Structural limits to management influence

The PSTA is a structural check and balance to the powers of management, overseeing its activities, and controlling the budget. Demands on the school budget must be agreed by the PSTA, which imposes a significant limitation on management authority. The Director must explain and justify proposed expenditures, and may have his claims rejected (see 5.4.2). This substantiates his assertion that the PSTA is the 'highest authority' in school (FN142), although its autonomy is constrained by the Director's own seat on the board.

In practice, the Director must work to meaningfully involve the PSTA in decision-making processes, while ensuring that it does not overstep external policy requirements. This requires the Director to relinquish some decision-making authority – for example, allowing the PSTA to identify spending priorities. The PSTA makes infrastructural decisions which would otherwise be made by management. Prioritising the repair of the wall or the toilet or the electric cables is important but not controversial, and not subject to strong WEO preference. Externally mandated aspects of school life are not open to debate. For example, on the anniversary of the TPLF the Director simply informs the PSTA that there will be a parade; there is no sense in which the other members could disagree on this point (PSTA Meeting 5).

Management seeks to comply with external policy requirements in all cases (see 5.1.2), and is supported in this endeavour by the internal structures and apparatus of management control discussed above. Only in areas *not* covered by external policy directives is debate possible. Here, management competes for influence alongside the others in the school community – teachers, students and parents, to whom I turn now.

6.2.2 Teachers' influence

Teachers have a substantial capacity to influence conditions in school, especially through staff meetings, where they engage in deliberative dialogue, collective decision-making, and the indigenous practice of *gim gima*. Collectively, teachers are able to influence resource and workload management, resolve workplace conflicts and hold management to account. Teachers are unable to make school-level decisions on matters relating to curriculum, teaching practices or assessment, which are all subject to external regulation. However, lacunae in the internal supervision system allow teachers to exercise considerable discretion in their classrooms.

Teachers' influence in decision-making forums: deliberative dialogue and collective decision-making

Teachers discount committee meetings as opportunities for influencing school policy; they expect to receive tasks delegated by management, and rarely raise concerns. In contrast, PSTA meetings offer greater scope for teachers to engage in school-level decision-making, for example, establishing spending priorities and overseeing management processes. However, access to the PSTA is restricted to two teacher representatives, elected by their colleagues for a three-year term. For most teachers, regular staff meetings are the principal forums through which school policies may be modified.

Management dominates staff meetings through the power of the chair. In my estimate, up to 90% of the time in these meetings is occupied by the Director, as he communicates his own expectations and gives instructions to staff (see 5.1.3); however, this does leave some space for teachers to raise their own concerns. At the start of a meeting, teachers are invited to add items to the agenda. The Director tends to append their issues to the end of his own list – although after one teacher complained about him always leaving their business to the end, when everyone was 'bored and ready to leave', the Director agreed to start with their issues (Staff Meeting 30). Controlling the agenda allows management to prioritise its own concerns and minimise the risk from the discussion of contentious issues (Ball, 1987). For example, on the prickly issue of teachers' performance appraisal scores, the Director invited teachers' comments at *the end* of a lunchtime meeting, limiting the time available for debate, and teachers' enthusiasm to argue (Staff Meeting 12). However, with the Director's permission and without formally tabling an agenda

item, teachers may also express their views at any point during the meeting. An example of this was reported in 5.1.3, when teachers responded to the Director's public critique of latecomers. Nevertheless, as chairperson, the Director exercises two-dimensional power, deciding who can speak, and whether or not their contributions are relevant.

Teachers' comments in meetings may be directed at i) the information flow (i.e. seeking or providing information); ii) holding others to account for their conduct; or iii) making changes to school policy. Comments relating to the information flow indicate where actions, instructions, or decisions are needed. For example, a teacher may note that there is a shortage of Grade 7 Chemistry textbooks, or that a decision is needed on the location of holes for students to plant seedlings. These inputs contribute to the smooth running of the school.

Where teachers bring changes to school policy, this occurs through deliberative dialogue and collective decision-making in areas which are not subject to external regulation, such as resource management. For example, in one meeting the Director reminded teachers about the end-of-year arrangements for collecting textbooks: students would be fined for lost or damaged textbooks, and books with missing pages would not be accepted by the storekeeper. Requesting permission to speak, a young Maths teacher pointed out that if they persisted with this policy then there would be a severe shortage of textbooks within two years. He suggested it would be better to collect and repair the damaged textbooks, and charge parents for the duplication of missing pages. The Director opened the issue up for debate and several teachers shared their views. The discussion reflected a range of concerns: that the school should maintain a high textbook-to-student ratio; that the condition of the textbooks be maintained; and that charges levied on parents reflect their ability to pay. After weighing these points, teachers voted to change the policy in line with the Maths teacher's suggestion. This mode of participation – deliberative dialogue and collective decision-making – occurs in the absence of explicit external directives. Where external directives *do* exist, there is no room for debate; it would be untenable to debate whether or not to scrap the student network system, or the requirement that teachers write weekly lesson plans. Similarly, teaching and assessment practices are not subject to teacher's influence at the school-level; on these matters, management simply communicates expectations and instructions based on external directives: prepare assessments in this way, use the student network system to set group work (Staff Meeting 14). Teachers' scope for influencing classroom practices is considered shortly.

Teachers' participation in gim gima: an internal accountability mechanism

Holding others to account involves criticising colleagues (teachers and directors) for not discharging their duties properly: for being impartial, obstructive, impolite, self-interested, or damaging the school's reputation. Such comments, in a *gim gima* mode, are aimed at exposing and changing the behaviour of individuals and groups, and can lead to outcomes such as a fairer distribution of *per diem* opportunities amongst staff (as described in 5.2.3), or the dropping of legal proceedings against a colleague (described below). *Gim gima* is a means of challenging colleagues for not upholding institutional rules and collective expectations; but it is not a forum for changing school policy where external directives exist.

Gim gima is an indigenous practice which developed during the civil war of the 1970s and 80s as 'a mechanism for promoting accountability and democratic decision-making within the TPLF army, before being adopted by civilian organisations in Tigray' (Young, 1997, p.203). *Gim gima* has its origins in traditional Tigrayan arbitration and accountability practices (Hendrie, 1999), and includes aspects of Leninism in addition to TPLF innovations (Young, 1997). It is a hybrid practice, combining modern, traditional, indigenous and foreign elements. *Gim gima* is practised widely at Ketema, involving all sections of the school community. Within regular staff meetings, short episodes of *gim gima* sometimes occur (e.g. the Director's criticism of latecomers, reported in 5.1.3). Sessions entirely devoted to staff *gim gima* are also held. This occurred twice during the fieldwork period. Parents from the PSTA and auxiliary members of staff (the caretaker, the storekeeper) also participate in these sessions, alongside teachers. The importance attached to hierarchical authority is reduced, and bottom-up critique is encouraged. Elders, as traditional sources of authority, are particularly influential in processes of collective decision-making, as illustrated in the example below.

In the final months of the 2013/4 school year a *gim gima* was called following a conflict between the Director and VD Haftom, who – in the course of a heated argument – threw a heavy item of stationery at the Director, which fortunately missed him and struck the wall. The Director recounted this incident in the *gim gima* and asked the participants to arbitrate.

The participants roundly criticised Haftom for his actions. From their perspective, his misconduct extended beyond this particular incident, to include

other aspects of his work. For example, one teacher criticised his attempt to exempt a young relative from paying school fees; another, his failure to perform administrative duties with due care. The teachers advised VD Haftom to admit his mistakes and apologise – not only to the Director, but to the wider school community. Teachers also criticised the Director for provoking the attack by using a loud voice, and for starting legal proceedings against Haftom before consulting the school community.

Several elder teachers focused on ways to resolve the conflict. One male teacher argued: ‘The way forward to end the case is not – as Dawit put forward repeatedly – to present a written letter of apology. A piece of paper does not outweigh the 30 members of staff who are participating in this meeting. Rather, Haftom has to admit his mistake and apologise in front of the participants, and so this will be enough evidence to end the case.’

Gebreselassie (another elder male), supported this position: ‘It is natural for conflict to emerge in our workplace. But what makes humans good is to admit mistakes and to apologise, as you must do. You are a youth who will encounter many things in the future. As for the written letter of apology, as Dawit insists, I think there are minutes being kept containing Haftom’s apology, and others’ views, and so I do not think a written letter is necessary.’

Haftom duly apologised to Dawit and the others, vowing: ‘if I fail to respect the decisions of the staff and commit the same mistakes again, then I will be sub-human.’ For his part, Dawit agreed to drop the legal case, as the elders advised. (Staff meeting 13, FN192)

As illustrated above, teachers exert an important influence over colleagues’ behaviour, holding teachers and directors accountable for their actions according to collective behavioural norms, and resolving interpersonal conflicts to restore harmony in the workplace.

Patterns of teacher participation in meetings

Analysis of minutes and transcriptions from ten staff meetings revealed unequal patterns of teacher participation by age, gender and contract type. Of the 64 comments by teachers,

men spoke more than twice as often as women, and elder teachers more frequently than their younger colleagues (see Table 6.1).³¹

Table 6.1 Tally of teachers' comments in ten staff meetings, by age and gender

	Number of comments	Comments per individual
Male (n=23)	43	1.9
Elder male (n=15)	30	2.0
Younger male (n=11)	14	1.3
Female (n=23)	21	0.9
Elder female (n=18)	19	1.1
Younger female (n=5)	2	0.4

Four elder teachers (three men and one woman) spoke at almost every meeting. None had taught for less than 29 years, and three were amongst the longest-serving on the staff. They spoke either to support or oppose management, or to raise other issues of concern, and played an important role in resolving conflicts, such as the one described in the previous extract. They told me that their interventions were necessary to ensure good leadership (FN749, FN801). Although younger teachers spoke less often, they were also confident to raise concerns (e.g. the Maths teacher who sought to modify the textbook collection policy). The intergenerational dynamics at Ketema were similar to those described by Dull (2004) in the context of a teacher training college in Ghana: 'While respectful of older staff members...tutors were not afraid to confront administration and elders at staff meetings' (p.307).

The willingness of teachers to contribute to discussions relies on their sense of identification with the school community (Ball, 1987). The small group of (mostly young, male) contract teachers never spoke in staff meetings. Although they were obliged to attend, they told me that the issues under discussion were of no concern, since they had no future in the school or the profession (FN182).

³¹ The identification of teachers as 'elder' (*shimugele*) or 'younger' (*menisay*) is problematic, since the term is relational, based on seniority. In this analysis I have treated teachers aged roughly 40 and below as 'younger', which reflects the usage of the term I heard in school.

Looking beyond the frequency of teachers' contributions, I found gendered patterns in the nature of teachers' comments (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Teachers' comments in staff meetings, by gender

	Request/offer information; suggestion	Criticism of management	Criticism of teacher/s	Criticism of WEO, REB	Criticism of PSTA	Criticism of conditions in school
Male (n = 23)	16	14	2	6	1	4
Female (n = 23)	10	4	4	0	0	3
Total	26	18	6	6	1	7

Male teachers criticised management three-times more often than their female counterparts did, for example, claiming partiality in the distribution of benefits, or identifying management errors or omissions. Male teachers also criticised the higher authorities, including the WEO Head when he visited the school for a *gim gima* (Staff meeting 14). Conversely, female teachers were more likely to criticise teacher colleagues for breaching the rules – for not taking attendance properly, or for missing the flag ceremony. In private, a group of younger male teachers laughingly referred to several prominent female teachers as 'supporters of Dawit'. One earned the epithet 'UN conflict negotiator' and another 'House of Federation' due to their 'establishment' status and tendency to side with the Director in disputes (FN552). I never heard male teachers mocked in this way. Female teachers take a greater personal risk than their male colleagues when they speak out in meetings, since it exposes them to such criticism.

As demonstrated in this section, staff meetings offer teachers scope to influence conditions in school by making collective decisions on school policy, and holding others to account for their conduct. As a group, teachers have a significant capacity to challenge colleagues and directors, and their collective decisions are binding, even when these oppose management preferences (as occasionally happens). This allows teachers to bring greater equity in the distribution of benefits, and resolve workplace conflicts. Teachers seek to change policies in line with their collective priorities (e.g. maximising textbook availability, equity of workload), but their capacity to change policy is restricted to areas not covered by external directives.

Teachers' influence in the classroom: policy and practice

In the classroom, teachers are positioned as implementers rather than formulators of policy. The internal supervision and performance appraisal systems are tied to external regulations of classroom practice which teachers have no opportunity to debate or modify in staff meetings or other decision-making forums. However, in practice teachers have significant freedom to arrange instruction according to their preferences (see 5.2.1).

While management ensures that teachers submit weekly lesson plans, and set the requisite number of tests, lessons themselves are lacunae in the internal supervision system. In principle, HoDs are required to conduct lesson observations within the department each semester, but this is a rule more honoured in the breach than the observance. There is little incentive to observe colleagues' lessons, since the characteristics of good practice are already specified in externally-defined performance criteria; there is no sense in which teachers might learn from each other's practice, and no systems to support or encourage this (cf. Stenhouse, 1975; discussed in 2.2). The WEO 'supervised' the lessons of three teachers during the fieldwork period. One of those observed told me:

The supervision from the WEO doesn't focus on the teaching and learning process, or academics. It only focuses on the clothing style and the unnecessary documents. (Science teacher, FN723)

Equally, while students are invited to evaluate certain aspects of teachers' classroom practice in grade *gim gimas*, they do not tend to comment on these issues. In short, teachers' classroom practice is largely overlooked in both internal and external supervision. Thus, although teachers cannot *formally* affect school policy in this area, they are relatively free to act at their discretion.

Thus, while there are external requirements that teachers use the network system, the practice is affected by subject conventions more than directives. I found the network system routinely used in Tigrigna, Amharic, English, Civics, Chemistry, Physics and Biology lessons; less often in Maths lessons (see also Frost & Little, 2014); and not at all in Social Studies, Music, Art or classroom-based PE lessons. Similarly, school-level prohibitions on headscarves, corporal punishment, and excluding students from lessons are applied inconsistently. Teachers implement these policies, or not, based on their judgement, and only face management intervention if students complain, as happened in the case of Teacher Biniam.

Teachers' comparative freedom to act at their discretion in the classroom is limited by factors beyond their individual and collective control. For example, class size and the student promotion policy – both of which have a significant effect on teachers' workload – are not amenable to their influence. Other considerations, such as students' engagement with the academic programme in lessons and the time they devote to studying outside school, may be influenced but not controlled by teachers. Teachers' influence over these matters is achieved through negotiation with students themselves, to whom we now turn.

6.2.3 Students' influence

This section considers students' influence in consultative forums and the classroom. Their participation in the former is driven by management agendas, and in particular, teacher surveillance. In *gim gima*, students raise concerns about individual teachers who fail to meet collective expectations, but they are unable to affect school policy. In the classroom, teachers dominate, but students are capable of collectively overturning specific teacher decisions, if not effecting more enduring changes.

Students' influence in consultative and decision-making forums

Students are positioned as civic agents, feeding into the consultative, evaluative and decision-making forums. *Gim gimas* and PSTA meetings are participative spaces in which, in principle at least, students can act to affect conditions in school in line with their preferences (Gaventa, 2005). Their scope to influence conditions in school is both enabled and constrained in these spaces, and shaped by the power relations which surround and permeate these consultative and decision-making forums.

Grade *gim gimas* are formal, teacher-facilitated consultative forums, in which students evaluate their teachers and peers according to management-specified criteria, as a component of the school's internal supervision system (see 5.3.3). These are consultative but not decision-making forums, and do not provide students with an opportunity to influence school conditions, except where their preferences coincide with those of management. Students comply with the consultation agenda (for example, reporting teachers who do not wear gowns), but also raise their own concerns about teachers who miss classes, use inappropriate language, or beat students unfairly. These issues are not part of the formal consultation agenda, but management takes such allegations seriously: teachers are called to the office to receive a reprimand, and may be criticised at a staff

meeting, or in extreme cases receive a financial penalty, or be reported to the police. Unit leader Haile often handled students' complaints against teachers in *gim gima*.

If you want to know the truth, you check by a vote. If all students agree – or if fifty-plus-one [percent] agree – it's true. If there is one student only: reject it.

(FN737)

Thus, although collective criticisms of teachers are upheld, a low value is attached to the testimony of individual students. This is an example of what Fricker (2007) terms 'testimonial injustice', where 'prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word' (p.1).

Not all of students' concerns are heeded. Management acts, or not, based on its own priorities, and it is typically more concerned with supervising teachers than students. The school lacks detailed behavioural records for individual students, and so complaints do not remain long in the institutional memory. Thus, a network leader who was said to be unsuited to the role was re-appointed the following year. The function of grade *gim gimas* is to identify individuals who break the rules, not to challenge or re-write the rules themselves. In the 7B questionnaire, students identified various aspects of school life they were dissatisfied with, including the rules regarding female students' dress, and the compulsory nature of after-school clubs; but these issues are not subject to debate in *gim gimas*, and are consequently beyond their sphere of influence. In short, grade *gim gimas* offers students the potential (if not the certainty) of affecting the conduct of individuals, but wider policy changes are off the agenda.

In contrast to grade *gim gimas*, PSTA meetings *are* decision-making forums. Three student representatives have permanent seats alongside the Director, two teachers and three or four parents. My analysis of the minutes from ten PSTA meetings from the fieldwork period indicates that student members have the least influence of all the members in these meetings. A low value is attached to their participation. For example, the PSTA does not convene without its full complement of parent members, but holds meetings even if only one student member is present. Students make fewer verbal contributions in these meetings than the other members. Comments were attributed to named students in only *one* of the PSTA minutes I reviewed. In this meeting, each student comment was preceded by a cue from the Director in which he stated his own position, which a student proceeded to endorse. For example, the Director raised the issue of the

library's closure, and a student expressed her own disappointment at this state of affairs; the Director expressed his desire to fix the school's PA system, and a student explained that this was necessary since comments were inaudible during flag ceremony (PSTA Meeting 36). Students' participation in these meetings amounts to a capacity to endorse the Director's preferred position.

Across the participative spaces discussed above, a common feature is the two-dimensional power of management: setting the consultation agenda, and directing discussion towards certain topics. By contrast, in less formal spaces such as class *gim gimas*, students have greater freedom to raise issues of their own concern. These sessions, conducted in tutor groups, are more flexible and not governed by a management agenda. An example was reported in 5.3.3 in which 6B students collectively decided on the punishment for a truanting classmate, and criticised their tutor, Yerga, for not calling parents to school, as he had promised. In class *gim gimas*, students exert a direct influence over their peers, and *may* influence their teachers (e.g. Yerga did meet with the parents of students who had failed the test); however, there is no formal mechanism for incorporating comments made in these forums into school policy. In summary, while students do participate in consultative and decision-making forums, they have limited scope to influence practice in line with their own preferences.

Students' influence in the classroom: teachers' agents and collective action

Students' influence in the classroom must be considered from the perspective of the organisational structures which shape their daily experiences. As reported in 5.3.2, the monitor and network systems are formal structures through which selected student leaders are given delegated authority over their peers – to keep them on task and seated at their desks; to support academic learning and regulate behaviour. These positions charge students with significant responsibility for implementing, but not shaping, policy. Monitors and network leaders do not define acceptable conditions in the classroom; they act within frameworks established from above, as agents of the teacher.

In contrast to students' outspokenness in *gim gimas*, they are generally more reticent in everyday interactions with teachers. On one occasion, a teacher began a lesson by quizzing students on their homework, and finding that no-one could answer correctly he rebuked the class for several minutes before realising that he had omitted a lesson in the textbook; no-one told him of his mistake (Grade 7 English Lesson 53). This is indicative

of the power imbalance between teachers and students: teachers give instructions, students obey. Disruption to this basic pattern is unusual in the classroom, but it does sometimes occur. The act of teaching requires an element of students' active consent (Elmore, 2005b), and as I reported in the previous chapter, students may opt to passively withdraw; to rest, or quietly work on homework for another subject. Conversely, through collective action, students can exert a more tangible influence over their teachers. For example, I observed a Grade 5 Maths lesson which extended into break; when the teacher announced that they would go through the answers as a class, voices from around the room cried out in unison 'make it homework!' and the teacher felt obliged to dismiss the class (Lesson 22, FN140). On another occasion a PE teacher decided to hold a classroom-based lesson because it was raining. The air is cool when it rains, and students like playing outdoors. The teacher told me that when he announced it would be an indoor lesson, the class had pleaded with him to let them go outside: it wasn't fair, they said, 7A had been allowed outside for PE. 'It's rainy,' the teacher told them, 'your uniform will become dirty.' But they replied: 'Tomorrow is Saturday, we will wash it' (FN156). So again, the teacher acquiesced to the students' demands.

The above examples illustrate how students may collectively assert their preferences, and influence their teachers on an ad hoc basis. However, while students may collectively oppose or spontaneously overturn decisions in this way, they lack the capacity to make wider or more enduring changes in classroom conditions in relation to the curriculum, assessment, the organisation of class activities, or the nature of the teacher-student relationship.

6.2.4 Parents' influence

Parents' scope to affect conditions in school varies according to their status. The three or four representatives on the PSTA have far greater leverage than the average parent, and so these are treated separately in the discussion below. In regular parents' meetings, participants vote on issues and have wide scope to share their evaluations of the school; however, their capacity to affect policy is limited. The PSTA has wider-ranging powers to monitor and intervene in management processes, but serves a watchdog, rather than a policy-formulation function.

Parents' influence in participative spaces: consultation and decision-making

Parents participate in decision-making processes at meetings by nominating representatives and by voting on issues such as the level of school fees. Voting on a motion constitutes one-dimensional power (Lukes, 2005): parents collectively decide the outcome of a vote, but not the terms of the motion or the issues on which they will vote. Management carefully organises decision-making forums in order to promote its own preferred course of action. For example, before inviting parents to vote on the level of school fees, the Director first presented the annual budget, explaining the many expenses the school faced, and announcing the donations I had brought to the school; he told me this would encourage parents to increase their own financial contributions (FN594). The full repertoire of persuasive strategies used by management is not especially important; the point is that parents do not decide *which* issues are put to a vote.

Time is given in every meeting for parents to share their ideas and evaluations of the school. Their inputs are more topically diverse than those of students or teachers in similar forums; they raise concerns about the conduct of teachers and other parents, and seek to change aspects of school policy in specific ways (see 5.4). For example, at one meeting a mother called for disruptive students to be excluded; at another, parents argued that female Muslim students should be permitted to wear headscarves in school (FN596). The Director responds to such comments opportunistically; where they are consistent with management agendas, he accepts them as an affirmation of his own preferred position; where they are in opposition, he explains why such suggestions are undesirable or unworkable. Wherever possible, the Director seeks to provide opportunities for *others* to advance the management line (such as the *Hajji* who argued against female students wearing headscarves in school; see 5.1.1). By endorsing and amplifying views expressed by parents, management is able to simulate participative decision-making without breaching external policy requirements – what Masue and Askvik (2016, p.2) describe as ‘democratic cosmetics’.

As illustrated above, parents participate in school-level decision-making by voting on specific issues at the invitation of management. The outcome of a vote determines school policy, but management decides *which* issues are put to a vote, and carefully frames the debate. Parents are not invited to vote on pedagogical issues, or whether or not headscarves should be worn in school; they may freely express their views on these issues,

but there are no formal means of incorporating their views into school policy. This amounts to a fairly limited scope for affecting school policy. Nevertheless, by expressing their views in these forums, parents sensitise staff to their perspectives and priorities. It is common for staff to raise parents' concerns in staff meetings and other forums at which parents themselves are not present. Staff wish parents to feel positively about the school: teachers want parents to trust their judgment, and directors wish to avoid parents' complaints in *tabia* (council) meetings. Consequently, even though the average parent has limited *direct* influence over school-level decisions, parents as a bloc exert a powerful indirect influence over decisions made by staff.

The influence of parent representatives in the PSTA

Unlike the student members of the PSTA, the four parent members exert a tangible influence in meetings. Parents either support or oppose management spending requests, and regulate such requests through their scrutiny of the school accounts and any demands made upon it. Parents oversee management processes, monitoring academic attainment in each grade/subject, the performance appraisal system and disciplinary procedures. The minutes of these meetings show no evidence of parents intervening on academic matters, but they are vocal on disciplinary issues. For example, it was a parent who first suggested that Teacher Biniam's case be referred to the police.

The PSTA serves a monitoring more than a visioning function; it safeguards the budget and ensures that tasks are undertaken according to legal and other external requirements, for example, enforcing the ban on teachers beating students, and seeking to improve performance according to externally-specified quality indicators. It does not seek to influence practice beyond this. The diverse issues raised in general parents' meetings (see 5.4) do not surface in PSTA meetings.

6.3 Negotiating agendas: meetings and the classroom

The foregoing discussion reveals meetings and the classroom as key sites for contesting and negotiating the agendas of different groups. Power relations shape the outcome of these negotiations, as illustrated below.

Meetings. Recent policy changes call for the participation of management, teachers, students and parents in school evaluation, consultation and decision-making (MOE, 2007, 2015). The external policy context establishes non-negotiable boundaries to the influence

of these stakeholders. Meetings are important forums for sharing evaluations of the school and how it might be improved, and management must work to both enable and constrain these discussions, to ensure compliance with external requirements. Management uses the power of the chair to open or close issues for debate, and decide which issues are put to a vote; this is two-dimensional power (Lukes, 2005). Most of the time, meetings provide stakeholders with opportunities to support management preferences, or propose alternative means for achieving the same ends. However, meetings also enable stakeholders to affect genuine changes in school, in areas which are not subject to tight external regulation, such as resource management, workload distribution and interpersonal relations.

Certain structures and processes, such as the PSTA and the practice of *gim gima*, serve as a counter-balance to management power. In *gim gima*, staff conduct is subject to public scrutiny; the importance of bureaucratic hierarchy is reduced, and traditional sources of authority come to the fore, especially the judgment of elders and collective decision-making. Although decisions made in *gim gima* sometimes oppose management preferences, it is not a forum for deliberating or modifying policy. Rather, it is a mechanism for holding individuals to account for upholding the rules and collective behavioural norms. The same is true of the PSTA, which serves a watchdog function, and which rarely makes policy decisions.

Where stakeholders' agendas are incompatible with the external policy context they remain unrealised. Issues such as reducing teachers' paperwork, or permitting Muslim students to wear headscarves (i.e. Figure 6.1, *points A* and *C*) are seldom raised in meetings, due to the two-dimensional power exercised by management. However, where stakeholders' agendas are *consistent* with external requirements – addressing teacher absence, exposing corruption – these forums allow the school community to hold individuals to account.

The classroom. The classroom is both a focus and arena of conflict in school. Many aspects of classroom life are codified and subject to external directives: the scope, sequence and means of covering the curriculum; the organisation of students; assessment practices; templates for planning lessons and related paperwork; the dress code for teachers and students. The school's internal supervision system is designed to monitor compliance with these directives. However, in practice both internal and external

supervisory systems focus largely on paperwork (which bears little relation to classroom practice), and the outwardly visible aspects of teachers' conduct, such as attendance, punctuality and dress.

As a result, teachers exert broad autonomy in the classroom. They routinely adapt the curriculum, and arrange instruction according to their preferences, and the student leadership structures reinforce their authority. This does not mean that teachers can act without due regard for others' wishes and expectations; their actions are constrained by a number of factors. Teachers have no say in class size or subject/grade assignments; while these issues might legitimately be brought to staff meetings or the PSTA, decisions in these areas are made by management alone, without consultation. If many students fail a subject, then teachers receive a low performance appraisal score, which negatively affects their career prospects. This is a structural incentive to cover the textbook and prepare students for the exam. In lessons, individual students may decide to withdraw from teacher-prescribed activities; or collectively, they may resist or even overturn teachers' decisions. Furthermore, teachers face serious consequences if students report cases of misconduct, as they are encouraged to do. There are, then, numerous constraints on teachers' autonomy in the classroom.

Described above are a number of factors affecting classroom life – external directives, management decisions, teacher autonomy, and the individual and collective agency of students. The interaction of these factors leads to varying practices. Some teachers use the network system in every lesson, others never do so; some award group marks as directed, others refuse; some make female students remove their headscarves, others do not. Classroom life is a dynamic, fluctuating balance of the factors outlined above, the most significant of which is individual teachers, and their evaluations of, and responses to, the situations in which they find themselves.

Summary

This chapter reported on whose agendas are realised in policy and practice, and found that the four key stakeholder groups have differential capacities to influence school conditions in line with their preferences.

Management agendas are supported by the bureaucratic apparatus in school (e.g. committees, the internal supervision system). In meetings, management exercises two-

dimensional power to open or close issues for debate (Lukes, 2005). These participative spaces offer significant opportunities for parents and students to raise concerns beyond the specific management consultation agenda. However, parents' scope for school-level decision-making is restricted to management-nominated issues, and students have little or no formal decision-making authority. For the most part, the influence of these stakeholders is exercised vicariously, if staff decide to act upon their stated concerns. An exception to this is the PSTA, which can overrule the stated preferences of management, and sometimes does so on financial matters.

By comparison, teachers have far greater scope to influence conditions in school, especially through collective action in meetings. Teachers may successfully assert their preferences over those of management, but only on issues not subject to external regulation. The external policy context marks a non-negotiable boundary to school-level decision-making. Despite teachers' inability to influence policies relating to classroom practice, they habitually exercise wide discretion in the classroom as a result of lacunae in the internal and external supervision systems.

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion

This ethnographic case study addressed the questions:

1. What range of interests and agendas are pursued through the school by different groups within the school community?
2. How are the participation and influence of different groups achieved and mediated by structures and processes in the school?

The first part of this chapter explores the findings in relation to these questions. This involves drawing links between the constructs developed through my inductive analysis of the case data and the theoretical constructs present in the literature (Hallberg, 2010; Ramalho et al., 2015). Since this analysis emerges from the study, rather than a prior commitment to a particular analytic or explanatory framework, new literature is introduced at this stage where relevant. In particular, Foucault's ([1977] 1995) notion of 'disciplinary technologies' is introduced as a means of linking structures and processes internal and external to the school to the production of *compliance*. Findings from Ketema are considered in relation to practices in wider African and international contexts.

In the second part of this chapter, I consider the implications of the study for policy and practice (7.3), trace a future research agenda (7.4), and reflect on the methodological approach of the study (7.5).

7.1 Convergence around the dominant model of schooling for national development

This section opens with a discussion of the dominant model of schooling for national development (7.1.1), followed by an outline of the internal (7.1.2) and external (7.1.3) structures and processes which incentivise and normalise convergence around this model. It concludes with a discussion of divergent agendas, which remain unrealised in school (7.1.4).

7.1.1 Schooling for national development

The prevalent view of the nature and purpose of schooling amongst management, teachers and many students, is consistent with the 'national development script' (NDS) which links Ketema and other state institutions to the long-term interests of the country. The

NDS positions the school as a vehicle for shaping young people into modern, technically-skilled and ethical citizens working for the national benefit. As such, universal primary education is part of the government's poverty reduction strategy, and its vision to transform Ethiopia into a middle-income country by the 2020s (MOFED, 2010; de Waal, 2013).

The discursive linking of *education* and *development* is a familiar motif across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Harber, 2002; Tabulawa, 2003; Dull, 2004; Dei, 2005; Vavrus, 2009). Kendall (2009, p.421) identifies a 'near-hegemonic understanding of and belief in formal, Western-style, state-provided, mass schooling' as a means of national development. The Ethiopian NDS is consistent with this international model of education for development, by which universal participation in state-sponsored schooling is seen as:

(1) central to the creation of a "modern" nation-state; (2) central to the development of "modern" workers and families; and, thus (3) central to a state's "modern" economic growth and international acceptance. (ibid., p.421)

At Ketema, as I found, the development of modern workers and citizens contains academic, ethical, social and political aspects.

Academics. According to the NDS, the academic programme prepares students for the demands of a modern economy and further education and training institutions. While the programme as a whole is conceived in these instrumental terms, special importance is attached to three curriculum areas of national priority: Science and Maths, which are required for industrialisation; and English, the language of post-primary education and international relations. Science, Maths and English are given special emphasis in the timetable, and teachers and students tend to attach greater value to these core subjects. Correspondingly, other subjects, particularly those in the Aesthetics Department, are deemed to be of lesser consequence. The academic programme involves covering the state-mandated textbook, and assessing students' recall of facts through multiple-choice questions, consistent with the 'banking' model of education (Freire, 1972), which dominates in the continent (Tabulawa, 2013).

Ethics. Shaping students ethically entails socialisation into the values, skills and behaviours desired of future citizens (Harber & Mncube, 2012). The school promotes students' national identification and pride, their sense of individual and collective

responsibility, orderliness and discipline (i.e. obedience to authority). These are overt aspects of the daily flag ceremony, where students sing the national anthem and vow to work for the development of ‘Mother Ethiopia’. These values are reinforced in the classroom, where students learn about the social and environmental issues facing the country and their own place in the national development project. Collective responsibility is further reinforced through the student network system and *gim gima*, both of which position students as civic agents with explicit responsibilities to others in the school community.

Secularism, gender equity and democracy. In contrast to the importance traditionally attached to gender roles, age deference and religion in Tigray (Elleni Tedla, 1996; Hendrie, 1999), schooling for national development promotes secularism, gender equity and a ‘democratic mindset’. Although a minority of students and teachers express misgivings about one or more of these ideals (discussed in 7.1.4), school-wide policies – such as the appointment of male and female students to elected positions of leadership in equal number, and restrictions on religious dress – present a consistent message about the rules which operate in government spaces. The promotion of democratic values is a more problematic aim in the context of a one-party state which demands obedience (Bach, 2011; Vaughan, 2011; Kalkidan, 2017; for a similar discussion in the Turkish context, see Altinyelken [2015]). Since the end of the Cold War, the notion of schooling for democracy has been an increasingly common feature of global education policies (Davies, 1999; Harber, 2002; Tabulawa, 2003; Harber & Mncube, 2012, pp.59-64), yet internationally, the dominant model of schooling remains more authoritarian than democratic (Harber & Mncube, 2012, chapt. 4), with typically limited scope for students to make decisions regarding the nature and conditions of teaching and learning in school (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007; Harber, 2010). A study from 18 sites across SSA (Evans & Rose, 2007) found a strong positive association between adults’ support for democracy and their level of formal education. This suggests that even predominantly authoritarian forms of schooling can promote the development of democratic values. At Ketema, students gain ‘political knowledge’ (Harber, 2002) of the structures and processes of government and parliamentary democracy through the Civics and Ethical Education curriculum, and they are inducted into limited forms of democratic participation by electing representatives, expressing views in *gim gima*, and participating in school management structures through the PSTA. This democratic participation occurs within

an organisational context which both enables and constrains students' influence in line with management agendas (discussed in 7.1.2).

Schooling for national development is a loud 'refrain' in school (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), communicated through official channels (e.g. ETV, textbooks, teachers' political training) and echoed by voices across the school community. The NDS is a powerful means of promoting a common view on the nature and purposes of schooling, and for mobilising efforts around government agendas. By linking the actions of individuals to the collective good, the NDS demands and inspires self-sacrifice: Ketema students link their personal career ambitions to the struggle for national development (discussed in 5.3.1; see also Marshall, 2016), and teachers take pride in the knowledge that their work is part of a broader plan for lifting the country out of poverty. This corresponds with findings from other sectors, including agriculture (Segers et al., 2009) and health (Maes et al., 2015). For example, members of the Health Development Army work at the government's direction on a voluntary basis for the purpose of saving lives and improving population health (ibid.). In the national interest, teachers also regularly accept additional unpaid responsibilities.

The discussion above summarises the dominant view on the purposes and nature of schooling for national development. The following sections, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3, outline the structures and processes internal and external to the school, which promote and sustain this particular model of schooling.

7.1.2 Internal factors which facilitate management control

Internal structures and processes at Ketema facilitate management control. As outlined below, these include common bureaucratic, as well as distinctively Tigrayan organisational features.

1. The bureaucratic structure of the school facilitates authoritarian management control (Harber & Davies, 1997, chapt. 3). Departments and committees support the delegation of responsibilities and tasks amongst staff (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006, p.164), and the cascading of expectations and instructions throughout the school.
2. Paper-based accountability mechanisms (e.g. attendance registers, planning and reporting templates) promote compliance with external policy requirements. For

example, teachers plot their coverage of the textbook using annual and weekly lesson plans; this encourages adherence to the mandated curriculum, and facilitates the surveillance of their work by management and the WEO.

3. There are formal positions of distributed leadership through which members of the school community are recruited as agents of management, with responsibilities for supporting and monitoring peers, colleagues and others in line with official agendas. For example, network leader and monitor for students; unit leader and HoD for teachers.
4. Management organises meetings for the purpose of communicating expectations and instructions to all sections of the school community. A recurrent message is that of *sharing responsibility*. For example, parents are asked to follow up their children's attendance and ensure they complete their homework.
5. Meetings enable the expression of diverse viewpoints, some of which are incompatible with official agendas; however, the disruptive potential is minimised by management, through the exercise of two-dimensional power – setting the agenda, and deciding who may speak, when, and to what end (Lukes, 2005). Meetings of the various bodies have different remits, and different patterns of stakeholder participation and influence. For example, in general parents' meetings, participants are invited to vote on specific issues nominated by management (sometimes after a programme aimed at persuading them of a particular course of action). In staff meetings, teachers have greater scope to raise issues of their own concern, and reach collective decisions through deliberative dialogue. However, in all cases, the external policy context establishes non-negotiable limits to school-level decisions.
6. Official agendas are promoted through various 'disciplinary technologies' (Foucault, [1977] 1995), whereby individuals are 'described, judged, measured, compared with others [...] corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc.' (p.199). Disciplinary technologies include: academic exams and behaviour ratings for students; the performance appraisal system for staff; the identification of positive and negative models at different levels throughout the school; and the ranking of students, teachers and departments according to the evaluations of hierarchical superiors. These processes position teachers and students as subjects to be 'used, transformed and improved' (ibid., p.143) through continuous supervision and evaluation.

7. *Gim gima* is another disciplinary technology, a practice of top-down, bottom-up and horizontal critique. The conduct of teachers, directors and others is publicly scrutinised for the purpose of airing grievances, correcting mistakes, reinforcing behavioural norms, and pursuing shared goals more effectively. *Gim gima* participants are both subjects and objects of observation and evaluation, a 'network of gazes that supervise...one another' (Foucault, 1995, p.180), with the goal of normalising behaviour in line with institutional rules and collective expectations.

These internal structures and processes amount to a powerful mechanism for promoting management agendas.

7.1.3 External factors which promote compliance with government agendas

I have identified a dominant model of schooling for national development, and structures and processes internal to the school which promote convergence around this particular model. These internal characteristics are reinforced by external factors outlined below.

Political appointments and training. The WEO makes final decisions on all staff appointments, transfers, and state-sponsored study opportunities. Thus, the WEO exerts a powerful influence over teachers' lives and careers, which places staff in a position of dependency. Within the politicised civil service, the WEO is responsible for securing staff support for government projects. Directors are appointed on the basis of their political as well as their professional credentials, and provide political guidance at the institutional level – for example, encouraging teachers to buy government bonds and attend parades. In addition to this, at politically significant junctures (such as the run-up to the May 2015 election) the WEO provides compulsory political training (*nay mengisti sil'tena*) to all teachers in the *woreda*, in order to communicate the policies of the government.

WEO supervision. The WEO supervises activities in school according to national and regional policy requirements. Management seeks to comply with these directives in all cases even when their meaning is not entirely clear (see discussion of BSC in 5.1.2). Supervision is primarily paper-based: management submits monthly reports to the WEO, and a supervisor visits each week to talk with management and review internal paperwork. Less often, the WEO conducts lesson observations which focus on teachers'

visible compliance, for example, correct dress and paperwork. This style of supervision leads to the ritualistic production of paper-based evidence, such as the functionally useless lesson plan, and leaves considerable scope for divergence in actual classroom practice.

Competitive rankings. Ranking is a disciplinary tool for reward and punishment (Foucault, 1995, p.188) which ties the values and motivations of members of the school community to WEO and government agendas. By publicly ranking schools within the *woreda*, the WEO engenders competition: schools try to outperform each other to gain positive recognition as a ‘model school’; a low rank is cause for shame and criticism.

Ranking is a tool within a wider policy technology which Ball (2003) terms ‘performativity’:

a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change...The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output...[and] represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement. (p.216)

In *woreda* rankings, the field of judgment is controlled by the WEO, which specifies the criteria by which schools are measured and ranked. At Ketema, the performance measures of foremost concern are:

- *Grade 8 pass-rate* – the percentage of students passing the primary school leaving exam
- *Income generation* – the amount raised to supplement the school’s budget
- *Building the Education Development Army* – a rating based on measures of teachers’ professional and political compliance

In seeking to excel at these competitive measures, and raise Ketema’s standing in the *woreda*, members of the school community actively pursue these government agendas as their own. While ranking provides an incentive for this alignment, it only partly accounts for motivations within the school community. Teachers buy government bonds not only to demonstrate their political commitment, but also because they believe it is right to do so, as explained below.

Shaping values: the three-dimensional power of the state. I have indicated a number of ways through which external pressures are brought to bear on the school. The general acquiescence to this regulatory regime cannot be explained solely in terms of coercion (e.g. the WEO's control of staff appointments and valued training opportunities) and requires a perspective on the normalisation of asymmetrical power relations.

Lukes (2005) identifies three dimensions of power, two of which have been mentioned already. Parents exercise one-dimensional power in nominating a representative, or voting on the level of school fees: they assert their will within boundaries established by others. Two-dimensional power consists in shaping decision-making forums – chairing meetings and setting the agenda; management decides which issues will be put to a vote, and which issues are not open to debate. Three-dimensional power is a less visible mode of domination which operates at the level of individuals' notions of what is normal and acceptable. It consists in securing individuals' consent to dominant power relations by affecting their values, motivations and sense of place in the world (Lukes, 2005; Gaventa, 2005).

At Ketema, there is a general acceptance that, through the WEO, and other organs of the state, the government hands down directives, monitors compliance, establishes targets and quality indicators, judges performance, and 'corrects' conduct using ranking, models, *gim gima*, and the various other disciplinary technologies outlined above, all of which reinforce, incentivise, legitimise and normalise compliance with the state. Gaventa (2005, p.14) describes this as the 'internalisation of powerlessness', but at Ketema it is experienced as a sense of duty, discipline and collective responsibility. The subjugation of the individual to the state is encapsulated in the NDS, which measures the value of citizens (teachers, students) and of schooling, in terms of benefits to the state through poverty-reduction, development, and so on. 'Education is key to the development of the country.' 'Brave students are a resource for the country.'

Key points from the analysis of the preceding three sections are summarised in Figure 7.1, which illustrates how the dominant model of 'schooling for national development' is supported by structures and processes internal and external to the school.

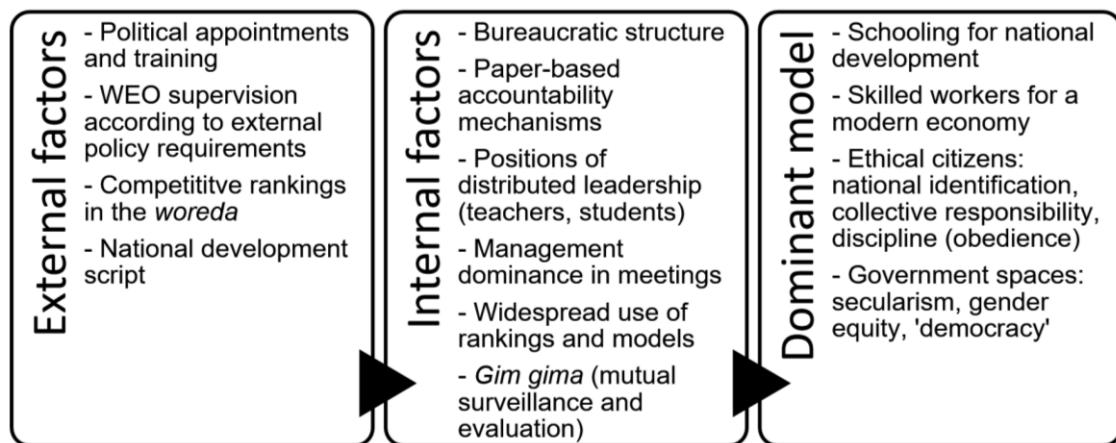


Figure 7.1 External and internal factors which promote the dominant model of schooling for national development

7.1.4 Divergent agendas

As a coda to the neat account of convergence presented above, I found persistent disagreements over several aspects of school life, which were inconsistent with external policy requirements.

- *Inclusion versus exclusion and selection.* While the NDS is predicated on universal inclusion and a single curriculum for all, some parents, students and teachers feel that this universal system is inappropriate in cases where students are persistently disruptive or disengaged. Students raise this issue in connection with the perceived *unfairness* of absentees sitting exams alongside their classmates; parents worry about the adverse effects of *ribushti* students in class; and many teachers favour a more selective system, which would restrict promotion to those who meet the curriculum objectives.
- *Elder-youth relations.* The TPLF-inspired practice of bottom-up critique (Young, 1997) is in tension with traditional elder-youth relations, whereby children are expected to show uncritical obedience to their elders (Poluha, 2004; Omolewa, 2007). For a small minority of teachers, the notion of being criticised by students is completely intolerable. This was the case for Teacher Biniam, who beat the students who criticised him in *gim gima*.
- *Restrictions on religious dress.* A minority of parents and students, and one or two staff members, feel that female students should be permitted to wear headscarves.

This issue was raised at a parents' meeting, where the school's uniform policy was defended by an influential Muslim parent (a *Hajji*).

When these issues surface, management engages in 'firefighting': explaining and justifying school policies, and taking action against those who express oppositional views, as necessary. An area in which management achieves notably *less* success is the issue of teacher autonomy, where an uneasy compromise is reached.

- *Top-down control versus teacher autonomy in the classroom.* Notionally, the lesson planning system is a mechanism for monitoring and regulating teachers' activities in the classroom. Teachers attach little value to this paperwork, which they dispatch with minimal effort. Nevertheless, supervision focuses on lesson plans rather than observed practice. In lessons, teachers regularly diverge from their written plans, and omit, adapt or supplement sections of the textbook. Teachers arrange instruction according to their preferences, and generally follow top-down directives regarding classroom practice only when these are considered efficacious, as is the case with the network system. The result (and the *cause*) of this mode of supervision, is that teachers' classroom practice is effectively 'buffered' from management oversight and intervention (Elmore, 2004), while their paperwork is tightly regulated.

7.2 Locating stakeholders' participation and influence

This section considers the participation and influence of school stakeholders in relation to the empirical and conceptual literature, and locates practices at Ketema within wider African and international contexts. I consider the participation and influence of parents and staff in 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, respectively, before concluding with a discussion of students' participation in structures and processes of consultation and peer leadership (7.2.3).

7.2.1 Community participation at Ketema

Parents' engagement with the school can be viewed from the perspective of an international shift towards increased community participation in school-level decision-making. This 'global education policy' (Verger et al., 2012), advanced by the World Bank and other international policy actors (Daun & Mundy, 2011), is purported to increase resource efficiency, improve educational outcomes, and ensure that schools 'reflect local priorities and values' (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009, p.2). Such policies, now commonplace

across SSA, are often framed in the language of ‘accountability, ownership and empowerment’ (Rose, 2003a, p.50); however, researchers often find little evidence of community participation in meaningful decision-making (Suzuki, 2002; Rose, 2003a; Pryor, 2005; Taylor, 2009), and have argued that claims of ‘ownership’ are principally a means of governments transferring responsibility for under-resourced schools to parents (Stenvoll-Wells & Sayed, 2012).

Community participation is generally achieved through a body containing parent representatives, often called a school management council, but called the PSTA at Ketema. Reviewing the activities of such bodies in 20 developing countries, including seven in SSA, Khan (2006) found that councils made management decisions of one kind or another, and were typically involved in mobilising resources from the community. Although many engaged in staff supervision, they frequently lacked authority over teacher recruitment or transfer; and involvement in decisions regarding classroom practice and curricula was rare. Khan (2006) found that power asymmetries outside the school were reflected in school councils; in particular, women were under-represented or played a marginal role (p.110; see also Rose, 2003b). Khan (2006) concludes that, in many cases, given the ‘fragmentary evidence’ in the studies she reviewed,

it is unclear whether councils merely implement policy directives that emanate from ministries, or make decisions in response to local needs and priorities.
(p.111)

In exploring the implementation of community participation policies in Malawi, Rose (2003a) proposes a continuum, ranging from ‘genuine’ to ‘pseudo-participation’. Genuine participation is ‘voluntary and spontaneous’, and manifested in parents’ ability to engage in ‘real decision-making and governance, where all members have equal power to determine the outcome of decisions’ (p.47). Conversely, pseudo-participation is:

at best, a consultative process whereby citizens are merely kept informed of developments at the school level, and are expected to accept decisions that have already been made. [It...] is extractive, often limited to contributing resources for school construction and maintenance. (ibid.)

Rose (2003a) found that pseudo-participation dominated in Malawi; parents were ‘merely informed of the contributions they are expected to make’ (p.61). This challenged the language of ‘ownership and empowerment’ used in national policy documents.

I found growing community participation at Ketema, in line with the trend identified in 1.3.2 (Swift-Morgan, 2006; Jeilu, 2009; Workneh, 2012; Yamada, 2014). I will consider the participation and influence of the ‘average’ parent in school, before considering that of parental representatives on the PSTA.

In general parents’ meetings, participants vote on management-nominated issues, and share their evaluations and ideas for improving the school. They hold management accountable for examination results and the conduct of teachers and students, and advise each other on how to support their children’s schooling. Parents also raise concerns about pedagogical issues, for example, by criticising homework which involves copying from the textbook, and arguing for increased use of the laboratory (see 5.4.3). This was surprising, in the light of previous studies in Ethiopia which found parents’ engagement with classroom practice to be ‘beyond the purview of their knowledge and responsibilities’ (Swift-Morgan, 2006, p.355). Past studies (Swift-Morgan, 2006; Yamada, 2014) were conducted outside Tigray, and primarily in rural areas, which may account for this variance; Ketema serves a more assertive urban community with a longer history of formal education. In addition, the Ketema fieldwork took place further into the current period of reform, when structures for community participation are more firmly established. Despite expressing their views on pedagogical issues, parents do not make *decisions* in these areas (cf. Khan, 2006, discussed above). Parents’ meetings are largely consultative forums, at the ‘pseudo’ end of Rose’s (2003a) continuum of participation. Management is not obligated to act on their preferences, which poses a challenge to the World Bank contention that community participation ‘ensures that schools reflect local priorities and values’ (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009, p.2). However, parents’ concerns are regularly raised in staff meetings, and other forums at which parents themselves are not present. Thus, parents’ participation in consultation leads to a greater awareness of their perspectives and concerns. Consequently, although the typical parent exerts limited *direct* influence over school-level decisions, as a bloc parents *indirectly* influence decisions made by staff.

Parent representatives on the PSTA have far greater leverage than the average parent, and their participation is closer to the ‘genuine’ end of Rose’s (2003a) continuum. The PSTA oversees management processes, for example, monitoring academic attainment in each grade/subject, and reviewing the staff performance appraisal system; it does not intervene on academic matters. The PSTA exerts greater control over the school budget than is

customary elsewhere (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009, p.3). In other parts of SSA, a lack of transparency in school accounting has been linked to parents' suspicions of school management decisions (in the context of Uganda, see Suzuki, 2002, p.255). At Ketema, the PSTA's control of the budget may contribute to the strong support for the payment of voluntary school fees, which has been elsewhere in the country (Hussien et al., 2014, p.28).

The PSTA serves a watchdog function, ensuring that tasks are undertaken according to legal and other external requirements. Thus, although its participation is *closer* to the 'genuine' end of the continuum, it is not 'spontaneous'; representatives do not choose their own roles, but accept responsibilities according to external specifications. A significant issue in Rose's (2003a) notion of genuine participation, is the criterion that 'all members have equal power to determine the outcome of decisions' (p.47). At Ketema I found gender asymmetries, corresponding to patterns identified elsewhere in SSA (Rose, 2003b; Khan, 2006). Although females outnumbered males 2:1 at general parents' meetings, men spoke more often than women. In the PSTA, the situation was different; although a male parent led this body, the two female parents were notably active, and one regularly challenging teachers and management. The quota system within the PSTA ensured female parents' inputs in school-level decision-making.

7.2.2 Staff participation in school decisions: hindering and enabling structures

The formal positions of teacher leadership are part of the bureaucratic apparatus of authoritarian management control (see 7.1.2). Similar findings have been reported in Anglo-American contexts, where it has been argued that teachers' appointment to so-called distributed leadership positions is a means of delegating responsibility for enforcing management agendas (e.g. Hatcher, 2005; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006). At Ketema, these leadership positions, and the accompanying paper-work accountability mechanisms, are examples of what Hoy (2003) terms 'hindering' structures: rigid rules and regulations aimed at securing compliance.

The prototype for a hindering structure is a hierarchy of authority that hinders and a system of rules and regulations that is coercive. The hierarchy has as its primary goal controlled and disciplined compliance of teachers...[T]he role of

authority, rules, procedures, and policy is to assure that potentially reluctant...teachers do what is prescribed by the administration. (p.91)

By contrast, aspects of teachers' participation in staff meetings and *gim gimas* share many characteristics of what Hoy (2003) terms 'enabling structures', which promote trust, flexibility, cooperative problem-solving, and learning from mistakes (p.92). These forums enable teachers to engage in deliberative dialogue and collective decision-making which draws from 'the collective ideas, abilities and experience of a whole staff' (Semmens, 1972, cited in Hatcher, 2005, p.262). Teachers' talk in these meetings is *dialogic*, in the sense that each 'utterance arises out of [the] dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.277); and it is *deliberative*, defined as:

debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. (Chambers, 2003, p.309)

In staff meetings and *gim gimas*, teachers speak across the formal hierarchy on issues of common concern, in order to: maintain the smooth operations of the school; promote the efficient and equitable distribution of resources and benefits; hold colleagues to account; improve educational outcomes; and uphold the reputation of the school. As such, these forums are an important mechanism for internal accountability (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999), and a key aspect of school leadership and management.

Teachers' participation in staff meetings is patterned by gender, age and contract status. Men speak more often than women, and their comments are more likely to challenge management. Elder teachers are more vocal than their younger colleagues, and have a more prominent role in the arbitration of workplace disputes. Contract teachers seldom if ever speak in meetings, which suggests that personal identification with the school and the willingness to make an emotional investment (Ball, 1987) are necessary preconditions for this mode of engagement.

Staff meetings and *gim gimas* do not feature in previous accounts of teachers' work (Sarton et al., 2009; Fekede & Tynjälä, 2015) or school management (Jeilu, 2009; Workneh, 2012) or in national policy documents which discuss school leadership and management (MOE, 2008; MOE, 2015, pp.66-69); yet these forums are an essential feature of the school's internal accountability system, and the principal means of teachers' involvement in school-level decision-making.

7.2.3 Student voice and leadership

Student consultation

Internationally, student representation on school management councils, is uncommon (Khan, 2006, p.101; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009, p.5). The inclusion of students on the PSTA commenced shortly before the start of fieldwork, and their involvement had yielded negligible impact. Minutes from meetings revealed that students did not table items for discussion, but occasionally expressed views on issues raised by others. On each occasion, students' comments were preceded by a 'cue' from the Director in which he stated his own position, and which the student subsequently endorsed. Evidence from the UK suggests that the successful involvement of students in management structures is a developmental process which requires time, staff commitment, and a conducive external policy context (MacBeath et al., 2008, p.30). Student representation on the PSTA may well be a necessary precursor for more meaningful involvement (Fletcher, 2005).

From one perspective, grade *gim gima* is a structure for students' involvement in the internal supervision system as agents of management – an example of extractive, pseudo-participation (Rose, 2003a). However, students are not *passive* in this process. They raise issues outside the specific consultation agenda, and where these coincide with management concerns, they can influence conditions in school, most obviously in cases of teacher misconduct. Like staff meetings, grade *gim gima* is an enabling structure (Hoy, 2003). Although this concept was developed to describe staff relations, it is applicable in this case, since grade *gim gima* enables cooperation between students and management across recognised boundaries of authority, supporting problem-solving, and fostering 'trust and...commitment to the school and its mission' (ibid., pp.91-92). Grade *gim gimas* enable management to learn of students' concerns, which they regularly raise with the staff. However, there is no obligation for management to act upon students' requests and suggestions; these forums are not a means of involving students in policy decisions.

The practice of public critique is rooted in the revolutionary principles of the TPLF (Young, 1997). Students' participation in teacher evaluation is unusual in Africa and the west (OECD, 2009), but this radical practice shares features with student consultation elsewhere. In common with findings from England (Fielding & Rudduck, 2005; MacBeath et al., 2008), consultative practices at Ketema do not involve students expressing their views about the core business of teaching and learning. While students

raise important matters which affect their learning and experiences in school – such as teacher absence, and the use of corporal punishment – they do not share their perspectives on the curriculum, how teaching is organised, or what is helpful for their learning.

Student leadership: regulating behaviour

In addition to participating in formal processes of consultation, selected students are appointed to positions of leadership, with responsibilities for supporting the academic learning and behaviour of their peers.

The lowest level of student leadership, and most pervasive in students' daily experiences, occurs within the network. Like *gim gima*, 'one-to-five' networks are a TPLF innovation that are also used in health, agriculture and other sectors, as a means of mobilising citizens within the various 'development armies' (see 5.1.1), sharing knowledge and skills. Networks are also a surveillance mechanism, used to maintain security, and suppress dissent (Aalen, 2014; Maes et al., 2015). Students at Ketema are unaware of these wider political uses of networks, but understand the expectations of discipline and collective responsibility, which underpin the network system.

Past research has highlighted the violent and male-gendered nature of student leadership positions in Ethiopian primary schooling. Poluha (2004) reported that monitor positions were held by the bigger males, who patrolled the classroom with a stick; and her account is consistent with my own experiences in schools, from 2007-2009. However, physical coercion is not the dominant means of peer control at Ketema: the distribution of network leaders around the room ensures that there is an academic and behavioural model at each desk (see Figure 5.1), a more effective means of regulating behaviour and supporting learning. These findings from Ketema may evidence a broader shift away from student-administered corporal punishment in schools where student networks are used, although further research is needed to establish this.

Student leadership: supporting learning

As well as serving a behavioural control function, student networks are associated with pedagogical changes that occurred in the five or six years prior to the start of fieldwork. Teachers reported that, prior to the introduction of the network system, their lessons consisted of lectures and individual work; this is consistent with research findings, discussed in 1.3.2. However, the dominant pattern in lessons observed at Ketema

comprised whole class instruction, followed by group work, followed by whole class activity. This indicates a change consistent with teachers' accounts. Group work can support students' learning within the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978), referring to tasks which students may undertake with adult guidance or 'in collaboration with more capable peers' (p.86). Network leaders are 'more capable peers', responsible for supporting the learning of students at their table.

Pedagogical reforms aimed at making classrooms less teacher-centred have a history of failure in Ethiopia (Derebssa, 2006) and elsewhere in Africa (Schweisfurth, 2011), often because practices advanced by ministries and INGOs are predicated on western values inconsistent with the socio-cultural contexts of schools and their communities (Guthrie, 2011; Tabulawa, 2013). What makes the network system different? Evidence from this study points to several factors. Firstly, there is a long history of peer mentoring within the formal education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Girma, 1967) (see 1.3.1). Secondly, the network system incorporates the long-standing practice of ranking students by academic attainment in state schools; the appointment of network leaders on the basis of their rank is a logical extension of this existing practice. Thirdly, one-to-five networks are consistent with traditional Tigrayan and modern Party expectations of collective responsibility and effort, as encapsulated in the NDS (see 7.1.1).

7.3 Implications for policy and practice

In this section, I identify five 'lessons' from Ketema – practices worthy of acknowledgement and emulation. Beneath each lesson, I suggest ways that these existing practices may be strengthened or extended, within the existing external policy context. However, I draw attention to the following points. Firstly, the foregoing description and analysis draws on data from a *single* school – one of 2000 in Tigray, and 32,000 nationwide (MOE, 2012a, 2015). This provides no basis for statistical generalisations; further research is needed to establish the existence elsewhere of the practices and relationships found at Ketema (discussed in 7.4), and so the recommendations below are made tentatively. Secondly, this section marks a shift from description to prescription. These prescriptions are informed by the views expressed by teachers, students and others at Ketema; by the school research literature (especially SI research, discussed in 2.2); and by my own preference for equitable and democratic relations.

Lesson 1: Peer support in student networks. One-to-five student networks are popular with students and teachers, and a valuable means of sharing responsibility with students for the work of the school. The networks provide social learning opportunities for all students, and offer network leaders the chance to gain experiences of leadership.

Recommendation i) Network leaders may benefit from additional support. Tutors are best positioned to deliver this. Monthly sessions may be organised for network leaders to share their experiences. Tutors may be provided with a prompt, to encourage students' reflection and discussion (an example is included in Appendix 9). The aim is to foster students' leadership skills, rather than their subject knowledge.

Recommendation ii) Each semester, a grade-level 'network leader meeting' may be organised for wider experience-sharing. A PSTA representative and/or member of management may attend to acknowledge the work of these students, listen to their views, offer guidance, and learn from their experiences.

Lesson 2: Student consultation in grade *gim gima*. *Gim gima* is a powerful internal accountability mechanism, and a valuable means of eliciting students' feedback on the conduct of teachers and peers.

Recommendation iii) The formal consultation agenda may be extended to include:

- known issues of student concern (e.g. the use of corporal punishment)
- aspects of teaching and learning (see Appendix 9)

Consultation should encourage students to identify positive as well as negative experiences. Points from these discussions may be raised in staff and PSTA meetings. Safeguards must be in place to protect students from negative repercussions from comments in *gim gima*.

Lesson 3: Consultation in parents' meetings. Parents' meetings are an important internal accountability mechanism: a forum for communicating information, eliciting parents' evaluations of the school, and their suggestions for improvement.

Recommendation iv) Evidence from the study reveals gender asymmetries in these meetings: female participants outnumber males 2:1, and men speak more often than women. The second point may be addressed by the chairperson alternating between male and female contributors (as teachers do in class).

Lesson 4: An active PSTA. The PSTA performs an important internal accountability function, overseeing and informing management processes, and making decisions on all financial matters.

Recommendation v) The PSTA already reviews assessment results in each subject/grade. Its engagement with teaching and learning may be extended by reviewing evidence from network leader meetings and grade *gim gimas* (see *Rec. ii* and *iii*).

Recommendation vi) The PSTA may develop its own quality indicators, based on issues raised in PSTA meetings and other consultative forums. These internal quality indicators (grounded in the perspectives and priorities of teachers, students and parents) may be used alongside external criteria for the purposes of SSE and improvement planning (examples are included in Appendix 9).

Lesson 5: Democratic participation in staff meetings. In regular staff meetings and staff *gim gimas*, teachers hold colleagues to account, share ideas for school improvement, and participate in collective decision-making.

Recommendation vii) Minimal attention is given to pedagogical issues in staff meetings, yet these are the principal occasions on which teachers gather together for the purpose of professional discussion. 10-15 minutes in each meeting may be reserved for pedagogical discussion. Management and teachers may share specific examples of good practices and challenges, based on evidence from student consultation and internal observations (see *Rec. ii, iii* and *viii*).

Recommendation viii) At present, the sole use of lesson observation is to check teachers' compliance with external policy requirements (i.e. 'supervision'). However, observations of classroom practice may be a useful stimulus for teachers' professional learning, in addition to organisational learning and improvement planning (see discussion in 2.2).

- Observing classroom practice may help management identify strengths and areas for development at the organisational level. Improvement planning may include an element of knowledge-sharing amongst teachers.
- Teachers may learn from observations of colleagues' lessons, particularly if they focus on the activities of *students*, and investigate their learning and/or engagement in different parts of the lesson (e.g. during whole class instruction, and in different types of network activities).

Findings of general concern (e.g. strategies for managing network activities) may be shared in staff meetings (see *Rec. vii*).

These recommendations aim to increase equity, strengthen internal accountability, and focus attention more directly on the processes of teaching and learning. As this study demonstrates, broad stakeholder participation in processes of consultation and evaluation is valuable, but is not in itself sufficient to ensure that a school satisfies stakeholders' concerns and priorities. The above recommendations work *within* the external policy context: internal quality criteria may be used in addition to external criteria; lesson observation for professional learning need not interfere with supervision for compliance.

However, evidence from this study suggests that changes are needed to the external regulatory system. Many external policy requirements (e.g. those relating to teachers' dress, and the production of paperwork) are 'hindering structures' (Hoy, 2003) – rigid, coercive rules which 'demand blind obedience' (p.89), and which divert resources and focus *away* from classroom practice, and the processes of teaching and learning. These external specifications lack flexibility to accommodate local priorities and notions of quality. Moreover, they stifle the innovation, experimentation, adaptation and *learning* necessary for school improvement. While evidence from this study is insufficient to make strong policy recommendations, it suggests the need for a review of WEO supervision practices, to establish how this tier of the civil service may best support, and not hinder, teaching and learning within the school.

7.4 Implications for future school research in Ethiopia

I begin by summarising the contributions of this study for understanding schooling in Ethiopia, before indicating areas where further research is needed. This study provides a point of departure for researchers and policy-makers concerned with school leadership

and management structures in Ethiopia. It describes the range of interests and agendas pursued by different stakeholder groups, and considers their concerns and priorities in relation to the external policy context. It describes internal accountability mechanisms including *gim gima* and structures of mutual surveillance which have not featured in previous accounts of school life. It also describes structures of student organisation and leadership – most importantly, the one-to-five networks, which are associated with pedagogical changes in recent years. The analysis draws from evidence from a single school, and further research is needed to establish the prevalence of these practices and conditions beyond the case study school. However, this study provides useful groundwork for future research in each of the areas mentioned above.

This study carries implications for future researchers and practitioners working within the SER and SI traditions in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa. As discussed in 2.1, SER tends to judge effectiveness according to narrow measures of academic performance in core subjects (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). At Ketema the academic outcome of greatest value to staff, students and parents is the Grade 8 exam. While studies of discrete skills such as literacy or numeracy offer valuable insights (e.g. Tassew et al., 2005; Piper, 2010; Tassew & Aregawi, 2016), for effectiveness studies to reflect the interests and priorities of local stakeholders they should explore school-level factors associated with student performance in these high stakes exams. Furthermore, the Ketema study reveals wider outcomes of schooling valued by teachers, students and others, such as gender equity and a sense of social responsibility. Future effectiveness research in Ethiopia (and perhaps other SSA contexts) should consider these social and ethical aspects of schooling, rather than focusing exclusively on academic outputs.

The study suggests fertile avenues for future SI research and practice. Given the value of broad stakeholder participation in processes of consultation and evaluation for organisational learning and school improvement (see discussion in 2.2), existing practices provide strong foundations on which to build: students, parents and others already regularly engage in processes of evaluation and consultation according to external quality frameworks (Mitchell, 2015a, p.331; Ehren et al., 2016). Since this is oriented towards monitoring compliance rather than more open-ended organisational learning, there is scope to see whether local stakeholder priorities may be incorporated into more flexible and democratic forms of SSE (e.g. MacBeath, 1999). Are there regions or *woredas* in which schools enjoy greater freedom in planning, reporting and determining quality

indicators based on local priorities? Are there schools in which PSTAs or other groups formally evaluate conditions according to their own definitions of quality? And how may students' views on teaching and learning be incorporated into these processes to inform teacher learning and school improvement?

In terms of school autonomy, further research is needed to establish whether the WEO-school relations in this study reflect conditions elsewhere in Tigray and other regions. Accounts of WEO perspectives are needed, given the central role of these bodies in defining and circumscribing the autonomy of the school. Qualitative studies of similar bodies have been undertaken elsewhere in SSA (e.g. Davies et al.'s [2003] study of District Education Offices in Malawi), but as yet there have been no studies of the workings of a WEOs.

I found asymmetries in the participation and influence of different stakeholder groups within the PSTA; students in particular played a marginal role. Is this representative of conditions more generally, or are there PSTAs in which more meaningful student participation occurs? For example, are there schools in which student representatives table agenda items in meetings, or challenge the positions of management or others? If so, what conditions enable or support more meaningful student involvement? More research is also needed about PSTAs' involvement in school affairs. Are there PSTAs which develop their own evaluation criteria or quality indicators based on local priorities? Or engage more deeply with teaching and learning?

Research is needed to establish the prevalence of one-to-five student networks elsewhere in Tigray and other regions, in urban and rural settings, and in different phases of education. Are younger First Cycle students as capable of working cooperatively as Second Cycle students? How do the different set of challenges in high school affect the nature of network activities? More research on network leadership is required, including studies of the links between network activities and a range of student outcomes (e.g. academic attainment, attendance, attitudes). As a matter of priority, research is needed into the means by which schools can best support networks and network leaders.

This does not exhaust the areas for further research. I hope that future studies will amplify successes and achievements, rather than failures and deficits. This is not solely a value-position; as I have argued here and elsewhere (Mitchell, 2015a), success stories are

needed in order to demonstrate what is achievable within existing policy, material and socio-cultural realities.

7.5 Methodological reflections

In this study I achieved my aim of investigating, and providing an account of, the agendas, participation and influence of different groups in school. In this study I achieved my aim of investigating the agendas, participation and influence of different groups in school. My reading of Giddens' (1984) structuration theory drew my attention to the mutual knowledge (of concepts, meanings, beliefs) underlying activities in school, some of which was articulable by participants (e.g. the lesson plan review process) and some merely acted upon without full consciousness of the implicit rules in play (e.g. the norms governing critique in *gim gima*). The work of Giddens (1984) and others (Becker, 1996; Prus, 1996) indicated the value of observing activities first-hand, studying what people do as well as what they say about what they do. The notion of structure as formal and informal rules and resources implicated in maintaining social systems helped me to identify different, and sometimes competing, sources of ethical authority in school – traditional Tigrayan and modern Party values; this supported a more nuanced account of school life.

In the circumstances, an ethnographic case study of a single school was an appropriate research design decision. The flexible, emergent nature of the ethnographic approach allowed me to focus on important data sources as they became apparent. This was a distinct advantage in the under-researched area of schooling in Ethiopia. For example, it was not until my second month at Ketema that I recognised the strategic significance of *meetings* as sites for exploring the agendas, participation and influence of different groups (discussed in 3.2.2). Working ethnographically allowed me to develop an 'intimate familiarity' (Lofland et al., 2006) with the school and its community. Through personal relationships developed over many months, I collected and interrogated the nature and quality of data – for example, by comparing accounts from different perspectives (see the discussion of Haile and Dawit in 3.2.3). Furthermore, my data collection path was guided by participants in the field; as I gained their trust, I gained access to previously-restricted data sources, such as minutes from high-level meetings (see 3.3.2).

Inevitably, some aspects of my fieldwork were more successful than others. I achieved greater insight into the perspectives of staff than those of students or parents (other school

ethnographers have reported the same, e.g. Woods, 1979). Even though it restricted the breadth of the study, it was prudent to have focused classroom observations on a single class, 6/7B, rather than student activities across the whole school. This enabled me to systematically collect data at the level of individual students and their networks, and to better understand the typicality and significance of events; it also meant that I had less reactive effect on activities, as the students and their teachers became accustomed to my presence. I regret not undertaking more interviews with Section B students as initially planned (see 3.2.3), however, questionnaires proved to be an acceptable alternative.

Parents' data are largely limited to talk in action, institutional texts (i.e. minutes) and observations from meetings (see Figure 3.1 for a map of data types). The views of parents who did not attend or speak in these forums are not represented in the case data. This was the result of resource constraints, rather than intentional neglect; under different circumstances I would have commissioned an assistant to conduct interviews with parents, including those who did not attend meetings. My own lack of proficiency in Tigrigna prevented me undertaking such interviews. This was an all-round barrier to data collection – but not as great a barrier as I had anticipated. I missed talk in action which would have been readily accessible to a fluent speaker; but this was ameliorated, to some extent, through the targeted use of audio translations. Working *with* translators was an important part of the fieldwork process (see 3.2.2).

I decided to use Atlas.ti a few months after leaving the field. As described in 3.3.1, introducing Atlas.ti at this stage involved de-constructing my FNs into hundreds of primary documents (PDs), and entering these into a 'Ketema School' project file. Had I begun using this software during my fieldwork I believe it would have significantly affected the development of the study. Atlas.ti not only facilitates data analysis, but *encourages* it, since unlike Word, its sole function is to support the user to advance the analysis. Using Atlas.ti (or similar software) in the fieldwork stage may reduce the time required for data processing, and increase the time available for data collection and analysis, since it is possible to scan and upload handwritten FNs directly into the software, so that analysis may proceed with minimal typing. This may be appropriate for researchers with stricter time pressures.

This study was a learning experience for me, not only in relation to Ketema, the research subject, but also in relation to the research process itself. My fieldwork was guided by

readings of past accounts (e.g. Whyte, 1943; Ball, 1984) and methodological texts (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wolcott, 2008), and experimentation in the field. With hindsight, I see many opportunities missed, ways in which the study might have been improved, and time and effort saved; this is an inevitable feature of ethnographic work (Rock, 2001), and indicative of the learning process.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tigrigna glossary

This glossary includes my translations of Tigrigna (and Amharic) terms used in the body of the thesis.

Ata!: Hey!

Ato: Mr.

Farenji: European foreigner.

Fasika: Easter.

Ge'ez: Liturgical language, the ancestor of Amharic and Tigrigna.

Gim gima (also *gemgema*, *gimgima*, *gemgima*): Public evaluation session.

Gujiley halafi: Network leader, the head of a 'one-to-five' group.

Hadinet: Unity.

Hajji: A man who has gone on the *Hajj*, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.

Ketema: Town.

Kidamay Miazia: April 1st. There is a 'coffee ceremony' on the first day of the month.

Kifle halafi: Tutor (literally: 'class leader').

Kulfe: Door key.

Mariam Ginbot: Christian festival for Saint Mary held in May (Ethiopian Calendar).

Medeb: Mud.

Menisay: Young male adult.

Nay mengisti sil'tena: Government training (i.e. political).

Nebab bet: First stage of schooling in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Ribushti: Disturbing (as in *ribushti temharo*: disturbing students).

Sewa: Local beer, homebrew.

Shumagele: Elder, mediator (male).

Sirah afetsatsima: Formal work evaluation, performance appraisal.

Tabia: Neighbourhood/council.

Tch'awat: Chat, hang out.

Teff: Staple grain.

Tesfa negeber: 'Let's hope.'

Tsom: Religious fast.

Woreda: District, local authority.

Woyane: Revolutionary, an informal term for the TPLF and its members.

Yekatit: February (Ethiopian Calendar).

Zetsegum allewom: 'Problems they have'; list of student misdemeanours in the register.

Appendix 2: Permission letter from the Tigray Regional Education Bureau

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Tigray Education Bureau		
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Teachers and Educational Institutions Development Core Process		
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40-69-89	Mekelle	Fax 40-83-00

Date - [Redacted]
Ref no [Redacted]

To [Redacted] Wereda Education Office


Subject : Letter of Support

Rafael Mitchell is an instructor on the International Education Masters Program, and is planning to undertake Doctoral Research on Elementary Schooling in Ethiopia in 2014. So he requires access to Elementary Schools and Wereda Offices.

Therefore Tigray Education Bureau requests your school/ Wereda vital assistance and professional support/advice for the researcher timely.

We thank for your collegial support.

Sincerely
[Redacted]



Cc.

- To Teachers and educational leaders development Core process
TREB

Appendix 3: Prompt for a stimulated recall interview

The following is an example of my lesson observation notes and questions which I printed and gave to Melkamu the Maths teacher as the basis for a stimulated recall interview.

Lesson observation notes	Questions / prompts for teacher
<p>7A Maths, 1st period. [11-04-14, Friday] The door is closed and T knocks on it; we enter. The students sing: "Welcome welcome teacher, we are ready to learn!"</p> <p>A boy cleans the blackboard with a duster. T sits me at the front – gives me a chair and says "it is better than the bench."</p> <p>He presents me with some documents – "but it is Tigrigna" he says. These are a year plan (?); a week plan; an attendance register for 7A (these three are A4 size, bound, landscape); and two exercise books (similar to my notebook 1). The notebooks contain Qs for the Ss amongst other text; they are very neatly written and immaculately kept. In the back of one of these books is T's timetable, drawn in blue pen using a ruler – it indicates his timetable for the week – when and who is teaching for each period. It indicates that he should be teaching 7A now.</p> <p>7.57 T closes the metal door. Wipes the board a little more, then divides it into 4 equal parts using 3 wavy lines.</p> <p>7.59 S knocks on the door, T opens it. Three boys enter – T says "don't worry" in English.</p> <p>8.00 T writes instructions/mathematical rules on board-left. Ss all sit facing the board, low talk – their books are open or not. A girl front-mid talks to her neighbour about what is being written.</p> <p>8.01 T begins by talking about yesterday's lesson ("timali"). T draws a triangle on the board. Only 3 hands go up, all boys.</p> <p>8.03 Knock at the door. T stops, goes to the door – leaves the room for a minute. The noise level rises in the classroom. T returns "Ok, excuse me," he says.</p> <p>T explains that a triangle has three "sides" (Ss chorus), he illustrates the angles – Ss "ab seleste". T continues talking of angles in Tig. Ss chorus response in Tig. Labels the angles: right angle, acute angle, obtuse angle.</p> <p>8.06 T asks a question of the class as he walks a circle around the class. Hands go up. T selects a boy mid-back who stands to answer. The T repeats the answer and the class chorus it.</p> <p>Someone knocks at the door. This interrupts the lesson. It is a T who does not enter the class. Mebratom takes an exercise book from the desk of a boy front-mid and gives it to the T.</p> <p>8.12 Wind blows the door open. T asks the class for a definition of 'postulate' [in English]. A boy stands and answers in Tigrigna. T says "It does not require any checking."</p>	<p>Do Ss normally sing when T enters? Or because 1st period?</p> <p>Why did T give me these documents? Does he normally do this when someone observes?</p> <p>Any comments?</p>

<p>8.13 T is now on the 4th section of the board. Still demonstrating angles of triangles. Pointing to this latest triangle he asks the class in English “What is the value of A?” Ss raise hands.</p> <p>T walks to the back-left of the c/room and picks a boy who stands and says “meto hamsa”. T repeats “150” in English and the class chorus “150” in English.</p> <p>T asks: “Is it clear?” in Tigrigna. Then he wipes the 2nd section of the board.</p> <p>8.14 A boy kneels in the doorway. His shins are completely parallel with the floor and his body upright, as if standing. The T doesn't notice him, and after a short while he leaves.</p> <p>8.15 T continues, giving slightly harder angles (I think). “What is the value of B?” he asks. A boy front has his hand up first. Then after 10 seconds more (thinking time), more hands go up.</p> <p>T picks a girl front-left – wrong. Another S – wrong. The 3rd S gets it right – the class chorus the answer.</p> <p>8.17 T wipes the 4th board.</p> <p>8.18 I focus on the S nearest me (let's call him Melkamu). He does not have a book out. Sits with his head leaning on hand, facing the board. He is <i>watching</i>, like television. He says something to the boy nearest him.</p> <p>T draws a rectangle on 4th board.</p> <p>Melkamu turned away from the board, spoke to the boy next to him, and looked back at the board.</p> <p>8.20 T uses a lot of English in his lesson. He explains bilingually a fair bit. “I will give you the chance for you: any questions?”</p> <p>Melkamu has a question. He asks one about “goni” – the number of sides. T explains.</p> <p>8.22 Now T wipes the entire board except for the far left section (which I think contains objectives or rules used in the lesson). T walks to the back and then left-front (where I'm sat). “Who can show what we have learned now?”</p> <p>A boy comes to the front. He explains the lesson they have just received. He illustrates the 1st triangle exactly as the T did. All the Ss in the class follow him. The boy continues, reciting the laws for triangles. He is confident. T interrupts to correct or emphasise one word, otherwise he paces the back row, hands behind his back.</p> <p>8.25 Boy is now on his 5th triangle – his 6th. The class are all watching. The arms are completely torn from his jumper. He stumbles over a word and the class correct him.</p> <p>8.27 Boy demonstrates that all triangles have 180 degrees. He rubs out two triangles and draws another. T is still pacing. The boy rubs out and draws the final triangle – he stumbles a bit and reads a bit from the Tigrigna on the left side of the board during this last part.</p>	<p>Why didn't T pick the first S?</p>
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<p>8.29 Boy finishes – he has spoken for 6 or 7 minutes. We all clap loudly in appreciation. Boy looks at me as he moves to sit down.</p> <p>The bell sounds.</p> <p>T asks “Any questions?”</p> <p>A girl comes to the front and repeats the exercise. T says “2 or 3 minutes”. She begins illustrating. She has short hair and ripped arms. A green t-shirt shows beneath her school jumper. (T is sat down front right, then he stands)</p> <p>8.32 Girl looks to the class to explain. She is confident, clear. She revolves the duster in her hand as she talks. At 8.33 (some mins before the boy reached this point) she explains the final triangle.</p> <p>T says there is no time, apologetically. As we leave he asks for ‘feedback’ – I say how impressed I was with the Ss – I was surprised by how attentive they were and how much they understood from this lesson.</p>	<p>Lessons have been reduced from 45 to 30 mins this day, because of meeting at cluster centre</p>
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Appendix 4: Meetings log

The case data includes data from 38 meetings which took place between 03-11-13 and 29-11-14. This log includes details and a synopsis for each meeting.

The following abbreviations are used:

C1st = First Cycle
C2nd = Second Cycle
cw = classwork
Dir = Director
hw = homework

P/Ps = parent/s
PO = participant observation
S/Ss = student/s
T/Ts = teacher/s
Tbk = textbook

#	Meeting body	Date	Data sources available	Synopsis
1	6B Parents' Council	03-11-13	Minutes	Ps identify problems amongst Ss: lateness; absenteeism; quarrelling and disturbance; failure to do hw; failure to bring tbks. Ps recommend that Ts correct Ss' cw and hw, and stop making Ss copy notes. Ps late to next meeting should be fined.
2	6B Parents' Council	01-12-13	Minutes	Ps discuss solutions to Ss' disciplinary problems in school; agree to come to school regularly and monitor Ss' behaviour. One P argues watching sports can impair Ss' academic performance; another says Ss should watch television according to their interests and the school should support their interests.
3	6B Parents' Council	26-01-14	Minutes	Ps say the school should provide Ss with answer sheets following exams. To improve S discipline, Ps should meet subject teachers as well as the tutor.
4	PSTA	30-01-14	Minutes	Financial decisions about: lunch for teachers working on Exam Committee, nominal payment for teachers working night school, purchase of equipment for cafe.
5	PSTA	17-02-14	Minutes	Dir presents statistics of exam failure by grade/subject. Financial decisions about lunch for teacher training, printer, amplifier. Reminder that Ts and Ss should actively participate in parade marking the Party's anniversary.
6	PSTA	11-03-14	Minutes	Dir presents evaluation of school activities in 1st semester. He mentions Ss' negative evaluations of 5 teachers. Discussion of Ts to receive awards. Retrospective financial approval for refreshments provided to Ss during evaluation of Ts.
7	Staff	28-03-14	Minutes	Reminder to collect school fees from Ss. Dir proposes all Ts make donation to 'Meles Zenawi Training Centre'; Ts discuss and agree. Ts nominate colleagues for Discipline Committee. Dir criticises T Biniam for beating Ss. T says 'I took corrective measures to mend students' behaviour', and blames another T for encouraging Ss to complain about him.
8	PSTA	02-04-14	Minutes	Discussion of literacy problems in C1st, and suggestion that G5-8 Ss act as mentors. Concern expressed that T Biniam continues physically punishing Ss and is

				causing disruption; decision to refer matter to Discipline Committee. Mother says if Discipline Committee cannot resolve issue, police should be informed. Financial approval for lunch during T training. Decision to allocate some funds donated to support orphans and Ss with HIV on data projector and DVD player for school income generation.
9	6B <i>gim gima</i>	22-04-14	Minutes	First agenda of meeting is to evaluate the work of 6B's monitors and members of Student Parliament. Male S says they are doing a good job; a female S says monitors report others when they make a disturbance but do not report themselves. Another male S says 6B are not properly recording misbehaviour.
10	Staff	25-04-14	Minutes	Discussion of invigilation and T responsibilities for coming mid-semester exams.
11	PSTA	14-05-14	Minutes	Update on T Biniam: Discipline Committee has revealed that T beat Ss following negative comments made about him during <i>gim gima</i> , and that he collected money from Ss for his own use. As a result, Discipline Committee fined him 2 months' salary, but he has disappeared, and matter is with the court. Decisions to make small financial award to two Ts who secured ICT donations for school, and to decline payment requests from three members of staff (including VD Haftom). Ts' Performance Appraisal marks are presented; PSTA judges these to be too low. Participants are informed that 1000 pairs of shoes have been donated to school.
12	Staff	14-05-14	Minutes, PO, Performance Appraisal data	Following an incident in which a S received eye injury, Dir reminds Ts that they are responsible for Ss' safety for duration of lesson. Dir informs Ts of Rafael's purpose in school and asks for their cooperation. VD Haftom reads Ts' Performance Appraisal marks aloud to staff. Ts are invited to share their responses: one T complains that no C1st Ts scored more than 90%; a few complain that marks are unbalanced and the process un-transparent.
13	Staff + PSTA (<i>gim gima</i>)	16-05-14	Audio translation, PO, minutes	Meeting led by Dir. After his request for payment was denied by PSTA (in Meeting 11, above) VD Haftom threw a hole puncher at Dir and was taken to prison, temporarily released from there to attend this meeting. Ts criticise VD's behaviour, urge him to apologise; they ask Dir to drop criminal case. Dawit says he will do so, if Haftom enumerates his mistakes in a written apology. Ts argue such a document is unnecessary, since Haftom's apology is made before 40+ witnesses and documented in the minutes.
14	Staff, PSTA, WEO Head & Teachers' Association Rep (<i>gim gima</i>)	05-06-14	Audio translation, PO, minutes	Following resumption of feud between Dir and VD Haftom, WEO Head leads this <i>gim gima</i> , asking Ts to share their views about activities in school. Ts criticise VD for: attempted assault on Dir, falsely claiming that the PSTA is being manipulated by Dir, discriminating in favour of his 'sister' (an orphaned S for whom he

				misappropriated a t-shirt rightfully belonging to another S). VD Haftom does not deny these charges, but further alleges that Dir showed partiality when enrolling Ss, and is manipulating the PSTA. WEO Head responds to participants' comments at the end, concluding: it is school community's responsibility to evaluate and reach decisions about such conduct, and school failed to thoroughly deal with these issues in the previous meeting (i.e. Meeting 13, above); VD's claim against Dir is serious, but there is no evidence, and VD's allegation is unreliable in the circumstances; VD's conduct is 'criminal', and he will be transferred to another school at the end of the year.
15	PSTA	20-06-14	Minutes	Financial approval for transportation costs to collect 32 computers donated to school, and for refreshments during T training. Date set for 'Ps and Ts Day'. External invigilators praised the behaviour of Ss sitting G8 exam.
16	??? (9 signatures, including VD Haftom's)	20-06-14	Minutes	Participants decide appointments for marking G8 scripts over the summer, a paid assignment. 11 staff members selected.
17	Staff	20-06-14	Audio translation, PO, minutes	Dir talks staff through calendar for the final weeks of the year; praises the Ts who succeeding in acquiring ICT and sports donations for school. Ts' suggestions are invited regarding Ss' tbks which are lost or damaged. A fee is decided for repairing lost tbks. Two Ts express concern that Ss are to be given tbks before the promotion policy is set; if Ss are subsequently asked to return tbks then their families will assume that the school is acting arbitrarily.
18	Grade 6 <i>gim gima</i> (facilitated by two teachers)	27-06-14	PO, minutes	Most Ss in G6 present (approx 200) in single classroom. Management specified agenda relates to strengths and weaknesses of Ss and Ts. Only negative evaluations are made. In my focal class (G6B) it is noted that a male S disturbs during classroom activities, that another two boys are rude to Ts, that one girl cheated in exams, and that another (Zeki) is incapable of supporting the Ss in his network. In other classes, Ss complain that persistent absentees have been permitted to take their end-of-year exams. A Science T is blamed for not teaching Music lessons assigned to him.
19	PSTA	09-07-14	Minutes	Dir presents 2014/5 Budget to PSTA, which is presented in full in the mins. This is approved, and will be forwarded to <i>kebele</i> for further approval.
20	PSTA	13-09-14	Minutes	Dir presents Annual Plan 2014/5 for approval, and corrections are given. Decisions to: provide stationary materials for 116 disadvantaged Ss, sell grass grown on field over summer, rent out the school cafe, reward guard for fixing fence, hire an additional guard, hire cleaners, provide Dir and VDs with monthly phone credit.

21	Staff (including Head of PSTA & WEO Supervisor)	17-09-14	Audio translation, PO, minutes	Dir presents a Report of 2013/4 activities, identifying strengths and weaknesses at levels of: school management, PSTA, Committees and Depts, Ts, Ss, Ps. Ts invited to share thoughts on whether Report fairly reflects school – nobody responds, which is reported as acceptance in the mins. Supervisor advises Ts regarding preparations for tutorials, saying problems here may partially account for failure of G8 Ss; he says the failure is not only the responsibility of G8 Ts, but of all Ts. New VD Terafa is introduced (replaces VD Haftom, who transferred to another school). Ts are informed of their subjects, grades and home rooms. They vote to appoint Unit Leaders.
22	Management Committee (Dir, 2x VDs, 3x ULs)	30-09-14	Minutes	Discuss logistics for new year: posting timetable, distributing stationery for disadvantaged Ss.
23	Management Committee	09-10-14	Minutes	Director explains responsibilities of Unit Leaders: monitor and rank Ts; follow up Ss' punctuality and uniform; work with management. Timetabling is discussed: the distribution is not balanced; 3 Ts should have their timetables revised.
24	Staff	13-10-14	Audio translation, PO, minutes	Dir says timetable clashes have been resolved, so Ts should not miss lessons; and tbks should be distributed. A T says there are insufficient tbks in certain grades/subjects; problem is discussed, and Dir appoints people to deal with logistics. Dir says Ts should take turns to organise Ss for Flag Ceremony each morning; Ts should keep records of Ss' absence and misbehaviour to keep management informed. A female Unit Leader raises issue of Ss' poor literacy, Dir agrees and suggests some literacy exercises. VD raises issue of T networks, and there is discussion of what their function could be.
25	School Improvement Committee	16-10-14	Minutes	Need for an annual plan is raised. Dir and VDs tasked with preparing plan for discussion at next meeting. Date for next meeting is set.
26	Staff	17-10-14	Minutes, PO	Dir informs Ts of political training this weekend, and Ps' Ceremony on Sunday. Dir says Ss discipline in afternoon is poor: controlling mechanisms must be improved. Ss whose behaviour does not improve should be sent to management. CPD Committee is established, and VD Terafa tells Ts that formats for individual plans will be provided soon. Unit Leader reminds Ts to 'use time properly' during first and last periods; another T says that Flag Ceremony should be conducted at the <i>end</i> of the day in addition to the beginning; another asks what is being done about the toilet situation. Dir says students are 'using water improperly' and management will prepare a rota for Ts to supervise Ss; a new toilet will also be built.
27	Parents' Ceremony (400+ Ps;	19-10-14	Audio translation, PO	Dir reads Report on 2013/4 activities (same as Meeting 21, above), plan and budget to Ps. Ss perform poems

	many Ss also in compound)			they have written, one about Ts and another about former PM Meles Zenawi. Ps invited to share thoughts on improving school: one says Ss and Ts should be monitored properly and follow the rules; another complains that G4 Amharic tbk gives the answers to hw; another complains that Ps are not ensuring Ss do their hw; another complains that Ps give children money for sweets. Dir informs Ps about Rafael's donations to the school, then Ps are invited to vote on level of fees; large support for raising fees to 60 Birr per family per year [approx. £2].
28	PSTA	28-10-14	Minutes	Dir asks how to collect fees: T suggests C1st Ss should be informed at a meeting; another says that receipts must be given. Dir says electric cables are dangerous, water container is needed to improve sanitation (toilets), and lock required to secure new ICT equipment; financial approval is given for these expenses. Discussion over how/when to rebuild wall; decision to postpone until after harvest, when labour prices will be cheaper. Criticism is made of literacy programme implementation in 2013/4, and new T member of PSTA volunteers to coordinate this year.
29	Management Committee (ULs are not present for this meeting)	28-10-14	Minutes	Evaluation of ULs: two are good, one is not doing as expected. Identification of several Ts who have missed classes without permission, and one who has refused to accept certain classes and is failing to discharge his responsibilities as form tutor. Another T is called to the meeting and agrees to take over as form tutor. VD Yesuf is criticised for leaving school without telling others and turning off his phone. Announcement that Music is to be introduced to G7 and G8 timetables, replacing 1x Chemistry lesson.
30	Staff	29-10-14	Audio translation, minutes, PO	Dir reminds Ts of national laws regarding T punctuality and attendance, and disciplinary procedure: Ts should not differentiate between Dir and ULs when it comes to monitoring/advising Ts. He gives example of Ts who have been marked as late. One T denies he was late – was in the toilet. Dir challenges the truth of this. Another T defends the first, saying the matter had been dealt with previously and should not be raised again. Dir says it is important to raise people's mistakes so that others can learn from them. Dir raises problems amongst Ss of tbk theft and fighting; VD Terafa says collaborative efforts are needed to improve Ss' behaviour and minimise failure. Dir raises issue of teaching load distribution and two Ts in particular raise a number of problems of timetable clash and uneven distribution of classes. Ts debate the rumoured bias in timetabling, and decide that the whole timetable should be revised by Dir, and a reduced teaching load given to 3 Ts.

31	Curriculum Committee	07-11-14	Minutes	<i>N.B. In addition to regular Curriculum Committee members, ULs also present at this meeting, and VD Terafa and Dir make interjections.</i> VD Yesuf reports that WEO supervisors visiting school yesterday found Ts going to class without gown and other necessary materials, and stated that insufficient short tests (continuous assessment) had been conducted. VD reports that Dir says there are inadequate relations with Ps, and each dept should identify training needs. A UL says Ss should do more reading in lessons and VD Terafa agrees. Participants rank departments according to conduct of teachers. There is a vote and department ranks are agreed upon. It is agreed that Mid 1 st Semester Examinations timetable will be scheduled by one participant.
32	Pedagogy Club, students	12-11-14	Minutes	Provisional chairperson of Pedagogy Club is a T (the Pedagogy Centre Coordinator) – unspecified number of Ss present. Ss elect representatives (including chairperson) who are 'believed to be active and capable of mobilising others' to identify teaching aids that are needed, and prepare these using materials in the Centre.
33	Staff	13-11-14	Minutes, PO	VD Terafa shares experiences from WEO officials' visit to a school in Amhara Region, identifying positive features: teaching aids made from locally available materials, a female Ss forum in school, use of 'team teaching' in C1st. Reminds Ts that some depts have not yet developed plans for T networks.
34	Pedagogy Committee (6 Ts; 2 VDs also present)	14-11-14	Minutes, PO	Pedagogy Centre coordinator questions why Ts are not using T aids? Male T says some do, including a female T present; she says she prepared a number of resources for C2nd, but these were taken by C1st Ts and should be returned. Another T says that Ts' perceptions need to be changed, that every T should have to use the Pedagogy Centre to make resources. VD Terafa says that depts should identify which resources need to be made, and develop a programme for constructing these; management will provide materials. VD Yesuf praises two of the Ts present, one of whom says that Ts who are not participating in the Pedagogy Centre should be identified.
35	Student Parliament	19-11-14	PO	First session of new S Parliament for 2014/5: T introduces its function – to monitor, evaluate and advise Ss and Ts, and explains that the organisation is structured in line with Ethiopian Parliament. With T's support, a S facilitates the nomination and election of chairperson, secretary and other positions. The new c/person leads vote on date and time for next session.
36	PSTA	20-11-14	Minutes	Dir invites ideas of what to do about the library, which has been closed for last 6 months; he says the school also needs a new amplifier. Male P, new to PSTA, asks why the WEO hasn't appointed a librarian? A female S

				says the closure of the library saddens her; there should be a consultation with Ps, and someone should be appointed from the community. She says that the PA should be fixed, because Ss can't hear instructions during Flag Ceremony. Financial approval for materials to duplicate exam papers, and to provide lunch for staff at forthcoming T training session using funds donated by Rafael.
37	Staff	21-11-14	PO	Dir explains arrangements for Mid-Semester Exams next week, and the procedures for exam statistics to be submitted to the Office. Ss in each class will be ranked based on their score (rather than waiting until the end of semester).
38	G8 Parents' Meeting (Director, G8 teachers, about 150 Ps)	29-11-14	Audio translation, PO	Dir raises the poor G8 results in 2013/4, says the Ps and school should share ideas to improve G8 results in 2014/5. He reads aloud names of 5x Ss identified by Ts as good Ss, and 30 or more Ss with persistent behavioural problems. Dir says the poor behaviour of the Ss mentioned will be bad for their families and the country in the future; even if they graduate, they will become corrupt workers and officials. Ts then raise problems with Ss and Ps: Ss are lazy and copy each other; Ps should be monitoring the activities of their children, ensuring they attend school and checking on hw. Ps who speak largely agree with Ts' criticisms, and share opinions about some of the poor behaviour of Ss; they also praise the work of the Ts, who they say are not responsible for Ss' failures.

Appendix 5: Lesson observation log

#	Date (2014)	Grade / Section	Subject	Activity	Period	FN
1	07-04	8B	English	Lesson		FN2
2	08-04	7D	English	Lesson		
3	08-04	6A	English	Lesson		
4	08-04	5A	English	Lesson		
5	10-04	6D	English	Lesson	P1	FN24
6	10-04	7D	English	Lesson	P6	FN28
7	11-04	7A	Maths	Lesson	P1	FN30
8	11-04	5B	English	Lesson		FN33
9	14-04	6B	English	Lesson	P1	FN38
10	14-04	8B	PE	Lesson	P6	FN44
11	14-04	7C	PE	Lesson	P7	FN46
12	16-04	5D	Science	Lesson	P2	FN52
13	21-04	8B	Maths	Lesson	P1	FN67
14	21-04	8D	PE	Lesson	P3	FN69
15	23-04	8C	PE	Lesson	P2	FN78
16	24-04	7D	Maths	Lesson	P3	FN89
17	25-04	8B	English	Lesson	P4	FN97
18	29-04	5C	Geography	Exam		FN108
19	29-04	8C	Chemistry	Exam		FN110
20	02-05	7B	English	Lesson	pm	FN126
21	06-05	6D	Social Studies (Geography)	Lesson	P4	FN135
22	07-05	5A	Maths	Lesson	P3	FN140
23	08-05	7C	Physics	Lesson	P4	FN146
24	09-05	6D	English	Lesson	P3	FN153
25	09-05	7B	PE	Lesson	P4	FN155
26	09-05	7A	PE	Lesson	P5	FN156
27	12-05	8D	PE	Lesson	P3	FN165
28	14-05	7D	Tigrigna	Lesson	P3	FN178
29	14-05	6B	Tigrigna	Lesson	P4	FN180
30	16-05	6B	<i>Gim gima</i>	Evaluation		
31	19-05	6B	Art	Lesson	P4	FN202
32	21-05	8C	Amharic	Exam		FN212
33	21-05	8C	English	Exam		FN213
34	23-05	8C	Tigrigna	Exam		FN225
35	27-05	5B	Science	Lesson	P1	FN249
36	27-05	6B	Science	Lesson	P2	FN250
37	29-05	6B	Maths	Lesson		FN264
38	02-06	6D	English	Lesson		
39	03-06	6B	English	Lesson		FN295
40	06-06	6B	Civics & Ethical Education	Lesson		FN316
41	10-06	G6	English tutorial	Lesson		FN326
42	16-06	6B	English	Lesson	P1	FN336
43	16-06	6B	Art	Lesson	P4	FN342
44	17-06	6B	Science	Lesson	P2	FN348
45	23-06	6B	Tigrigna, English, Sports	Exam		FN392-4
46	24-06	6B	Amharic, Maths, Civics	Exam		FN401-3

47	25-06	6B	Social Studies, Art, Music	Exam		FN407-9
48	27-06	G6	Grade 6 <i>gim gima</i>	Evaluation	Morning	
49	30-09	7B (formerly 6B)	Chemistry	Lesson	1 st period of 2014/5	FN482
50	01-10	7B	Tigrigna	Lesson	P4	FN489
51	02-10	7B	English	Lesson	P3	FN497
52	03-10	KG + G1/2	English	Lesson	P2	FN503
53	03-10	7A	English	Lesson	P3	FN505
54	03-10	7B	English	Lesson	P4	FN507
55	03-10	7B	Civics & Ethical Education	Lesson	P5	FN508
56	06-10	7B	Geography	Lesson	P2	FN520
57	06-10	7B	Amharic	Lesson	P3	FN521
58	07-10	7B	No teacher		P4	FN529
59	08-10	7B	English	Lesson	P2	FN534
60	08-10	7B	Amharic	Lesson	P3	FN535
61	09-10	7B	Biology	Lesson	P2	FN541
62	09-10	7B	English	Lesson	P3	FN542
63	10-10	7B	English	Lesson	P4	FN548
64	10-10	7B	Civics	Lesson	P5	FN549
65	13-10	7B	Maths	Lesson	P1	FN559
66	13-10	7B	Amharic	Lesson	P2	FN560
67	15-10	7B	PE	Lesson	P1	FN573/4
68	16-10	7B	Chemistry	Lesson	P2	FN580
69	16-10	7B	Tigrigna	Lesson	P3	FN581
70	17-10	7B	No teacher (should be English)		P3	FN588
71	17-10	7B	Civics & Ethical Education	Lesson	P4	FN591
72	17-10	7B	Amharic	Lesson	P5	FN592
73	20-10	7B	English	Lesson	P4	FN604
74	21-10	7B	Maths	Lesson	P1	FN607
75	21-10	7B	English	Lesson	P2	FN608
76	22-10	7B	No teacher (should be Biology)		P3	FN610
77	23-10	7B	No teacher		P3	FN620
78	23-10	7B	English	Lesson	P4	FN622
79	24-10	7B	Social Studies	Lesson	P1	FN627
80	24-10	7B	Chemistry	Lesson	P2	FN628
81	24-10	7B	Physics	Lesson	P3	FN629
82	28-10	7B	English	Lesson	P2	FN642
83	28-10	7B	Biology	Lesson	P3	FN643
84	29-10	7B	English	Lesson	P3	FN649
85	29-10	7B	Maths	Lesson	P5	FN653
86	31-10	7B	Physics	Lesson	P3	FN658
87	31-10	5C	Science	Lesson	P5	FN674
88	03-11	6C	Music	Lesson	P3	FN678
89	03-11	7B	Physics	Lesson	P4	FN680
90	04-11	7B	English	Lesson	P2	FN686
91	04-11	7B	Biology	Lesson	P3	FN687
92	04-11	7D	Sport	Lesson	P6	FN686
93	04-11	G8 Education Contest	Questions on: English, Maths, Amharic, Tigrigna	Contest	After school	
94	05-11	7B	Chemistry	Lesson	P4	FN705
95	05-11	7B	Maths	Lesson	P5	FN706

96	07-11	7B	Amharic	Lesson	P4	FN711
97	07-11	7B	Tigrigna	Lesson	P5	FN712
98	11-11	7B	English	Lesson	P2	FN727
99	11-11	7B	Biology	Lesson	P3	FN728
100	12-11	7B	PE	Lesson	P3	FN738
101	13-11	7B	English	Lesson	P4	FN759
102	18-11	?	PE	Lesson	P4	FN780
103	18-11	7B	Music	Lesson	P5	FN783
104	19-11	7B	English	Lesson	P3	FN789
105	19-11	7B	Social Studies	Lesson	P4	FN792
106	19-11	7B	No teacher (Maths)		P5	FN795
107	26-11	7B	Tigrigna	Exam		FN833
108	01-12	G8	Inter-school G8 Constitution Competition (3 schools)	Contest	Break – P4	FN858
109	02-12	7B	English	Lesson		
110	02-12	7B	Chemistry	Lesson		
111	02-12	7B	Maths	Lesson		
112	02-12	7B	PE	Lesson		

Appendix 6: 7B questionnaire

i) The questionnaire

In November 2014, in my final weeks at the school, all 45 students in 7B were given a Tigrigna-language questionnaire translated from the following text.

Rafael is very interested in your ideas about the school, so please answer the following questions. When he writes about the school in his research publications he will never use your real name, and even the name of the school will be changed.

Name _____ Date of birth _____ Grade joined Ketema School _____

1. Think about your experiences in Ketema School – your teachers, your classmates, and the things you do in school. What do you like most about the school?
2. Are there any things you don't like about the school? If so, what?
3. What are your favourite subjects? Why?
4. Are there any subjects or activities that you don't find interesting? If so, please explain.
5. How do you think students, teachers and parents can make the school a better place?
6. What would you like to do when you leave school? What can you do in school that will help you achieve this?
7. Do you give your permission for Rafael to use your photos in his research publications and presentations?

ii) Students' likes and dislikes

Students' responses were translated by my assistants. I read each response many times before summarising the objects of students' like/dislike using short phrases. Each response was coded multiple times. For example, the following answer to Q1 was coded 'Playing with friends' and 'Teachers in general':

When we play in school that makes me happy: football, running and also playing riddles in school makes me happy. Our teachers are good; they support us in every way.
(Female Christian)

Students' likes and dislikes are tallied in Tables A6.1 and A6.2.

Table A6.1 What students liked about school

Order	Item	Female Christian (n=12)	Female Muslim (n=6)	Female total (n=18)	Male Christian (n=6)	Male Muslim (n=21)	Male total (n=27)	Total
1	Teachers in general	6	4	10	3	7	10	20
2	Learning with friends	3	2	5	3	7	10	15
3	Playing with friends	3	2	5	1	7	8	13
4	Spending time with friends and teachers	3	1	4	0	6	6	10
5	Specific teachers (mentioned by name or subject)	0	0	0	7	1	8	8

6	Specific lessons (e.g. learning about vitamins)	2	2	4	1	1	2	6
7	Specific activities (e.g. drama, competitions)	0	1	1	0	3	3	4
8	Improving my marks	2	0	2	0	1	1	3
9	When I was in the First Cycle	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
9	The trees	1	0	1	0	1	1	2
9	Nothing	0	0	0	0	2	2	2

Table A6.2 What students disliked about school

Order	Item	Female Christian (n=12)	Female Muslim (n=6)	Female total (n=18)	Male Christian (n=6)	Male Muslim (n=21)	Male total (n=27)	Total
1	Fighting	7	4	11	3	6	9	20
2	Theft	6	2	8	2	2	4	12
3	Toilets, water	2	3	5	1	4	5	10
4	Insults, swearing	3	1	4	3	0	3	7
5	Nothing	1	1	2	0	4	4	6
6	Teachers beating students	1	1	2	0	3	3	5
6	Truancy and lateness	0	1	1	1	3	4	5
7	Quarrelling, breaking up with friends	2	1	3	1	0	1	4
8	Damaging school property	1	0	1	1	1	2	3
8	Insulting or talking back to teachers	1	0	1	1	1	2	3
9	Damaging trees	1	0	1	0	1	1	2
9	Cheating	1	0	1	0	1	1	2
9	Female students' dress	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
9	Disrupting class; talking while teacher is talking	0	0	0	0	2	2	2

Appendix 7: Screenshots from Primary Documents coded in Atlas.ti

This section contains screenshots from different types of Primary Documents coded in Atlas.ti:

- Plate A1: Image of an activity in school (6B *gim gima*)
- Plate A2: Minutes from a meeting (Staff Meeting 26)
- Plate A3: Student questionnaire response
- Plate A4: Fieldnotes from participant observation (Week 3)

Plate A1: Image of an activity in school (6B *gim gima*)

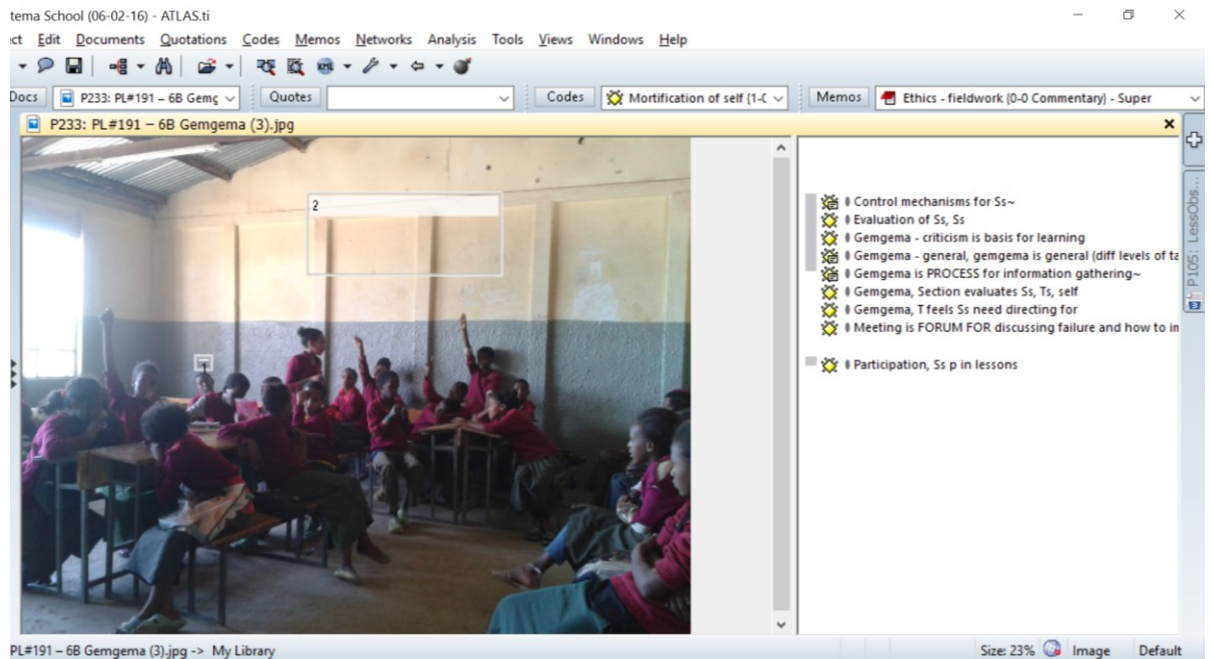


Plate A2: Minutes from a meeting (Staff Meeting 26)

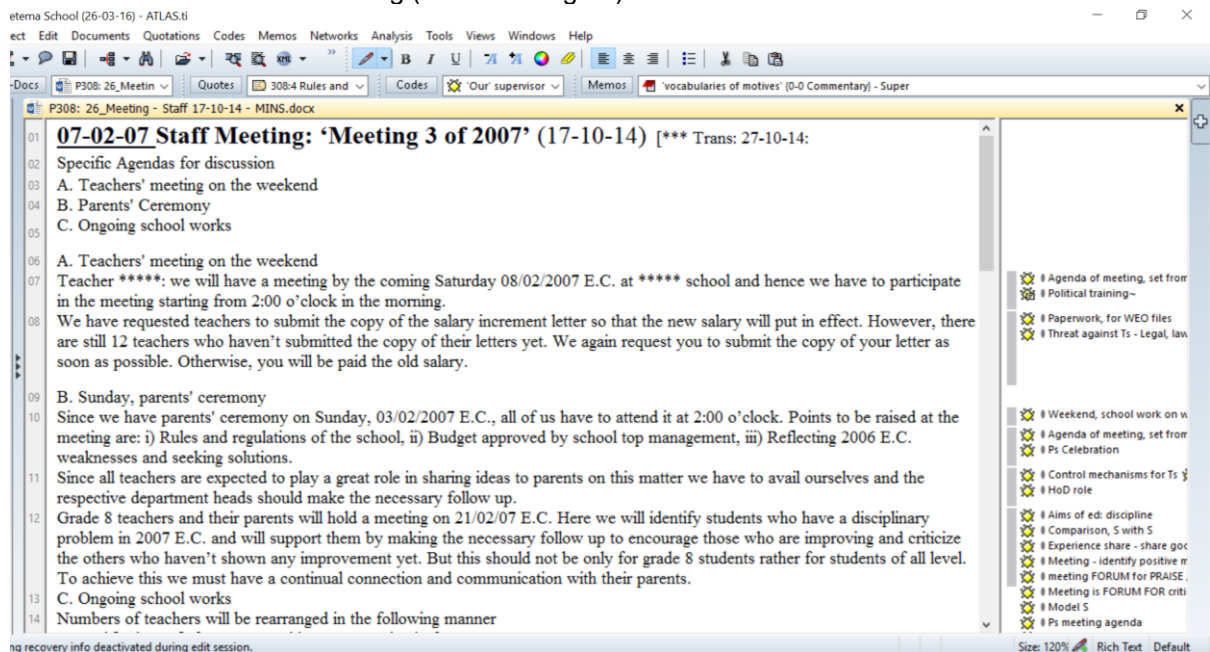


Plate A3: Student questionnaire response

ma School (26-03-16) - ATLAS.ti

Edit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Analysis Tools Views Windows Help

P193: PartAcc 7B

01 Date of Birth (EC): 20-9-92

02 Joined school (EC): 2001

03

04 1 Teacher Yerga is a good teacher, he taught us very well. Also I remember when we were in G6 there was one student who stole from us and his name is ****.

05 2 Yes, there is. There are some swear words that were written on the blackboard in the class, and I didn't like them. There is no clean toilet – we have a toilet but it's not clean.

06 3 I like Mathematics because I want to be a bank manager.

07 4 There is no subject I don't like.

08 5 If we can get the teachers' help and from our network, and also tutorial support.

09 6 I want to be a bank manager. I will try to be a better student at all subjects.

10 7 If you promise to give me one photograph, then yes I will.

11

- # Join school G1, S
- # S likes T (or Ts)
- # Theft, stealing
- # Dislikes, S - DISCURSIVE~
- # Insults, Ss
- # Toilet, complaints
- # Career aspirations, S
- # Subject, instrumentally useful
- # S likes subject
- # Subjects, S differentiation bw
- # S Network, Ts strengthen~
- # Tutorials/special support
- # Career aspirations, S
- # Study hard, S need to
- # Agency, S~
- # Rafael's position in the school~
- # Research gatekeeper/s~
- # Research, participant constrain/restrict access~
- # S INTEREST

Plate A4: Fieldnotes from participant observation (Week 3)

School (26-03-16) - ATLAS.ti

dit Documents Quotations Codes Memos Networks Analysis Tools Views Windows Help

P132: PartObs - Week 3.rtf

21-04 66 5 [09-08-06 EC]

7.56 - walking to school, some Ss ahead of me arriving - boy smartly dressed, smiles - asks me "how do you like our class?" he must be G8 or 7 [Later realise it is D*** from G8]. Carries school books in his hand, not bag. Before he spoke to me shook hands with a very smartly dressed man in a silver suit.

I arrive in school 1.58. As walking past G8 building in direction of s/room G8 Maths T Mulu greets me as I walk along the path "You want to enter?" he calls to me. "Please!" I say.

[I'd been hoping to see his class last Thurs am, but cancelled for a meeting]

21-04 67 2 G8B Maths. I sit at an empty desk at the back left.

7.59 T divides the board (see n/book 2 p4). I map Ss seating positions (see n/book 2 p4). – only 26 Ss present

8.00 T turns to address the class, smiles: "Enqua absehakum" [N.b. Muslim T greets Ss on Christian holiday]

T says to me "As you see, the number of students are decreasing because of the holiday." [A Maths T joke]

8.02 T has drawn triangle on board – asks Ss the value of sth. A hand goes up – T picks S from back left (boy).

8.03 T asks female S front left – she gets answer wrong – hands go up.

8.04 T moves to 2nd part of board: "The formula for any...in a radical...Use the formula."

He demonstrates $S_n \text{ Root } 5 \times S_n \text{ Root } 4 = S_n \text{ Root } 20$

- # Muslim and Christian relations are good
- # Absence, S is responsible for his
- # S / Ss blamed (i.e. for lessons disruption)
- # T jokes

bs - Week 3.rtf -> My Library

Size: 120%


Appendix 8: Example lesson plan

Below is typical Grade 7 English lesson plan from 2014/5. The template does not allow much space for planning. Note the red ticks and comments from the HoD and management: 'seen'.

Daily Lesson Plan

Teacher's Name: [redacted]
Unit to be Taught: Unit One My Village Town
Topic to be covered: Grammar
Guided Composition
Debate
Revision & Assessment

Objectives: Students are able to
1. Complete a guided composition
2. compare and contrast
3. revise what they have learned
4.

Date	Main content	Time	Teachers activity	Students activity	Teachers aid	Questions & Remark
03/02/2007	Letter writing Lesson 10 	7 25 7 6	1. Introduction Take the necessary points - Formal & Informal 2. Presentation Demonstrate Discuss 3. Stabilization Summarize the main points 4. Evaluation check students' activities	Listening Taking note Realizing observing participating Asking Answering	Letter form	
04/02/2007	Lesson 11 Guided Composition	6 27 6 6	1. Introduction Introduce their meanings relatives - families 2. Presentation Demonstrate Answer the 1st space of a sample 3. Stabilization summarize the main points 4. Evaluation chicken - small hen check their work	Listening writing Taking note observing Realizing Asking Answering Do the activities Practicing		
05/02/07	Lesson 12 Debate	6 25 8 6	1. Introduction Take the main points from the previous 2. Presentation Discuss Demonstrate 3. Stabilization summarize the salient points of the lesson 4. Evaluation check the work of the students	Listening Take notes Realizing observing Asking Answering Demonstrating Discussing		
06/02/07	Lesson 13 Revision exercise	7 23 8 7	1. Introduction Ask oral questions in regard to the topic 2. Presentation Demonstrate Discuss 3. Stabilization summarize the main points 4. Evaluation check students' work (activities)		Pie-chart 	
07/02/07	Assessment Mixed exercise - Grammar - Responses	6 24 9 9	1. Introduction Have the necessary points from the past 2. Presentation Demonstrate Discuss 3. Stabilization summarize the main points 4. Evaluation check students' activities			

Approval: [redacted]
Teacher's: [redacted]
Department: [redacted]
Academic Director's: [redacted]
Seen
03/02/07

Appendix 9: Additional material relating to recommendations

This section contains additional material relating to the recommendations presented in 7.3.

Recommendation i) Prompts for ‘Monthly network leader sessions’

The following are examples of questions that could be used by a tutor or subject teacher to encourage network leaders to reflect on their experiences, and as the basis for a group discussion.

What challenges have you faced? How have you overcome them?

What advice would you give to each other?

Are there any challenges where you need a teacher to intervene?

What have you done to help the learning of other students?

What have you done to discourage copying, and to help students to find their own answers?

How can other students be encouraged to take the lead?

What else can you/teachers/the school do to support students’ learning?

What have you learned from the experience of being a network leader?

The aim is to acknowledge the work of network leaders, and support their development by helping them reflect on *learning* and *leadership*. Non-network leaders may also attend some sessions, to share their insights.

Recommendation iii) Prompts for ‘Consulting students on teaching and learning in grade gim gima’

The following questions could be used to stimulate discussion about teaching and learning in grade *gim gima*.

Which teachers make things easy to understand? What do these teachers do that you wish more teachers did?

Which teachers manage the classroom in a way that makes it easier for you to learn? What do they do that helps you learn?

What network activities help your learning?

Recommendation vi) Examples of quality indicators that might be developed by a PSTA

Below are examples of quality indicators which might be developed by a PSTA. These mostly derive from issues raised in consultative forums at Ketema, but include some of my own invention (marked *).

Reduced incidence of corporal punishment.

Reduction in the number of ‘copying’ activities set for classwork/homework.

Network leaders receive monthly support from tutors. (*)

Reduced levels of copying within student networks.

The PSTA acts upon students’ inputs (in the PSTA and other consultative forums). (*)

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