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Assessing the Perceived Effectiveness of the School Improvement Program in Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools of the Amhara Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the perceived effectiveness of SIP in enhancing teaching and learning within secondary schools in the Amhara Region using a sequential explanatory design. The study involved 1,152 teachers, 82 students, 82 members of the School Improvement Committee (SIC), and 10 principals, via questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, one sample t-test and one-way ANOVA with post-hoc tests, while narrative analysis was applied to the qualitative data. The findings indicate that secondary schools lack clearly defined principles for high-quality teaching and learning and struggle with developing effective innovative teaching strategies. Although teachers use lesson plans and share learning objectives, their current methods for giving ongoing feedback, conducting assessments, and communicating with parents fall short. It was concluded that challenges persist in enhancing teaching and learning, despite effective communication of learning objectives and structured planning by teachers; critical gaps in continuous assessment, feedback mechanisms, and teacher professional development hinder student achievement. To improve teaching and learning outcomes in secondary schools, it is crucial to establish clear guiding principles, provide targeted teacher training, enhance support for struggling students, encourage regular feedback, foster a positive environment, involve parents, ensure ongoing professional development, align with national educational objectives, and implement consistent monitoring and evaluation.

Key Words: School Improvement Program, Teaching and Learning, perceived Effectiveness, Secondary Schools, Amhara Region

1. Introduction

School improvement is a systematic, ongoing effort to enhance learning conditions and internal factors within schools, aimed at efficiently achieving educational goals by elevating student achievement through improved teaching and learning environments (Gray et al., 2011). In

Ethiopia, the School Improvement Program specifically aims to improve education quality by addressing teaching, leadership, learning environments, and community engagement, enabling schools to overcome challenges and achieve better student outcomes (MOE, 2012).

The School Improvement Program (SIP) stands as a foundational initiative within Ethiopia's broader General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP), initially launched in 2007, with a revised blueprint and framework introduced in 2010 (MoE, 2007). The overarching objective of SIP is to elevate the overall quality of education and, consequently, to enhance students' academic outcomes across both primary and secondary school levels (MoE, 2007). This program is conceptualized as a continuous and cyclical process, encompassing planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting, all of which are intended to be consistently executed at the school level (MoE, 2010). SIP was adapted from Australian school excellence initiatives, designed with the explicit intention of fostering positive changes within Ethiopian schools (MoE, 2007; Yishak & Triegaardt, 2024).

Since the establishment of Ethiopia's modern education system, significant efforts have been made to enhance education quality and accessibility, particularly through the 1994 Education and Training Policy, which emphasized decentralization and democratization. However, challenges persist, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, high dropout rates—especially in rural areas and a history of limited funding and qualified teachers (World Bank, 2018; Lema, 2020). The SIP was introduced to address these issues, aiming to improve educational quality and outcomes across the system.

The program's structure is articulated around four key domains, which collectively comprise 12 elements and 15 standards

(MoE, 2007). Each of these domains is considered equally vital for the comprehensive strength and success of the program (MoE, 2007, 2010).

The Teaching-Learning domain of SIP is recognized as paramount for determining the success of schools in fostering student learning outcomes. It encompasses a range of factors related to classroom conditions, including student- and teaching-related aspects, which significantly influence the teaching and learning process. The core emphasis here is on improving students' learning and achievements, with effective teaching practices being the primary conduit for realizing desired learning outcomes (MoE, 2007; Harris, 2005; Macsuga-Gage et al., 2012).

School Leadership and Management domain underscores the critical importance of effective administrative support and leadership within schools. It advocates for a decentralized management approach, aiming to bring educational services closer to students, parents, and communities (Upadhyay & Rajasekhar, 2022). Effective leadership is not confined to a single individual but can be distributed among various personnel within the school, fostering collaborative cultures and positive relationships (Yang & Chang, 2024). Strong leadership is considered a pivotal factor for overall school success, directly influencing teacher motivation and the broader school environment (Sakerani et al., 2019).

Parent-Community School Relations domain highlights the essential role of active community involvement in enhancing school effectiveness and fostering a more

supportive and caring educational environment. Increased family and community engagement is believed to lead to improved academic performance, a reduction in disciplinary issues, elevated staff morale, and more efficient utilization of resources (Tekeste, 2007). Community participation is specifically expected to facilitate the mobilization of resources and provide crucial support for various school affairs (Yusuf, 2024; Mapp et al., 2013).

Healthy School Environment domain pertains to both the psychological and physical characteristics of the school setting that influence staff, students, and the overall teaching-learning processes (World Bank, 2018). Schools are expected to cultivate a conducive climate and culture that facilitates effective teaching and learning. Directly addressing school culture is considered essential for school improvement, as a suitable school environment significantly contributes to the quality of education by encouraging purposeful student activity and supporting a wide array of learning-facilitating activities (Calvo et al., 2020).

The structured presentation of these domains, as shown in Table 1, provides a foundational understanding of SIP's intended components and their contributions to enhancing teaching and learning. This framework serves as the theoretical basis against which the perceived effectiveness of the program can be systematically evaluated.

The Amhara Region represents a particularly salient geographical area for assessing the implementation and effectiveness of SIP, given its unique

historical and contemporary educational challenges. Historically, the region has grappled with a notable scarcity of secondary schools, which has led to significant problems such as overcrowded classes, the widespread adoption of two-shift systems, and students having to endure long commuting distances to reach educational facilities (Abebe, 2009; JICA, 2020). These conditions underscored an urgent and pressing need for substantial facility expansion and a comprehensive improvement in educational quality within the region (UNICEF, 2021).

Despite these formidable challenges, the Amhara Region has demonstrated discernible progress in expanding access to secondary education. Data indicates that the annual average growth rate in secondary education enrollment in Amhara has surpassed the national average. Furthermore, a noteworthy demographic shift has occurred, with the number of girls enrolled in secondary education exceeding that of boys since the fiscal year 2012/13 (JICA, 2020). However, despite these gains in access, the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for secondary education in the region—standing at 47.9% for secondary education as a whole and 64.2% for general secondary education still falls considerably short of established targets (JICA, 2020).

A critical observation from studies focusing on SIP implementation within the Amhara Region, specifically in the Waghimra Administrative Zone, reveals that

Table 1. Key Domains of the SIP and their Intended Impact on Teaching and Learning

SIP Domain	Key Focus/Elements	Intended Impact on Teaching and Learning
Teaching-Learning	Classroom conditions, student-related aspects, teaching practices	Improved student learning outcomes and achievements
School Leadership and Management	Effective administrative support, decentralized management, collaborative cultures	Enhanced school success, improved teacher motivation, supportive school environment
Parent-Community School Relations	Active community involvement, family engagement, resource mobilization	Improved academic performance, reduced disciplinary issues, better resource utilization
Healthy School Environment	Psychological and physical school characteristics, conducive climate and culture	Facilitated effective teaching and learning, purposeful student activity, supportive learning environment

Source: *School Improvement Blue Print Manual* (MoE, 2007)

the planning and execution of SIP across its core domains (teaching-learning, leadership, learning environment, and community participation) have been notably low (Merawi et al., 2021). A striking finding indicates that an overwhelming 99% of both primary and secondary schools in this zone were operating below expected standards (Merawi et al., 2021). This stark contrast between the ambitious, well-structured policy intent of SIP and its documented low-level implementation in a specific region points to a significant policy-implementation gap. This suggests that the perceived effectiveness of the program will likely be diminished, not necessarily due to inherent flaws in the program's design, but rather because its execution is severely constrained by systemic and localized factors. Understanding this discrepancy is

paramount for comprehending stakeholder perceptions.

Moreover, the region's educational landscape has been profoundly affected by prolonged conflict, which has directly impeded SIP program activities. This includes significant delays in classroom construction and efforts to enhance school access in areas hosting refugees within the Amhara Region (ACLED, 2021). Such security challenges have not only disrupted program delivery but have also created substantial obstacles for data collection and program monitoring, further complicating efforts to accurately gauge SIP's impact (ACLED, 2021). The presence of these external shocks fundamentally shapes stakeholders' experiences and their judgments regarding the program's success or failure. This implies that any assessment

of "perceived effectiveness" must meticulously account for these exogenous variables, as they profoundly influence how the program is experienced and evaluated by those on the ground.

While objective metrics, such as national examination results and enrollment rates, offer quantitative measures of educational outcomes, they inherently provide an incomplete picture of the overall impact and success of educational programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These numerical indicators, while valuable, often fail to capture the nuanced experiences, subjective judgments, and deeply held opinions of the individuals directly involved in the education system.

"Perceived effectiveness" refers precisely to these subjective judgments and opinions held by key stakeholders—including teachers, school leaders, students, parents, and community members—regarding the extent to which SIP has successfully achieved its goals in enhancing teaching and learning (Robinson et al., 2009). These perceptions are of critical importance because they profoundly influence several aspects of program success: program buy-in, the consistency and sustainability of implementation efforts, and ultimately, the long-term viability of educational reforms (MoE, 2007).

Understanding perceived effectiveness is instrumental in revealing potential discrepancies between policy intentions, as articulated by the Ministry of Education, and the realities experienced on the ground (MoE, 2007). Such an investigation can illuminate areas where implementation

strategies may require significant adjustment, or where there is a notable lack of awareness or effective communication regarding the program's objectives and benefits. For instance, if a program is poorly implemented due to a lack of awareness, resources, or skilled personnel (MoE, 2007), stakeholders will likely perceive it as ineffective, regardless of some positive quantitative trends. This underscores that while objective data shows *what* is happening (e.g., low exam scores), an understanding of perceived effectiveness explains *why* it is happening from the perspective of those directly affected. This provides actionable intelligence into the human and operational factors that either drive or impede program success, information that objective metrics alone cannot fully capture. This study systematically evaluates SIP's impact on teaching and learning through comprehensive assessments in various secondary schools in the region, guided by the following core research questions:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of SIP in enhancing teaching practices within secondary schools of the Amhara Region?
2. To what extent do stakeholders perceive SIP as effective in improving student learning outcomes in secondary schools of the Amhara Region?

2. Methods and Materials

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the School Improvement Program (SIP) in influencing teaching and learning in

secondary schools of the Amhara Region, Ethiopia. Employing a pragmatic paradigm with a sequential explanatory design, the researcher focused on practical outcomes and effective solutions as emphasized by Creswell (2014). This design allowed for the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2012). It was particularly beneficial for interpreting unexpected quantitative results and deepening insights into the issues within the study region (Mertens, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.1. Population, Sampling, and Sampling Techniques

The study targeted secondary school teachers, students, principals, and School Improvement Committee (SIC) members in the Amhara National Regional State. Using simple random sampling, the researcher selected 3 of the 13 administrative zones and 3 of the 6 city administrations: Central Gondar, West Gondar, Awi zones, and Gondar, Bahir Dar, and Dessie city administrations, representing 32% of the total population of the administrative zones and city administrations in the region. From the 137 public secondary schools (grades 9-12) in these areas, 41 schools (30%) were chosen through random sampling.

In the Amhara region, the Annual Education Statistics Abstract (2021/2022) reports 41,459 secondary school teachers. A 5% sample yields 2,073 teachers, exceeding the threshold of 384 required for sample size determination. Utilizing Cochran's (1977) formula, a total of 1,152 teachers were selected. Additionally, 82 student council members, 82 School Improvement

Committee (SIC) members, and 10 principals were purposively sampled due to their roles in SIP implementation. This resulted in 1,326 total respondents. Of the 1,316 distributed questionnaires, response rates were 950 (83%) from teachers, 78 (95.1%) from students, and 76 (92.7%) from SIC members.

2.2. Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, employing questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to gather data. Questionnaires, adapted from the revised national framework for school improvement (MOE, 2012), were distributed to teachers, students, and SIC members, with responses gathered on a five-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent of execution of the Teaching Learning Process Domain of SIP (using 15 items) in relation to established targets. To ensure clarity, the questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Amharic with the help of language experts, followed by a pilot study (26 participants—comprising 10 teachers, 12 students, and 4 SIP Committee members—from Angereb Secondary School, who were not included in the final sample) that refined it based on participant feedback. The content validity of the instruments was evaluated using the content validity ratio (CVR) developed by Lawshe (1975) using 8 panel of experts in the field of education policy and leadership (1 professor, 3 associate professors and 4 assistant professors) and out of the 8 experts 7 of them replied essential and the CVR value was 0.75, indicating that minimum cut criteria was satisfied. The reliability of the

15 teaching learning domain items (TL1 to TL 15) was assessed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient and the values satisfied the

minimum cut points and the detail of the value is indicated in table 2 below:

Table 2. Reliability Results of the Teaching Learning Domain of SIP Items.

Ite ms	TL 1	TL 2	TL 3	TL 4	TL 5	TL 6	TL 7	TL 8	TL 9	TL 10	TL 11	TL 12	TL 13	TL 14	TL 15	Av.
α - val ue	.7 30	.7 32	.7 66	.7 49	.7 15	.7 22	.7 30	.7 44	.6 95	.73 1	.78 7	.73 7	.73 8	.73 1	.7 34	.7 50

Given that the study employed an explanatory sequential design, the data collection unfolded in three distinct phases. The first phase involved a pilot study; the second phase consisted of administering the finalized questionnaire to secondary school teachers, students, and school improvement committee members. The researcher and his assistants administered the questionnaires directly to respondents, collaborating closely with unit leaders and school principals in the selected schools, in the third phase, qualitative data was gathered through interviews and document reviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Amharic with secondary school principals, lasting about 50 minutes each, and were both note-taken and audio recorded with participant consent. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to gather qualitative data regarding the extent, to which the teaching-learning domain of SIP has been implemented. The interview comprised a total of eight questions. The validity of the interviews was also established through expert and peer validation. The focus of the document analysis included various documents like school improvement policies and strategies, national-level SIP guidelines, SIP implementation plans, school strategic plans,

student dropout rates, examination results, SIP committee minutes, school self-assessment tools, and overall records pertaining to SIP implementation.

2.3.Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, one sample t-test and one-way ANOVA with post-hoc tests in IBM SPSS version 26 to identify significant differences in perceptions among teachers, students, and SIC members, as three distinct sample groups warranted this approach (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative data from interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and document analyses underwent narrative analysis, where the researcher constructed a narrative by integrating facts and events from various sources (Polkinghorne, 1995, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018).

3. Results

3.1.Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This study included 1,104 participants (73.8% male, 26.2% female). The largest age group was 31-40 years (65.4%), followed by 41-50 years (24.8%), 16-25 years (7.1%), 26-30 years (2.3%), and over 50 years (0.5%). The majority of participants (82.3%) held a BA/BSc/B.Ed.,

with 9.5% holding an MA/MSc, 7.6% having secondary education, and 0.5% possessing a diploma.

3.2. Perceived Effectiveness of the School Improvement Program in Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools of the Amhara Region

Table 3. One-Sample t-test Results on Perceived Effectiveness of the SIP in Enhancing Teaching Practices and Learning Outcomes

No.	Items	M	SD	t- value	MD	Sig.(2-tailed)
TL1	The school has mutually defined principles which lay down strong foundations for quality teaching and learning	2.06	.517	60.174	.936	.000
TL2	The school designs and implements a strategy through which teachers can acquire new and effective teaching methods and strategies	2.16	.784	35.453	.837	.000
TL3	The school has put in place support mechanisms for academically weak students	3.07	.987	2.256	.067	.024
TL4	The school ensure that teachers teach according to their plan (daily & annual)	3.95	.250	125.962	.949	.000
TL5	Teachers attempt to consider individual differences and teach accordingly	3.19	1.065	5.852	.188	.000
TL6	Teachers communicate clear objectives of what they teach	3.47	.823	18.873	.467	.000
TL7	Teachers provide the necessary support for their students	2.85	.980	5.007	.148	.000
TL8	Teachers use the comments given to them for improving their performances	2.89	1.011	3.662	.111	.000
TL9	Benchmarks that encourage students for better results are clearly defined	2.39	.931	21.597	.605	.000
TL10	Students get continuous, timely and constructive feedback from their teachers	2.02	.721	45.239	.982	.000
TL11	Students' participation in co-curricular activities has increased	2.95	1.029	1.667	.052	.096
TL12	Student's results have shown considerable improvement over time (after SIP)	1.80	.535	74.830	1.204	.000
TL13	The performance of students is reported to the parents regularly	1.91	.339	106.419	1.086	.000
TL14	Teachers used continuous assessment to measure progress of their students and provide support accordingly	2.18	.730	37.392	.822	.000
TL15	Teachers have participated in continuous professional development in order to learn new knowledge to apply in the classroom	2.03	.649	49.686	.971	.000
TL Total		2.5896	.382	35.631	.41039	.000

Key: TL = Teaching-Learning; M = mean; WM = weighted mean; SD = standard deviation; MD= mean difference



As indicated in Table 3, the items (TL1, TL2, TL7, TL8, TL9, TL10, TL12, TL13, TL14, and TL15) of the teaching-learning domain of SIP were statistically significant compared to the test value of 3 with TL1 ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .517$; $t(1103) = 60.174$, $p < 0.05$), TL2 ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .784$; $t(1103) = 35.453$, $p < 0.05$), TL7 ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .980$; $t(1103) = 5.007$, $p < 0.05$), TL8 ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.011$; $t(1103) = 3.662$, $p < 0.05$), TL9 ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .931$; $t(1103) = 21.597$, $p < 0.05$), TL10 ($M = 2.02$, $SD = .721$; $t(1103) = 45.239$, $p < 0.05$), TL12 ($M = 1.80$, $SD = .535$; $t(1103) = 74.830$, $p < 0.05$), TL13 ($M = 1.91$, $SD = .339$; $t(1103) = 106.419$, $p < 0.05$), TL14 ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .730$; $t(1103) = 37.392$, $p < 0.05$), and TL15 ($M = 2.03$, $SD = .649$; $t(1103) = 49.686$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that activities in these items were performed lower than the expected (average) level of implementation.

Similarly, as indicated in Table 3, the items (TL3, TL4, TL5, and TL6) of the teaching-learning domain of SIP were statistically significant compared to the test value of 3 with TL3 ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .987$; $t(1103) = 2.256$, $p < 0.05$), TL4 ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .250$; $t(1103) = 125.962$, $p < 0.05$), TL5 ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.065$; $t(1103) = 5.852$, $p < 0.05$), TL6 ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .823$; $t(1103) = 18.873$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that activities in these items were performed more than the expected (average) level of implementation.

However, as indicated in Table 3, item TL11 was not statistically significant compared to

the test value of 3 with ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.029$; $t(1103) = 1.667$, $p > 0.05$), indicating it is at an average level, or students' participation in co-curricular activities was found to be as expected.

3.3. Perceived Effectiveness of the School Improvement Program in Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools of the Amhara Region

Table 4, Item 1 indicates a lack of consensus among teachers ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 0.559$), students ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.000$) on the existence of mutually articulated principles for high-quality teaching and learning. A one-way ANOVA showed no significant differences among the groups ($F(2, 1101) = 0.267$, $p > 0.05$), confirming a uniform perception of ineffective shared guidelines for quality instruction across all groups.

Table 4, Item 2, show low satisfaction among teachers, students, and SIC members regarding schools' efforts to facilitate innovative teaching techniques, with mean ratings of 2.19, 2.12, and 2.10, respectively. Principal interviews indicated that despite teachers' involvement in activities, their assessment of curriculum materials and uses of student-centered approaches were limited, highlighting insufficient professional development. A one-way ANOVA ($F(2, 1101) = .612$, $p > 0.05$) revealed no significant differences in perceptions of professional development support across the groups, indicating that inadequate support is a widespread issue in secondary schools in the Amhara Region. During interviews,

secondary school principals identified several factors hindering the implementation

of active learning strategies in their school improvement programs:

Table 4. One Way ANOVA Results on Perceived Effectiveness of the SIP in Enhancing Teaching Practices and Learning Outcomes.

No	Items/Indicators of the teaching-learning process domain	Respondents			WM	One-Way ANOVA	
		T(950) M	S(78) M	SIC(76) M		F-Value	Sig
1	The school has mutually defined principles which lay down strong foundations for quality teaching and learning	2.07	2.00	2.03	2.03	.267	.250
2	The school designs and implements a strategy through which teachers can acquire new and effective teaching methods and strategies	2.19	2.12	2.10	2.14	.612	.021
3	The school has put in place support mechanisms for academically weak students	3.24	2.14	2.00	2.46	.791	.000
4	The school ensure that teachers teach according to their plan (daily & annual)	3.94	4.02	4.10	4.02	.062	.025
5	Teachers attempt to consider individual differences and teach accordingly	3.06	3.96	4.00	3.67	1.028	.000
6	Teachers communicate clear objectives of what they teach	3.38	3.98	4.12	3.83	.632	.000
7	Teachers provide the necessary support for their students	2.67	4.01	3.87	3.52	.748	.000
8	Teachers use the comments given to them for improving their performances	2.71	4.04	4.02	3.59	.823	.000
9	Benchmarks that encourage students for better results are clearly defined	2.13	3.96	4.03	3.37	.449	.000
10	Students get continuous, timely and constructive feedback from their teachers	2.02	2.01	1.98	2.00	.521	.945
11	Students' participation in co-curricular activities has increased	2.78	3.89	4.01	3.56	.881	.000
12	Students results have shown considerable improvement over time (after SIP)	1.76	2.06	2.04	1.95	.279	.000
13	The performance of students is reported to the parents regularly	1.90	2.12	2.06	2.03	.114	.003
14	Teachers used continuous assessment to measure progress of their students and provide support accordingly	2.21	1.97	2.01	2.06	.529	.005
15	Teachers have participated in continuous professional development in order to learn new knowledge to apply in the classroom	2.03	2.05	2.00	2.03	.422	.837

Key: T = Teacher; S = Student; SIC=School Improvement Committee; M = mean; WM = weighted mean; SD = standard deviation.

“...most secondary school teachers favor traditional lecture methods, perceiving themselves as the primary knowledge source. Classroom conditions in urban schools like Gondar, Dessie, and Bahir Dar are inadequate, with overcrowded classes hindering practical activities and problem-solving approaches. Insufficient instructional facilities and a lack of clean, well-resourced environments limit active learning opportunities. Furthermore, some textbooks do not support active engagement, promoting one-way communication instead”.

Overall, the findings suggest that secondary schools in the region have not prioritized the development and implementation of strategies to enhance teaching and learning.

In Table 4 Item 3, the study explored the perceptions of support mechanisms for academically weak students among teachers, students, and members of SIC in secondary schools of the Amhara Region. The mean scores indicated significant disparity: teachers ($M = 3.24$), students ($M = 2.14$), and SIC members ($M = 2.00$), revealing skepticism regarding the effectiveness of these support systems. A one-way ANOVA ($F(2, 1101) = 791, p < 0.05$) confirmed significant differences among the groups, with post-hoc analysis via Scheffé's method indicating notable differences between teachers and students (mean diff = 1.240, $p < 0.05$) and SIC members (mean diff =

1.240, $p < 0.05$), but no significant difference between students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.00, $p > 0.05$). The findings suggest that secondary schools in the Amhara Region inadequately support academically weak students despite claiming to offer assistance mechanisms.

An analysis of responses regarding teacher adherence to lesson plans (Item 4, Table 4) in the Amhara Region secondary schools revealed high perceptions among teachers ($M = 3.94, SD = .269$), students ($M = 4.02, SD = .000$), and SIC members ($M = 4.10, SD = .000$). Despite reported adherence, documentary analyses indicate a lack of consistency and frequency in supervision practices. ANOVA results confirmed no significant differences in perceptions among the three groups ($F(2, 1101) = .062, p > .05$), suggesting a uniform understanding of adherence levels across stakeholders.

The study investigated perceptions of teachers' efforts to accommodate individual instructional differences. Data from teachers ($M = 3.06, SD = 1.092$), students ($M = 3.96, SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.000$) were analyzed for item 5 in Table 4. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference among groups ($F(2, 1101) = 1.028, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis (Scheffé's method) showed significant differences between teachers and students (mean diff = 0.944, $p < 0.05$) and between teachers and SIC members (mean diff = 0.944, $p < 0.05$), but not between students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.000, $p >$

0.05). These results indicate a general consensus on teachers' efforts, but teachers perceive their own efforts less positively than students and SIC members, warranting further exploration of factors influencing teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction.

Table 4, Item 6 shows that teachers ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.856$), students ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.000$) perceive teachers as effectively communicating learning objectives. A one-way ANOVA ($F(2, 1101) = 0.632$, $p < 0.05$) indicates significant perceptual differences among groups. Post-hoc analysis (Scheffé's Method) reveals that teachers' self-perception significantly differs from both students' and SIC members' perceptions (mean diff = 0.619, $p < 0.05$ for both). There is no significant difference between students' and SIC members' perceptions (mean diff = 0.000, $p > 0.05$). These findings suggest a discrepancy between teachers' self-perception and that of students and SIC members, indicating a potential area for improvement in teacher training and professional development.

In the Amhara Region, secondary school teachers perceived their support to students (Item 7, Table 4) at a moderate level ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .931$), while students ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .000$) and SIC members ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .000$) rated it high. A one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in perceptions among the three groups ($F(2, 1101) = .748$, $p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis using Scheffé's method revealed significant discrepancies between teachers' self-perception and those of students and SIC

members (mean diff = 1.334, $p < 0.05$), while students and SIC members had similar views (mean diff = .000, $p > 0.05$). This indicates a gap between teachers' perceptions and those of students and members of SIC, suggesting that while teachers were effective in providing support, they underestimated their support.

In item 8 of Table 4, a study revealed differing perceptions of feedback utilization among teachers ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .977$), students ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.000$). ANOVA results indicated a significant difference in how feedback is used ($F(2, 1101) = .823$, $p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis using Scheffé's Method showed significant differences between teachers and both students (mean diff = 1.292, $p < 0.05$) and SIC members (mean diff = 1.292, $p < 0.05$), while no significant difference was found between students and SIC members (mean diff = .000, $p > 0.05$). These findings suggest variations in perception regarding teachers' feedback utilization, indicating that secondary school teachers in the Amhara Region acknowledge feedback's importance for improving their practices, which benefits students.

As presented in Table 4, Item 9, respondents rated the clarity of benchmarks for student achievement as follows: teachers ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.722$), students ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.000$). This indicates that secondary schools in the study area are generally clear in defining benchmarks. Analysis of student portfolios confirmed that classroom-based data and personal goal-setting with

homeroom teachers are prioritized. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in benchmark clarity perceptions among the groups ($F(2, 1101) = 0.449, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc tests using Scheffé's method showed significant differences between teachers and both students (mean diff = 1.865, $p < 0.05$) and SIC members (mean diff = 1.865, $p < 0.05$), while no significant difference was found between students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.000, $p > 0.05$). These results highlight varying perceptions of benchmark clarity, especially the divergence between teachers and the student/SIC perceptions in the Amhara Region.

Analysis of Table 4, item 10, showed a consensus among teachers, students, and SIC members on the average provision of continuous feedback (Mean = 1.98-2.02). However, teachers exhibited a wider range of opinions ($SD = 0.777$) compared to students and SIC members. A one-way ANOVA test revealed no statistically significant differences in perceived feedback levels among the groups ($F(2, 1101) = 0.521, p > 0.05$). This indicates a general agreement on average feedback levels, but potential inconsistencies in the quality and application of feedback practices across schools and teachers.

In a survey on student participation in extracurricular activities (Item 11, Table 4), the perceived mean scores were 2.78 ($SD = 1.011$) for teachers, 4.89 ($SD = 0.000$) for students, and 4.01 ($SD = 0.000$) for SIC members. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in perceptions ($F(2, 1101) = 0.881, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis

using Scheffé's method showed that teachers perceived significantly lower participation levels than both students and SIC members (mean diff = 1.222, $p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found between students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.000, $p > 0.05$). These results indicate discrepancies in perceptions of student engagement in extracurricular activities among the groups.

As detailed in Item 12 of Table 4, respondents assessed the impact of SIP on student achievement. Mean scores revealed discrepancies: teachers ($M = 1.76, SD = 0.569$), students ($M = 2.06, SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 2.04, SD = 0.000$). ANOVA analysis showed a significant difference in perceived student achievement among the groups ($F(2, 1101) = 0.279, p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference between teachers and both students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.237, $p < 0.05$), but no significant difference between students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.000, $p > 0.05$). This indicates that the overall student achievement improvements remain deemed insufficient. Variability in performance suggests that factors like school quality, teacher training, and socioeconomic status impact results. Ultimately, student achievement levels anticipated by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education have not been met.

Data from SIC, teachers, and students in item 13 of Table 4 reveal a significant disparity in perceptions of parent notifications about student academic progress. SIC members and students reported a low frequency (mean = 2.09, $SD = 0.000$), while teachers perceived it even

lower (mean = 1.90, SD = 0.364). A one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference among the groups ($F(2, 1101) = 0.114$, $p < 0.05$). Post-hoc analysis with Scheffé's method indicated that teachers perceive notifications at a significantly lower frequency than both students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.100, $p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found between students and SIC members (mean diff = 0.000, $p > 0.05$). Documentary analysis corroborates these results, indicating that parents are typically informed only twice a year, highlighting a notable communication gap between schools and parents in the Amhara Region.

According to data presented in Item 14 of Table 4, there is a low level of agreement on the effective implementation of continuous assessment among teachers ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.783$), students ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.000$), and SIC members ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.000$). Analysis shows that teachers primarily use continuous assessment results for grading rather than identifying learning gaps or adjusting instruction, often misunderstanding it as frequent testing. A one-way ANOVA ($F(2, 1101) = 0.529$, $p > 0.05$) reveals no significant differences in perceptions among the three groups, indicating a consensus on the ineffective usage of continuous assessment. Principals also noted in their interviews that secondary schools were not consistently implementing continuous assessment due to the following challenges:

“...large class sizes; teachers think that continuous assessment can cause grade inflation; teachers assume that

it creates high workload for teachers; due to lack of resources (like laboratory equipment and other teaching materials).”

These findings highlight a significant gap in the implementation of continuous assessment in secondary schools. It is evident that continuous assessment is not perceived as a crucial tool for enhancing student learning. However, ongoing evaluation of student performance is essential for effective teaching and learning.

A survey conducted in Amhara Region's secondary schools highlighted low teacher participation in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs, with mean scores of 2.03 for teachers, 2.05 for students, and 2.00 for SIC members (see Table 4, Item 15). A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in perceptions among the groups ($F(2, 1101) = 0.422$, $p > 0.05$). During the interviews, school principals were asked for their perspectives on the role of school-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in enhancing teachers' professional growth. Their responses included the following:

“...teachers engage in continuous professional development (CPD) primarily due to pressure from principals, who note that many teachers view CPD as a mere obligation rather than a valuable tool for growth. This negative perception stems from the repetitive and uninspiring nature of the CPD programs, which have remained unchanged for the past decade

without yielding significant benefits.”

Similarly, one of the secondary school principals also stated that:

“...teachers don't engage in CPD out of genuine self-improvement concern; they often lack clarity on necessary actions.”

The responses indicate a lack of strong in-service professional development opportunities for teachers, suggesting that continuing professional development (CPD) is not prioritized in the region. As a result, teachers may not acquire the essential skills and knowledge needed to deliver quality education.

4. Discussion

The study found that schools lacked effective shared principles essential for high-quality teaching and learning. These contrasts with other research emphasizing that collaboratively defined principles, accepted by all stakeholders, create a powerful framework for educational practices (Fullan, 2001; Hattie, 2009; Elmore, 2004). Such principles foster a shared vision, enhance collaboration, improve decision-making, boost student engagement, and elevate educational quality. Therefore, mutually agreed-upon principles are vital for establishing a strong foundation for quality education in secondary schools, particularly in the Amhara region, where they can enhance collaboration, student outcomes, and accountability.

The study found that schools have inadequately implemented strategies to support teachers in learning innovative teaching techniques. This is contrary to findings from several organizations, including the World Bank (2019), UNESCO (2021), OECD (2022), and Fullan and Langworthy (2021), which emphasize the importance of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) for effective school improvement. TPD equips teachers with updated knowledge and skills, significantly enhancing teaching quality and student outcomes. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2023) also highlights TPD as crucial for its education sector development plan. Thus, prioritizing TPD is essential for schools to achieve their educational goals.

The study found that most secondary schools provide support systems for academically struggling students, a practice supported by existing literature that highlights the importance of such mechanisms for effective education (Hattie, 2009; OECD, 2019). These systems help identify and address the root causes of academic difficulties, improve engagement, and enhance outcomes. Implementing robust support structures is vital for fostering inclusive and equitable educational settings, as they boost self-esteem and elevate performance. Schools must invest in these systems to ensure all students have opportunities for success.

The study highlights that most secondary schools in the Amhara Region observe subject teachers consistently following daily and annual teaching plans. This adherence is crucial for effective school improvement, as

supported by research from Fullan (2001), Hattie (2009), and OECD (2019). By adhering to these plans, teachers create a structured learning environment, which significantly enhances student outcomes and overall school advancement.

This study highlights that secondary school teachers in the Amhara Region actively recognize and address students' individual differences, aligning with research that emphasizes the importance of such practices for effective teaching (Hattie, 2009; Tomlinson, 2014). Tailoring instruction to diverse needs fosters an inclusive and equitable learning environment, essential for maximizing student potential and equipping them for future success. Therefore, considering individual differences in teaching is crucial for creating effective educational experiences.

The study found that secondary school teachers in the Amhara Region effectively communicate clear learning objectives, reinforcing findings from research that show such clarity enhances student outcomes. Marzano (2007) emphasizes that defined goals help students understand expectations, while Wiggins and McTighe (2018) advocate for backward design, aligning assessments and instruction with clear objectives. When students understand what is expected, they are more engaged and able to monitor their progress, leading to greater success. In summary, clear learning objectives are essential for fostering student engagement, motivation, and achievement.

This study highlights that feedback is essential for teacher professional development (TPD), as it enables teachers to

enhance their performance. Research supports this, with Hattie (2009) identifying feedback as a key factor in improving student achievement through clear, specific, and constructive guidance. Fullan and Langworthy (2021) stress feedback's role in fostering a continuous improvement culture among educators, encouraging reflection and growth. Additionally, OECD (2018) recognizes feedback's significance in TPD and educational outcomes. Thus, actively seeking and applying feedback is crucial for teachers to improve their effectiveness, ultimately benefiting students.

With respect to the importance of clear benchmarks in motivating student achievement, it was reported that defining clear benchmarks to motivate achievement was a common practice in secondary schools within the study area. This is consistent with various studies demonstrating the positive effects of clear benchmarks on student performance (e.g., Dweck, 2006; Wiggins & McTighe, 2018). Clear benchmarks are pivotal in motivating students to attain higher performance levels. They provide tangible goals and direction, helping students understand expectations and standards. Consequently, this fosters a sense of purpose, engages students, and drives them to excel. In conclusion, clear benchmarks are essential for motivating improved student performance. By offering direction, purpose, and accountability, benchmarks can enhance engagement, motivation, and facilitate student success.

This study highlights that while teachers struggle to provide continuous feedback, it remains essential for effective teaching and

learning. Existing research underscores its positive impact on student achievement, motivation, and engagement. Continuous feedback delivers timely insights, identifies improvement areas, and fosters a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). The Ministry of Education (2007) advocates for ongoing assessments to gauge student progress, while Hattie (2022) emphasizes the importance of specific, actionable feedback. Black and Wiliam (1998) also stress the role of formative assessment in facilitating learning. In summary, timely, specific, and constructive feedback is crucial for helping students develop skills, boost motivation, and reach their full potential.

This study highlights the importance of extracurricular activities in secondary schools in the Amhara Region, where students regularly engage in such activities. Research indicates that these activities are essential for holistic development, fostering skills, interests, and social connections. Hattie (2009) and the OECD (2019) emphasize their positive impact on student performance and comprehensive development, while UNESCO (2021) underscores their role in promoting social cohesion and active citizenship. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2021) found that involved students often achieve higher academic success and better social skills. UNICEF (2010), advocates for diverse school clubs, which enhance children's emotional and spiritual well-being, and community engagement. However, challenges like limited resources and unequal access exist. To maximize the benefits, schools must offer diverse options, ensure adequate resources, and promote

participation. Ultimately, extracurricular activities are vital for personal growth and student achievement in Ethiopian secondary schools.

The study reveals that secondary schools in the Amhara Region infrequently report student performance to parents, contrasting with research that emphasizes the importance of regular communication in education. Effective communication fosters partnerships between home and school, enhances parental involvement, and provides critical insights for families. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2012) recommends bi-semester meetings between parents and school administrators to discuss academic progress. Hattie's meta-analysis (2009) demonstrates that parental involvement significantly predicts student achievement, while Marzano and Pickering (2005) stress the need for clear communication. In summary, a communication gap exists regarding student performance between parents and schools in the Amhara Region's secondary institutions.

This study highlights a low level of continuous assessment practices among teachers in the Amhara Region's secondary schools, despite its recognized importance in enhancing student learning and achievement. Continuous assessment, a key aspect of modern educational systems including Ethiopia's, involves ongoing evaluation and feedback, which can support personalized learning. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2023) emphasizes its significance in reform initiatives. Research by Hattie (2009) and Black and Wiliam (1998) reinforce the benefits of formative

assessments linked to continuous assessment. However, challenges like the need for teacher training and equitable application in diverse classrooms hinder effective implementation. In summary, continuous assessment is a valuable tool for improving student achievement in Ethiopian secondary schools by fostering engagement and facilitating regular feedback.

5. Conclusions

This study found that the School Improvement Program in the Amhara Region's secondary schools has had varying effects on teaching and learning. While teachers communicate learning objectives effectively, follow structured planning, and provide some support for underperforming students, challenges remain. Schools lack clearly defined teaching principles and effective strategies for innovative approaches, and continuous assessment practices are weak. Additionally, feedback mechanisms are insufficient, and parental involvement in monitoring student progress is minimal. Despite efforts to address student diversity and maintain extracurricular participation, SIP has not significantly improved student achievement to the desired level. Furthermore, the low involvement of teachers in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) indicates a gap in integrating ongoing training into the educational process. Overall, while SIP has laid a foundation for improvement, further action is necessary to enhance its impact on student learning outcomes.

Limitations: Despite efforts to meet the study's objectives, limitations persist. The issues such as respondent and recall bias,

along with incomplete data, could compromise accuracy. Restricted access to school records and government databases limits the study's scope, while findings may not be generalizable to other regions with different educational contexts. Financial constraints, limited personnel, and challenges in accessing certain schools or stakeholders may further narrow the perspectives considered. Additionally, as a one-time assessment, the study cannot capture long-term trends or improvements in the educational landscape.

Future Research Directions: Future research should encompass all school levels and include personal variables, school-related constructs, policy issues, training systems, and community perspectives to thoroughly understand the problem.

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