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**Teacher as a Key Role Player to Induce Quality Education:
Challenges and Prospects of Primary Schools in Addis
Ababa**

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Teacher as a Key Role Player to Induce Quality Education: Challenges and Prospects of Primary Schools in Addis Ababa

Abstract

There is no question that Ethiopia registered an extraordinary achievement in terms of increasing student enrolment, but quality education still remains a challenge and is becoming a bottleneck for the country. The efforts made to improve quality through Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) are promising. But those changes are worse doing if due attention is not given to another important cross-cutting issues for quality education. One of such issue is creating sense of initiation among teachers or motivating teachers especially those in the disadvantaged areas is an important aspect to sustain the change. This qualitative case study therefore aimed at examining the main challenges faced by primary school teachers in Addis Ababa. To accomplish the goal of the study, two public primary schools were selected in Addis Ababa. A structured and semi structured interview was conducted with teacher participants and also an open and closed ended questionnaire was administered. From the data obtained the major challenge obtained was poor motivation and lack of commitment as result of repellent salary. It was also found that teachers spend fewer hours to classroom teaching in favor of their private work, possibly as a means of balancing their inadequate salaries. The study also revealed the existence of high quit intention from the profession. The low emphasis given by the society, student's misbehavior and the inability of the school administration to effectively address the teachers' demands for supportive and fair leadership were also found to be a challenge. Based on the findings of the study imperative implications for practice and future research were made.

Key words: *Quality education, initiation, driving force, incentive*

Introduction

There is no question that Ethiopia experienced massive improvement in access to education. Which can be taken as extraordinary achievements in terms of increasing enrolment, but education quality still remains a challenge. Enrolling children into schools alone is not an indication of quality. Ensuring that children attain the basic knowledge and skills needed for personal well-being and national development is much better. In successive national learning assessments conducted by the National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency (NEAEA, 2014), achievement of students is still low and also declining. But, slight improvement was registered in the assessment of 2014.

The efforts made to improve quality through Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP I- IV) are promising. The plan focused mainly on improving quality, equity, relevance and efficiency of primary education, improving curriculum by introducing Civics and Ethical education, expanding the opportunities for enrolment in primary education, improving students' achievement, creating a good work environment through improving school administration and creating child-friendly learning environment. Currently, the document (ESDP-V) speculates that the education sector mainly focus on advancing science and technology, access and equity in early childhood, expansion of higher education. The integration of Information communication Technology (ICT) in education raised in ESDP-IV was left behind, though ICT is the current growing body of source of information. The overall plan is associated with similar rolled down objectives and issues from the past. To this end it can be inferred that instead of looking different aspects of the education sector, similar circular issues are targeted and demanded by the government, though there are notable improvements and features.

Observed progress of the past ESDP include: expansion of higher education, expansion of primary and secondary education; because of this an increased enrollment at all levels was registered. The certificate level of teacher qualification and teacher training at private levels were brought to an end and so the minimum teacher qualification becomes three year training at college level, revision of curriculum materials. However, the sector is still compromised of quality issues, since students achievement in successive national learning assessment is below

average and they failed to achieve basic skills needed for the next level and for the world of work.

The study conducted by the Institute of Education Research of Addis Ababa University in selected schools of four regional states revealed that the quality of primary education is declining. The research, presented by the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, on December 27, 2012 at Semen Hotel stated that the majority of primary students scored below the minimum 50% expected for all subjects. Some of the factors that the study identified are: poor implementation of active learning method, lack of effective monitoring and evaluation practices, low students interest to learn and lack of motivation among teachers (Ethiopian academy of science, 2012). These situations directly urge to identify the core factors for this poor achievement and devastating condition. Particularly, the present study focused on teacher factor. The study investigated the challenges faced by primary school teachers of Addis Ababa for possible implication and consideration in the upcoming plan.

A teacher is one of the valuable assets for quality education. Development of any country depends on its educational system that is the quality of its graduates, so teachers are the nation builders. The role of a teacher cannot be ignored in the process of development and success in one country. Teaching is a profession that has low emphasis but teachers have a great role in their students' intellectual, personal and social development, there by influencing the whole nation's development. Teachers can have an influence more profound than others and give the glorious position and dignified status to the nation (Imrab, et al., 2013). On the other hand Troudi (2011) argues that teaching is about passion, love of education and learning, inspiration, concern, consideration of the other, dedication to trusting students, belief in the power of knowledge and a non-stop attempt to make a difference to the lives of others. A motivated teacher is recognized by high level of commitment, hard work, devotion, dedication and becomes a source of inspiration through his or her exemplary character (Imrab, et al., 2013).

According to the report of Centre for British Teachers in 2008, it was found that the education system in Ethiopia, at all levels is confronted by a lack of quality. Policy makers themselves and other stakeholders also portray the lack of quality in the education system. This is confirmed by the state itself on the debate with political parties (EBC, 2015). Thus, an intensive reform is needed to improve the efficiency and quality of education system of Ethiopia. The lack of quality

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in the education system in Ethiopia is associated with many factors including the poor standard of those entering the teaching profession, high teacher turnover and problems such as demotivation, poor quality of the teachers' working environment, low status of teachers, inadequate salaries (Centre for British Teachers, 2008: Voluntary Services Overseas, 2010: Workneh & Tassew, 2013: Gedefaw, 2012).

Access, attainment of basic knowledge, sufficient and efficient training of teachers, inspired teachers, good learning environment; students' engagement is all indicators of quality education. Though quality have varied definitions, without loss of generality it can be taken as a change in the education sector. This refers to the empowerment of the learner as whole, which is the attainment of basic knowledge and skills needed for personal well-being and national development. Students come to school with little or no knowledge and then they acquire knowledge and skills that can be used to adapt to the changing environment. Hence there is transformation or change. If students fail to adapt to the changing environment and to solve problems of the society at large then quality is not achieved.

The government tries to tackle the problem by introducing new textbooks, assessment techniques and teacher development program, school improvement program, expansion, etc. It was also believed that the progress on teacher development is satisfactory in terms of increasing proportion of qualified teachers; upgrading primary teachers from certificate to diploma. The following figure shows composite scores obtained in national assessment of student achievement in grade 4 and grade 8 from the year 2000 to 2011:

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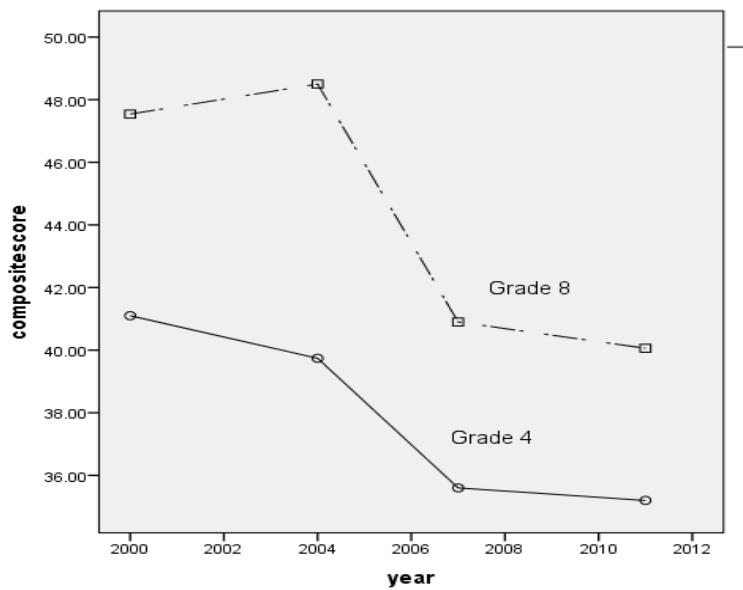


Fig1: Composite scores obtained in national assessment of student achievement in grade 4 and grade 8 from the year 200 to 2011[adapted from Girma, 2013]

The figure shows a striking decrease in achievement of students depicting that improving learning achievements still remains challenging, though many measures are taken using ESDP. Many educators feel that the decrease is more critical than the above report. To this end, there is a big question that should be addressed: why does the problem persist? Does it mean that the measures are ineffective to alleviate the existing problems? The following paragraph deals with these questions.

It is believed that quality is not only about upgrading qualification of teachers and increasing enrolment. It is about producing nationally and internationally competent and disciplined man power that can solve problems which is the goal of education. The measures taken by the government through ESDP can be taken as a driving force to initiate the required change. However, those measures alone do not produce a change. Hence there should also be an effort to reduce the offensive forces that prevent the change to be initiated. Therefore, another important cross-cutting issue to initiate and sustain change is to establish sense of initiation among teacher or motivating teachers especially those in the disadvantaged areas. In this context, disadvantaged areas include not only hot areas and emergency post, but also Places like Addis Ababa where life is so expensive.

The study conducted by EGRA showed that students are not equipped with the necessary numeracy and reading skill at primary schools, and that there is a considerable challenge to meet the quality and standard of education at the primary level. Primary schools are foundations for secondary and tertiary level. If there is a gap in primary schools this gap will proceed to the next level which leads for the loss of productive man power of the country. Thus there is a need to investigate contributing factors for the decline of quality of primary education in the country.

Though there are many factors that contribute for quality education, teachers take the leading role. Imrab, et al (2013) argued that teachers have a profound influence than any other body in the education system. Similarly, Kayuni & Tambulasi (2007), and Troudi (2011) confirmed the negative effect of low motivation of teachers on students learning. However, to alleviate the problem, there is a need to investigate and understand the existing challenge to help policy makers take plausible interventions. This study therefore was directed towards identifying the challenges of primary school teachers and to come up with notable prospects for quality education by gathering in-depth data from teacher participants.

Guiding Research Questions

The guiding research questions of the study were:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers at primary schools in Addis Ababa town?
2. How should the problem be improved from participants' point of view?
3. Is there a commitment in the teaching profession?
4. Do primary schools in Addis Ababa provide a transparent structure to support the learning process from teachers' perspective?

Research Methodology

Since this research requires a fresh and rich description of the challenges faced by teachers', a phenomenological study design was used to achieve my goal. Louis, Lawrence & Keith (2007), confirmed that this methodology allows the researcher to understand human and social behavior from the insider's perspective and thus gain firsthand information about the perception of the participant. A structured and semi structured interview and non-participatory observation was

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used as a primary source of data for this research. The goal of my observation is to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon of teachers in line with the purpose of the study.

Non-participant observation involves observing participants without actively participating. This option is used to understand a phenomenon by entering the community or social system involved, while staying separate from the activities being observed (Flick, 2006). I use this type of observation because of natural phenomena in which I cannot place myself as a primary school teacher. It also allows the researcher to be open to discover inductively how the participants understand the setting (Patton, 1980).

Convenience sampling was used to select teacher participants. This is to mean that available teachers those who were close at hand and were willing to participate were interviewed. I continued to select teacher participants according to the findings that emerge in the progress of the study and I considered and examined extreme views or contrasting views. I persist doing this until saturation has been achieved or redundancies occur. This notion is called theoretical sampling (Brink, 1993). Accordingly, 15 teachers were interviewed. Two school principals were also interviewed to examine contrasting ideas from teacher participants. To have initial concept for deep investigation during interview, a questionnaire containing open ended and closed ended question were administered for 32 teachers including those participated in the interview.

Data Analysis

Interview data that are audio-recorded was transcribed and checked by participants themselves and by outsiders (colleagues). After the interview data have been transcribed then the data was categorized in various ways. Closed ended questions in the questionnaire were reported by tables and percentages, while open ended questions were thematically narrated by combining with the data obtained from the interview and observation.

Ethical Considerations

In any research, the researcher needs to consider the ethical and political issues in asking a particular research question (Yvonne & Dorothy, 2002). Therefore, in this research project I considered informed consent and confidentiality as an ethical issue to protect my participants' identity. The aims of the study were briefly explained to all participants and they agreed to

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participate on the study. Participants were also informed that there is no harm whether they agree to participate in the research or not. They were also informed that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time. During the interview, tape recording was made only when the participant agrees to be recorded. All participants agree to be anonymous, and so particular school/sub city was not mentioned in the overall report of this study.

Trustworthiness and Dependability

According to Guba & Lincoln (1985), the basic question addressed in qualitative research is "How can an inquirer convince his/her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" Trustworthiness is defined as the conceptual soundness of the research results and is influenced by the notions of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Naturally, the very presence of the researcher affects the validity of the data provided by participants. Because, when a new member is introduced into the community being studied, reactive effects can occur (Brink, 1993). Participants may also behave abnormally and distort some information. So to tackle this issue, I tried to stay with my participants' for extended period of time and create a sense of trust. Moreover, I conducted repeated interviews at different times and in different settings and take detailed field note to examine the variations in responses over the course of time and then I compared results.

To allow my audiences assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed and pose their own generalization to their particular context, I thoroughly described the procedures from the beginning to the end, which ensures dependability. Credibility on the other hand is about the congruency of the findings with reality and so ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. To ensure this I used different data collection methods such as observation and individual interviews as well as open and closed ended questionnaire.

Findings and Discussions

The thematic data analyses generated four themes regarding the challenges faced by primary school teachers of Addis Ababa. These themes included: issues related to salary and benefits, administration, students' misbehavior and societal view of the teaching profession.

Salary and Benefit

Of all the challenges facing primary school teachers in Addis Ababa, inadequate pay is the highest in their mind and some of my respondents feel nervous when talking about their salary. One respondent claimed that “*I hate the profession since it does not change my life, regardless of its importance we are living under poverty so how can we teach?...*” The salary paid to teachers is not large enough to support their family. This issue is found to be the most challenging factor. Currently, teachers report that there are allowances paid for housing and public transport (for free), and they claimed the absence of facilities for loans or grants or medical insurance. One of the interviewee states that “*the house allowance we receive does not cover the house rent we require, and we are unable to meet the current market situation*” The following table shows views of teachers about their profession and salary:

Table 1: Teachers view about their profession and salary

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Do you think that you are satisfied with teaching profession?	32.3	67.7	100
If you are free to choose, would you prefer to discontinue in your profession?	84.3	15.7	100
Is your salary sufficient to meet the financial needs of your family?	0	100	100

As shown in the above table all respondents are not satisfied with their salary and so they claim for the improvement. Similarly, there is a high quit intension, revealing that the current status of the profession is on crisis, only aged teachers prefer to stay in the profession if they are free to choose. One of my respondents put his reason for leaving the profession if he is free to do so, “*...everybody knows the reason even you know it very well, but mine is for the sake of survival*”. And the other says “*the only challenge is the low amount of salary and this forced me to leave the profession*”. The respondents also recognized that the existence of few opportunities to get additional income by tutoring. But it was found that majority of teachers’ doesn’t have any source of additional income other than their regular income (salary). But it was

impossible to find teachers in the school compound after they finish their duty in the classroom, they leave the school immediately.

School Administration

Teacher participants raised the issue of a lack of good governance in their school. This is related in particular access to training and workshops and that there was little transparency about how these choices were made. Of the respondents 65.6% report that the school has limitations in communicating policies and procedures of selection to different training and workshops. This is also another challenging factor for teachers, because how teachers are managed and supported is of fundamental importance for effectiveness. One of my participants stated as follows to mention the status of administration in the school system:

...The school administration is not focused on and accountable for what matters to the primary stakeholders, their focus is simply to meet the political needs of the ruling party and also they are appointed to do so by the top down process.

This shows that they have no voice about the appointment of their leaders. This type of practice may affect teachers' mentality and readiness. The following table shows teachers view on the administrative support and reward system:

Table 2: Teachers view on the administrative support and reward system

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Is there any reward given for academic staff for those showing good performance?	50	50	100
Do you think that your school administrators appreciate your participation in decision making?	34.8	65.2	100
Do you feel that your administration is best in communicating its policies and procedures?	34.4	65.6	100
Do you feel there are tight rules and regulations in your school which demotivate teachers?	71.8	28.2	100

Students' Misbehavior

Respondents mention students' misbehavior as a challenge for the learning process. One of the respondent states that “...*what is disgusting about my profession other than salary is: high work load and students' misbehavior*”. Student misbehaviors such as disruptive talking in the classroom, avoidance of academic work, disrespect of teachers and rudeness were observed and reported by teacher participants. Students' misbehaviors in schools affect the smoothness and effectiveness of the learning process. This is a point of departure for teacher respondents to agree with the decline of students' achievement. The other respondent stated as follows to underline the decline in achievement of students over time. “...*currently, almost all students' are low achievers and have low interest to learn*”.

Societal View of the Profession

Respondents mention the low emphasis given by the society, as another aspect of a challenge for the profession. One of the respondent states that, “*in the eyes of the society the profession is undervalued.*” Another respondent mentions the following to highlight the low emphasis given by the society:

Around 20 years ago teachers were respected by the society and the government. The communities were proud to give their daughters to teachers as a wife. They sung by saying መሽሪት ኩሪ ኩሪ ወሰደሽ አስተማሪ claiming that she is lucky to marry a teacher. But now this thing is reverted negatively as ባጣ ባጣ አስተማሪ አላጣ. Revealing that teacher is the lowest option in the females mind.

This shows that a teacher is the lowest option to be married by Ethiopian ladies; hence it may affect the social interaction of a teacher.

Discussion of the Findings

Though issues related to salary and benefits were taken as a challenging situation for teachers, respondents believe that their role is important and they highlight the opportunity they get for their personal development in the teaching profession. However, teachers' does not have any motivation to join the profession; they joined because of lack of opportunity for other professions. This shows that when they join the profession, these teachers have low motivation

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because of the low emphasis given to the profession and the low salary. Among the respondents of this study, 93.7% percent of the respondents claimed that they joined the profession without their choice. The remaining 6.3% reported that it is their first choice.

The positive thing that teachers have was that they believe that being a teacher is being a father for all professions. One respondent for instance claimed that ***“a teacher produces human power not an object and producing skilled man power is the best ever satisfying thing”*** The respondents mentioned that teaching is the main source to every other profession and they can be happy and satisfied by seeing the success of their students’. One of the respondents feels as follows:

I feel happy in building future generation and what is more satisfying is when I see my students’ achievements in their work places. Teaching is also the only profession that leads you to upgrade and update your knowledge in line with the changing environment.

It is also found that they have high commitment to teach and contribute to their country and the society, provided that the question for survival is assured. Regardless of these views, most of them reported that they want to shift to other profession. The foremost reason to do so was found to be salary issue.

All respondents report that they joined the profession because of their relatively low result they have as compared to their peers and hence they have no other option. One of the respondent claimed that ***“...the only job I get at that time was teaching and so I joined since I have no choice”***. This shows that less competitive candidates are joining the teaching profession.

Regarding motivation, Maslow (1943, cited in Saul, 2007) stated that peoples need to be motivated to achieve certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfill the next one, and so on. The most widespread version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels. These are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs and self actualization. However, the above Maslow's five stage model currently has been expanded to include cognitive need, aesthetic needs and transcendence needs (Saul, 2007). Cognitive needs include knowledge, meaning, etc. Aesthetic needs include appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc. Transcendence needs include helping others to achieve self-actualization.

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Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs adopted from Saul (2007)

Physiological needs consists of the need for basic biological needs which includes the need for food, water, air and other primary needs such as shelter, warmth, clothing, etc. When the physiological needs are not satisfied, no other need will serve as a basis for motivation. Once they are satisfied, then newer needs emerge. Considering this as a baseline when we see primary school teachers particularly in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), it is evident that teachers are striving to fulfill their physiological needs. The current house rent in Addis Ababa ranges from 900 to 3000 according to the distance from the center, the size and quality of the house. Teachers are suffering of these problems, they are unable to fulfill their basic need which intern affect their commitment to the profession and leads to perform poorly.

From Abraham Maslow's perspective, their motivation lies at the bottom of the hierarchy. In this stage peoples are motivated to fulfill the physiological needs such as food, water, air and other primary needs such as shelter, clothing, etc. However, as a teacher, they need to prepare themselves for teaching and assist students in different ways, but their mind is busy and depressed of the way they are living, thus they probably unable to give emphasis for the learning process. This leads students to become dependent and less competitive which in turn mean gradual decline of the quality education system in general. Thus, basic needs must be met before teachers can be motivated to fulfill their higher-order needs of self-actualization and professional

goal attainment. Similarly, Peretomode (1991) asserted that dissatisfaction negatively influence workers efficiency, productivity and performance in the school; whereby satisfaction influence workers achievement and possibility of personal growth. That is, when the motivational factors are present and applied in a positive direction in a job situation, teachers will experience the feeling of satisfaction but if absent they will experience dissatisfaction.

Generally, the result of the study speculates that though teachers are intrinsically motivated, the poor extrinsic motivation is affecting the overall performance and this situation affects quality of education and future generation. I believe that teacher should have good motivation to work if at least they met the safety needs. Because it is at this stage that they feel they are living, secured and the need for serving the society arises.

Possible Solutions from Teachers Perspectives

From teachers point of view, strategic measures to be taken to enhance both job satisfaction and motivation was found to be the improvement of salary and the provision of good governance. Additionally, respondents mention the provision of allowances, health facility and housing. Teacher respondents agree that the existing poor motivation affects their efficiency and thereby, badly affecting students' performance or learning outcome. For instance, one of the respondents says

Almost all students' are low achievers and have low interest to learn .To resolve all this problems and impose quality into the education system there should be a political will and commitment to address the problem.

Though improving salary of teachers is not the only means to address the problem, it was found that the current situation is not letting teachers to use their maximum effort. There was a high turnover and quit intention which affect the effectiveness of schools (Tariq, 2013). It was also found that low achieving students are joining the profession with no interest to continue in the profession and so manifest low level commitment. Hence, this situation urges for plausible intervention in terms of improving the lives of teachers and recruitment and selection criteria, endorsing good governance, fostering professional ethics, strengthening teacher training institutions to instill teachers' competence in terms of pedagogical, content and technological knowledge.

Conclusions and Implication

Salaries of teacher are found to be the most challenging situation. There is a mismatch between the salary and living cost, and that teachers were unable to cover all their basic needs up to the end of every month. Salary and benefits are extrinsic factors associated with the environment. The fulfillment of these factors is a requirement for the intrinsic aspects of the work factors to prevail (Gedefaw, 2012). Teachers were dissatisfied with the extrinsic aspects of their work. They also showed dissatisfaction with the absence of good governance. The school administration was found to be weak in effectively addressing the teachers' demands for supportive and fair leadership. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the administrative support practices prevailing in the schools, which relates to the fairness, transparency and student disciplinary problems.

Teacher respondents found the intrinsic tasks associated with teaching a satisfying aspect of their work. Teachers were happy with the responsibilities associated with teaching (production of human capital). The teachers' greatest satisfaction was related to the emotional rewards of teaching; such as the opportunity to use their skills at school, their view that their teaching developed the human beings and their contribution to the development of their country.

The findings of this study have the potential to add value to educators as well as those who are interested in furthering the research in more detailed way. The detailed findings from this study might provide current information to policy makers and practitioners on which areas to target to improve teachers' satisfaction. Based on the aforementioned discussion and conclusion, the following implications were forwarded for practice:

- ✚ Since teachers were highly dissatisfied with their salaries, the government of Ethiopia and education leaders needs to understand the issue and work for its improvement. This will improve motivation of teachers' and effectiveness, and in the end it might contribute for the overall quality in the education system.
- ✚ The education bureau must work towards the implementation of issues raised in ESD-V, which is "to transform teaching into the profession of choice based on the needs of teachers". Apart from the results of this study, conducting need assessment will be beneficiary in this regard.

- ✚ Teachers association needs to work hard to create commitment of teachers to the profession.
- ✚ There is a need to provide housing and free health facilities for teachers to meet their basic needs in such a way that they feel they are favored for being in the profession.
- ✚ Enhancement of full salary during retirement might also help to sustain and attract teachers.
- ✚ The school principals, need to take time with teachers to listen to their thoughts, aspiration and complaints and take a positive measure.
- ✚ Fulfilling the basic needs and safety needs such as job security, financial reserve, medical insurance and housing should be the core focus to sustain and motivate teachers; however, trying to create community awareness, campaigns, recognition is a strategy which is doomed. Because, social status should not be achieved without meeting the lower physiological and safety needs. The social status will rise for its own sake if the safety need is achieved.
- ✚ Provide merit-based scholarships in such a way that teachers can upgrade their credentials and make the selection fair and clear.
- ✚ The practice of appointing school principals needs revision so as to consider the voices of teachers in the appointment process.
- ✚ Create a well-furnished staff room for teachers to hold staff meetings, work together, and socialize.
- ✚ This study provides information about challenges faced by teachers in Addis Ababa primary schools. Using the same methodology it is recommended that this study be repeated in other parts of the country.
- ✚ This study focused on primary school teachers. Similar studies could be done on secondary school teachers in Ethiopia.

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