

## A Study of the Accountability of Policymakers and Curriculum Implementers for Curriculum Implementation in Ethiopian Primary Schools

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### Abstract

This study aimed to explore the top-down or compact accountability relationship for curriculum implementation in rural public primary schools in the East Wollega zone administration, Ethiopia. An exploratory case study type and a multiple case study research design were employed. A purposeful sampling technique was used. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews and document reviews. The data were analyzed qualitatively by coding and describing patterns and themes in the raw data. The study utilized triangulation, expert reviews, and member checking to ensure internal validity and reliability. The findings of the study reveal that the compact accountability relationship between the policymakers and the curriculum implementers was loosely exercised and compromised by main determinants such as weak capacity, poor monitoring progress, and politicization of the policymakers' roles and responsibilities. This study also affirms that a compact accountability relationship was seriously operational to collect easily achievable reports, which led policymakers to be unsuccessful in communicating their clear duties and responsibilities for the curriculum implementation to hold implementers accountable as stated in the government proclamation. Hence, it can be concluded that accountability stands for responsibilities outside the classroom by missing the actual curriculum implementation. The study recommends that the regional education bureau, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, establish an autonomous and independent policymakers' office that acts as an overseer and holds curriculum implementers accountable by visiting schools, pointing out mistakes, writing reports, and exercising accountability mechanisms. The study suggests that teachers and school principals ought to be held accountable for their particular duties and responsibilities instead of producing reports for higher-level commands that take them away from effectively implementing the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Compact, Curriculum implementation, Primary schools

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## Introduction

Primary education is universally accepted as the foundational level of education in all nations of the world. It provides students with a basic understanding of various subjects as well as the skills they will use throughout their lives (Rubio, 2024). In Ethiopia, the primary education (grades 1–8) curriculum is aimed at effectively addressing the needs of both society and the individual, bearing in mind the crucial issues of poverty reduction (MoE, 2009). Yet it is important to note that primary schools have been faced with a myriad of problems in implementing the curriculum. In this case, flawed education administrative procedures, a lack of a clear accountability system, politicized employment, and defective controlling mechanisms are considered the main problems for the effective implementation of the curriculum (Teferra et al., 2018). The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia issued educational reforms based on policy documents entitled Education and Training Policy in 1994 that called for accountability with greater community engagement and the involvement of policymakers and curriculum implementers (teachers and school principals) in curriculum implementation (MoE, 1994, 2002) to strengthen a compact or bureaucratic accountability relationship. In the context of this study, accountability is concerned with proper behavior, and it deals with the responsibilities of individuals and organizations for their actions toward other people and agencies (Levitt et al., 2008).

The compact or bureaucratic accountability relationship is the accountability that connects policymakers to school curriculum implementers (MoE, 2002; WDR, 2004). When applied to the Ethiopian context, it is the broad relationship connecting regional policymakers of the primary education system with the school curriculum implementers, teachers, and school principals (MoE, 2002). This ensures that there is alignment between the policies set by policymakers and the actions taken by those responsible for implementing the curriculum in schools. Strengthening public primary school education for better implementation of the curriculum requires coordinating compact accountability relationships. In this case, curriculum implementers agree to implement the curriculum as intended in return for being rewarded or penalized depending on performance. Thus, they should be structurally accountable to the policymakers for performing their duties (Pritchett, 2015). This accountability structure helps to ensure that there is consistency and coherence in how the curriculum is implemented across different schools. Through this accountability relationship, policymakers and school curriculum implementers should create an environment in which all schools have the means to provide high-quality curricula for their students. Since policymakers are the developers of the curriculum framework, they should generate information about the performance of schools' curriculum implementation and apply accountability measures (rewards and sanctions) to satisfy the needs of students (MoE, 2002; Pritchett, 2015). Thus, a compact accountability relationship (top-down from the regional education bureau to the primary schools) stands for how well and how the responsibilities of curriculum implementers and the objectives of curricula are communicated to the students. Curriculum Implementation (CI) is a process of translating the effective components of official government curriculum documents (textbooks, syllabi, and teachers' guides) into classroom practices as intended (Fullan, 1999).

Policymakers have the authority to oversee, monitor, and use enforceability approaches for the implementation of the school curriculum. Enforceability comes into play when the compact also specifies the rewards (and possibly the penalties) that depend on the curriculum implementers' behaviors and actions (WDR, 2004). As an element of the vertical form of accountability, a compact accountability relationship can be linked to rewarding good behavior and punishing unacceptable behavior (Pritchett, 2015; WDR, 2004). This will lead policymakers to make sure that the curriculum is effectively implemented by using compact relations to monitor and exercise accountability measures over the curriculum implementers to hold them accountable by evaluating their performances (MoE, 2002). According to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, if curriculum implementers fail to discharge their responsibilities, policymakers are expected to hold them accountable for improving the implementation of the curriculum, from simple disciplinary penalties (oral warning, written warning, and fines up to one month's salary) to rigorous disciplinary penalties (fines of up to three months' salary, downgrading, and dismissal) to improve the quality of curriculum implementation (Proclamation, 2002).

Even though the accountability movement has helped to make school performance more transparent (Fullan, 2000), public opinion generally considers public education to still be in crisis (Fowler, 2009) and failing to meet today's challenges in the implementation of curriculum (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010). When implementing school curricula to meet the needs of students, primary schools in Ethiopia have encountered several problems. One of the major issues with curriculum implementation is that stakeholders (such as policymakers and curriculum implementers) have limited commitment to carrying out their duties. A report on the curriculum's implementation by Areaya (2006) provides evidence to support this. One of the challenges in implementing the curriculum is the incompatibility of accountability arrangements among school stakeholders in Sub-Saharan Africa and Ethiopia in particular.

A large-scale study in Ethiopia also indicates that primary schools continue to face crises in curriculum implementation (Hoddinott et al., 2019). These crisis narratives about the lack of students' engagement in the

curriculum in primary schools have gained traction recently. Essentially, in the context of the study area, the achievement results of students who completed primary school and took the regional exam for boarding secondary schools administered by the Oromia Development Association (ODA), which invites students to compute following primary school promotion in the east Wollega Zone, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of students who completed grade 8, sat for the regional exam and were promoted to boarding secondary school in East Wollega Zone

Academic Years	Number of students who sat for the exam	Number of students who prompted
2020	98	4
2019	121	7
2018	11	3
2017	630	15
2016	167	6
Total	1027	35

The data for Table 1 comes from the regional exam results filed by students for the 2016–2020 academic years in the ODA office's East Wollega zone (unpublished documents).

A compact accountability relationship between policymakers and implementers can be established for effective curriculum implementation and, ultimately, better educational outcomes for students. Nevertheless, as can be seen from Table 1, out of a total of 1027 students who sat for the national exam for consecutive five years, only 35 (3.41%) students were promoted to boarding secondary schools. This directly shows that curriculum implementation in primary schools in the East Wollega Zone had a serious gap in exercising compact accountability relationships, most probably between policymakers and school curriculum implementers. We argued that weak monitoring functions between policymakers and implementers may cause the continuous failure of students in regional exams. Nonetheless, compact accountability interventions for curriculum implementation can improve learning outcomes by fostering a strong relationship between curriculum policymakers and school implementers (Komba, 2017; Pritchett, 2015). This was found to be an unsolved problem from time to time, which motivated us to conduct this study. Therefore, this study aims to explore the compact accountability relationship between policymakers and curriculum implementers for curriculum implementation. Specifically, the study targeted:

1. Determine how to hold curriculum implementers accountable through a close accountability connection with policymakers.
2. Explore the nature of the compact accountability relationship for which policymakers primarily hold curriculum implementers accountable.

### Literature Review

In the 21st century, the widespread interest in accountability is reflected in research, where the use of the term increased tenfold in studies published between 1965 and 2000 (Dubnick, 2014; Dubnick & Frederickson, 2014). At the same time, research-driven fuels are of paramount importance to strengthening accountability in the education system, and they are not a recent phenomenon in developed countries. Taking that into consideration, the development among education researchers on the implementation of accountability for school effectiveness and improvement has demonstrated that schools and teachers make a difference. It was argued that the development and implementation of strong accountability systems have been one powerful, perhaps the most powerful, trend in education policy in the UK, USA, and many other countries, including Holland, Australia, Canada, Sweden, and Russia (Barber, 2005). To develop comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems, systems may need to generate sound evidence for policy formulation and the management of education systems, as well as ensure accountability (Forum, 2015). In general, according to Chiang (2009), accountability policies and relationships have a significant effect on the pedagogical and curricular decisions and practices that take place in schools.

The literature review of this study is mainly focused on the 2004 World Development Report's accountability relationship, which explains the compact accountability relationships between policymakers and curriculum implementers (WDR, 2004). This is because the report builds the structural and practical accountability relationships of top-down approaches between policymakers and the implementers of the curriculum for using resources and enforcements to implement the curriculum effectively. Moreover, it proposes a key conceptual

construct of relationships of accountability and a particular conceptual educational structure of school curriculum implementers and regional policymakers (MoE, 2002; Pritchett, 2015; WDR, 2003, 2004). Indeed, in the education system, curriculum implementers do not work in isolation from government policymakers' decisions. Arguably, this accountability relationship is the most influential and advanced, and it emphasizes the importance of public school curriculum implementation responding to the demands of local curriculum users, and advocating for greater control and accountability (Pritchett, 2015; WDR, 2004). Although the relationship has four accountability relationships: voice, compact, power, and management, this study primarily focused on compact, which includes policymakers who have oversight authority over curriculum implementers through compact accountability relationships. Policymakers provide continuous professional development opportunities for implementers to enhance their knowledge and skills related to curriculum implementation. This can include workshops, training programs, conferences, or online resources. In Ethiopia, policymakers have the right to carry out the majority of educational activities, including curriculum implementation (MoE, 2002). Due to this reason, we used compact accountability relationships between policymakers and curriculum implementers. Accountability relationships can be verified through information (formal reporting, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation). Thus, policymakers anticipated that a substantial and strong monitoring function would be used to generate information about the performance of curriculum implementers (MoE, 2002; WDR, 2004).

This accountability relationship, which highlights the significance of public school curriculum implementation and advocacy for increased control and accountability (MoE, 2002; WDR, 2004), is arguably the most influential and advanced. On the other side, there is a continuum of accountability that runs from strong to weak. A strong, compact accountability relationship would have external actors with significant influence, transparent, high-quality communications, and reasonable judgment. A weak, compact accountability relationship, on the other hand, would result in poor communication, poor outside influence, frequent ambiguity, and bad decision-making (O'Loughlin, 1990). However, according to Gonzalez and Firestone (2013), subordinate employees are accountable for adhering to work rules and directives, with rules determining relationships and accounting for subordinates or routine responsibilities. Compliance with rules, supervision, and rewards or punishment are key concepts in accountability measures.

However, political or technical procedures that shift the school's focus away from the implementation of the curriculum as planned may be the reason why the compact accountability relationship is not working (WDR, 2004, 2018). A compact accountability relationship is unclear and frequently fails in various countries' education systems (Di Gropello, 2004; Komba, 2017). There is no compact in failed or failing nations since the state's level of control is so low (such states are referred to as low-income countries under stress). This occurs when nations are engulfed in protracted civil wars or when sizable portions of the nation are out of the government's control (WDR, 2018). The cooperative relationship between state policymakers and public school curriculum implementers is frequently incredibly weak when it comes to implementing curricula, even in working states (WDR, 2004). According to Di Gropello (2004) and Pritchett (2015), successful accountability requires clear goals, effective monitoring mechanisms, enforcement mechanisms, adequate resources, and stakeholder engagement. If any of these elements were lacking in the compact accountability framework, it likely failed to achieve its intended outcomes.

The assumption is that, for example, strengthening compact accountability relationships in primary schools leads to close relationships between policymakers and implementers to hold curriculum implementers accountable for better implementation of curriculum (Komba, 2017; MoE, 2002; WDR, 2004). This accountability relationship is important in the primary education system because it helps to ensure students' engagement in curricula by holding curriculum implementers accountable for their performance. As a result, this relationship has significant ramifications for its potential to be an efficient remedy for improved primary school classroom curriculum execution through a close and compact accountability relationship. This accountability relationship consequently has important implications for its potential to initiate and force the curriculum implementers in the right direction through ongoing and close oversight.

## Methods

### Research Design and Approaches

In this study, a multiple case study design was employed to provide in-depth insight into how the compact accountability relationship has been exercised for better curriculum implementation and for what this relationship is primarily operational to hold curriculum implementers accountable (Yin, 2003). It is important to note that case study techniques are suitable because of their ability to accurately represent the views of respondents under investigation for effective reconstruction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2011). According to various scholars, interpretivists use qualitative methods to understand social phenomena directly from the perspectives of social

actors (Miles et al., 2014; Punch, 2013). Thus, a qualitative research approach that follows constructionism was adopted for this research because we needed to view the accountability of policymakers and curriculum implementers for curriculum implementation in primary school systems as existing in the minds of education stakeholders within the system and as best understood when interpreted from their perspective.

### **Samples and Sampling Techniques**

According to Martella et al. (2013), purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of particular people, events, or settings for the significant information they provide. Hence, it was used in the study to choose the study locations and the participants. Among the 19 zones of the Oromia regional state, the East Wollega zone was purposefully selected because it consistently underperforms in promoting eighth-grade students to Oromia Development Association (ODA) boarding secondary schools, as indicated in the statement of the problem. According to the data from the zone education office, the zone has 644 primary schools. At the time of data collection, more than 350 primary schools were closed due to internal political conflict in the zone. Because of the instability and war-related displacement in the area, three primary schools from three relatively peaceful districts within the zone were selected as the research sites for this case study. Three policymakers were selected from the regional education bureau for their expertise, educational structural position, and top-down accountability relationship with curriculum implementers, teachers, and school principals. School principals act as teachers and principals because they have teaching loads. Three school principals, one from each respective school, were selected based on their positions. Six teachers, two from each school, were chosen based on their teaching experience. This is because, since 2002, primary schools have been managed by the same guideline. Choosing teachers with long experience—more than 20 years—is essential to getting reasonable information.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The instruments used to collect data in this study were interviews and document reviews. These data sources allowed for triangulation through substantive and in-depth data (Cohen et al., 2007) and helped to enhance data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003).

#### *Semi-structured interviews*

Interview questions serve as the major data collection tool for this study. Individual interviews provide us with access to detailed, individualized information. Because of this, we developed and employed a semi-structured interview approach with respondents for this study as key information. It was assumed that these interviewees would provide authentic information related to the study's subject. All interviewees were available and volunteered for a tape recorder, which led us to productive methods of data collection. The interviews ranged from 50 to 65 minutes. All interviews were conducted in "Afaan Oromoo." This is due to it being the medium of instruction in primary schools and the mother tongue of the respondents. Then, all recorded interviews were transcribed into the English language to allow for analysis. Nine people in total participated in the interview process: six teachers, three policymakers, and three principals of schools.

#### *Documents*

Document reviews from sampled schools' and the zone ODA office's annual reports from the 2016–2020 academic years, education guidelines, and the Ethiopian government's education proclamation were used to gather the necessary information to triangulate with the interview evidence. This is because there are education policies and school management guidelines that indicate the duties and responsibilities of education for stakeholders, with particular reference to the implementation of the school curriculum. It is also of paramount importance to compare and contrast Ethiopian education policies and guidelines with the current views and practices of the global educational accountability system.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

After the data presentation was finished, we moved on to thematic data analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions in this study. It is the way to find, examine, group, describe, and present themes that are present in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the sake of data analysis, we used color coding. Teachers were coded as Teacher One (T1) and T6 for data analysis, school principals as School Principal One (SP1), SP2, and SP3, and policymakers as Policymakers One (PM1), PM2, and PM3. The data were analyzed manually by discovering repeated patterns in the data set.

## Results

In a top-down accountability relationship for school curriculum implementation, the responsibility for ensuring that the curriculum is effectively implemented lies with the regional policymakers within the primary education system. They should monitor progress toward meeting curriculum implementation goals by conducting regular evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum being implemented. Under this sub-section, the accountability of policymakers and curriculum implementation are expected to address their professional responsibilities. Nevertheless, the major themes identified during the interview process were student-related and school facility reports, politicized responsibility, accountability enforcement, and measures. By respecting their obligations and responsibilities outlined in the proclamation and education management guidelines, policymakers must also assess how well the curriculum is being implemented and take corrective action (MoE, 2002).

As explained by policymakers, their roles and ways of using enforcement mechanisms to hold curriculum implementers accountable for curriculum implementation are essentially devoted to the distribution of students' books. In this regard, all the policymakers (PM1, PM2, and PM3) explained a similar argument:

“To provide for the school, policymakers obtain textbooks for the pupils, teacher's manuals, and other instructional resources from the zone education offices. Policymakers also force them to provide such books on schedule. Policymakers also advise individuals to use those books responsibly until the new curriculum is adopted. Policymakers are also eager to gather information on textbook requirements for schools, which must then be submitted to the appropriate authorities. This is the initial mechanism to hold schools accountable.”

The concern about the compact accountability relationship is highly focused on collecting school test scores. Ethiopian primary school students have no trend to participate in international tests. Therefore, tests and exams are not standardized and are prepared by school teachers. School curriculum implementers were forced to be ranked by promotion rate and the improved school-wide students' average scores. Hence, policymakers highlighted that:

“Policymakers collect the data from schools on students' results, and individual schools are held accountable through the mechanism for students' test scores. Students did not attend international assessment practices. Based on the direction given by the ministry of education, zone education office, and regional education bureau, policymakers put pressure on schools to improve students' test results by at least 10% from the previous year.” (PM1, PM2, and PM3)

It is important to note that the compact accountability relationship is focused on students' enrollment and dropout rates. The compact accountability relationship is easy because the targets are numerical. As explained by the policymakers,

“The Zone Education Office has given an enrollment plan through formal or official letters, which show the number of students to be enrolled. Policymakers force schools to reach the given plan. Policymakers divide the target number of students in the school to teach at the maximum level. Schools should give priority to reaching the expected number of students to reach the plan. Policymakers are not concerned with which schools effectively implement the curriculum. Policymakers often set several enrollment limits for schools. Schools should be appreciated for their overcrowded number of students. Students' dropout rate is also another mechanism to hold schools accountable as one of the school ranking criteria.” (PM1, PM2, and PM3)

Another expert emphasized that:

“Failing schools are relatively unranked schools that failed to demonstrate yearly progress enrollment rate data by grade level and by gender and were loosely subjected to sanctions. These accountability sanctions are rare and most probably change school principals from their positions to the teaching profession.” (PM2)

In addition, teachers' relationships with policymakers for curriculum implementation were seen to be weak and inadequate. Therefore, one participant understood that:

“Although it is not good to make hasty generalizations about policymakers, they are afraid to enter the classroom to evaluate teachers and give feedback about teachers' performance. They have no interest in playing formal evaluation roles as policymakers for the implementation of the curriculum. There is no way to make teachers accountable for better implementation of the curriculum. Even their language does not smell of educational expertise, and they come to school for the sake of their presence. They are reluctant agents. Teachers are not lucky enough to expect professional support from such policymakers.” (T5)

Another teacher also explained that:

“I report individual test scores to students and parents. However, for the general public, policymakers score and make school rankings on a school-by-school basis using school-wide averages. No one reports

*that they can tell which teachers are effective and which are ineffective at implementing the curriculum. No accountability measures differentiate individual teachers' performances for the implementation of the curriculum."* (T1)

When policymakers visit schools, they are considerably more worried about ranking issues based on student results than they are about how students will be engaged in the curriculum about this compact accountability relationship. Participants explained that as a result of:

*"Teachers do not have a meeting with policymakers on issues related to the implementation of curriculum and on how to use it effectively. Rather, they enforce schools and teachers by saying that all students should be promoted. Schools are motivated to adjust students' results to fulfill the needs of the regional education bureau and MoE. Policymakers put pressure on schools to adjust the students' marks to be appreciated by their political bosses and to get international funds. They do not like to hear about students being detained. They are confusing us by not implementing the curriculum effectively."* (T3 and T4)

Policymakers commonly exercise their compact relationship with schools' facilities as ranking criteria rather than the translation of the written curriculum into classroom practices. Several participants asserted that:

*"Schools are extensively evaluated and held accountable for school facilities such as sports fields, clean water, latrines for boys and girls, classrooms, and students' tables and desks. Policymakers do not have concerns about putting any pressure on curriculum implementers about what is going on in the classrooms among students, teachers, and instructional materials."* (T2, T4, and T6)

Although policymakers are positioned at the regional education bureau, teachers explicitly suspect their expertise because they come to the school with an opinion that focuses on varying degrees of political friction. The political nomination is the most powerful because it directs a compact accountability relationship between the policymakers and the curriculum implementers to focus on political issues rather than the implementation of the curriculum. One participant emphasized that:

*"Policymakers are evaluating the implementation of the school curriculum, and they have no practice observing how students learn and how teachers teach. Policymakers are teachers who do not teach their students properly. They were pulled into the office. I know that they are positioned as policymakers based on important criteria: political membership in the ruling party, and they do have relatives who are top politicians and can be nominated politically. Indeed, there is no transparent and merit-based competition to select those policymakers. I see that they usually come to school with a political agenda."* (T1)

In this regard, other respondents reported that:

*"Policymakers come to school to collect information about the political views of the school community in general and teachers' and students' views in particular... who do not support the ruling party and who show resistance to this party... And they focused on collecting the hidden political agendas, and they do have many structural connections to the community beyond the school. They are often called collectors of data related to students. They are far from curriculum knowledge and its implementation. So, CI is commonly left to the teacher alone."* (T1 and T2)

Another compact relationship is just to trust the top-down commands that cannot be escaped to do so. These commands are specified as emerging informal activities of school functions, with various types of checklists from the regional education bureau and the schools. All school principals and one teacher shared similar insights about informal school activities embedded in classroom practices by saying:

*"Teachers and school principals have plans to implement the curriculum. Policymakers forced us to participate in many informal activities from central politicians or curriculum developers through the telephone, such as discussions about student textbook ratios, student-to-chair ratios, student-to-classroom ratios, and others that disrupt our duties and responsibilities. Policymakers exercise compact relationship accountability to enforce curriculum implementers for additional informal activities beyond the implementation of the curriculum. Of course, politicians have goals other than implementing the curriculum effectively."* (SP1, SP2, SP3, and T3)

Several school principals (SP1, SP2, and SP3) worried about the future generation because policymakers have always used strong, compact accountability relationships for political concerns, and they highlighted that:

*"School principals see that CI is politicized and students are not effectively engaged in the school curriculum. School principals and teachers are running with unnecessary routine activities. School*

principals hope this notion has to be changed in how to implement the curriculum effectively. In the 21st century, CI has a priority agenda in the schools, and the practice is technology-integrated, yet the Ethiopian curriculum is simply implemented from the students' books. Schools are failing to transmit societal core values to the next generation. Policymakers force school principals to lead schools out of principals' leadership roles for implementing curriculum, and they also mislead principals and teachers to focus on schooling (general education services, whether textbook distributions, teachers, school facilities, student-related reports, construction, etc.) that don't strengthen the interactions and enforcements for meaningful curriculum implementation."

## Discussions

A top-down accountability relationship for school curriculum implementation ensures that there is alignment between educational goals in the primary education system, which initiates regional policymakers to monitor the progress towards those goals (MoE, 2002). By holding curriculum implementers accountable for implementing the curriculum effectively, this approach aims to ensure that all students have access to high-quality curriculum implementation in East Wollega primary schools. In the context of this study, the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic Proclamation addresses the fact that policymakers are expected to hold curriculum implementers accountable for improving the implementation of the curriculum through a range of rigorous disciplinary measures, including downgrading, dismissal, and fines of up to three months' salary (Proclamation, 2002). Similarly, in developed countries like the USA, schools, and curriculum implementers are held accountable for establishing standards and evaluating student performance. Failing schools face sanctions ranging from minor tutoring to major reforms, staff and administration reforms, school closures, and student transfers (Itkonen & Jahnukainen, 2007). However, the findings of the study generally demonstrate that compact accountability failures with meager accountability measures were observed to hold curriculum implementers accountable, as stated in the proclamation. The finding suggests that policymakers' roles had nothing to do with accountability measures, and curriculum implementers did not encounter any intervention or sanction resulting in shallow practices of compact accountability relationships to improve the implementation of the curriculum.

According to the Ethiopian school management guideline, curriculum implementers are accountable to policymakers for the performance related to the activities of the curriculum implementation (MoE, 2002). Hence, investigating effective approaches (monitoring and evaluation) to classroom curriculum implementation is one technique to improve the compact accountability relationship between policymakers and curriculum implementers for continuous improvement of curriculum implementation. Nevertheless, the findings of this study disclose that policymakers exercised their authority through compact accountability relationships to hold curriculum implementers accountable for collecting informal reports (e.g., on-time book distribution, improving students' test scores by a certain percentage from the previous year, improving students' enrollment rate, reducing students' dropout rate, improving students' promotion by 100%, keeping school conducive, and the like) to get rank and funding from foreign donors rather than for the implementation of the curriculum.

Politicized duties and responsibilities from policymakers caused them to practice their compact accountability relationship with the school curriculum implementers. Policymakers experienced a compact accountability relationship with the schools' curriculum implementers to address the hidden political agenda of the ruling party by violating their professional responsibilities. Likewise, according to WDR (2018), political challenges compound technical ones, resulting in policymakers having different interests, again beyond the implementation of classroom curriculum; they may simply try to protect their positions. However, the study's results indicate that political nomination had the most power to direct the compact accountability relationship between the policymakers and the curriculum implementers to focus on politically attractive reports and observable school facilities to satisfy the needs of their boss rather than focusing on classroom curriculum implementation. Monitoring the classroom and holding curriculum implementers accountable for classroom practices like lesson plans, content delivery, instructional arrangements, and evaluation procedures were missed. A compact accountability relationship is the right driver for adequate implementation of the school curriculum. Yet, this study suggests that policymakers are not fulfilling their professional roles and responsibilities in holding school curriculum implementers accountable for what is going on in the classroom.

## Conclusions

Top-down or compact accountability relationships help to create a shared understanding of expectations and responsibilities between policymakers and curriculum implementers, ultimately leading to more successful implementation of school curricula. However, the findings of the study show that policymakers exercised weak, compact accountability mechanisms according to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's proclamation to hold curriculum implementers accountable for better implementation of school curricula. This study also suggests that policymakers are highly interested in putting an enforcement or political compact in place through oral and



telephone means for the improvement of school-wide average students' test scores, enrollments, and school construction, which are easily reported as fundamental variables that gear curriculum implementers to give little emphasis to implementing curriculum. It was also found that some of these reports through this accountability relationship are aimed at forcing curriculum implementers towards too much administrative work and preparing politically attractive reports that divert them from their responsibility in classroom practices. Moreover, the study significantly observed compact accountability relationship failures, in which regional education bureau policymakers fail to communicate clear responsibilities for adequate implementation of the primary school curriculum and fail to enforce clear responsibilities.

As disclosed through the findings, it can be concluded that the compact accountability relationship of politically nominated policymakers with politicized and expertise roles and responsibilities to observe and collect the political views of curriculum implementers and students rather than the implementation of the curriculum. These findings were original, and the fact that policymakers were working with violated professional responsibilities that had led the curriculum implementers to place minimal importance on implementing the curriculum as planned. These findings provide valuable insight into the literature on the accountability relationship between policymakers and curriculum implementers that can inform the revitalization of policies and practices for the betterment of curriculum implementation.

It is obvious that if the head has a problem, the legs could have difficulty functioning correctly. If the policymakers are not executing their responsibilities successfully, producing simply a lovely report to appease the higher authority, if it influences the role of the school curriculum implementers, the curriculum cannot be implemented properly. Therefore, policymakers should respect their duties and responsibilities to ensure that schools' curriculum implementers effectively put the school curricula into classroom practices. From the existing accountability relationship, the study found that curriculum implementers were more likely to create reports of routine activities than the classroom implementation of the curriculum. Hence, the government should create an autonomous and self-governing policymakers' office that strengthens performance in the compact accountability relationships to hold curriculum implementers accountable by continuously visiting school curriculum implementers. It is recommended that the government design a contractual form of compact accountability policies that drive both policymakers and curriculum implementers to discharge their duties to improve the implementation of classroom curricula. Finally, curriculum implementation is not the role of teachers and school principals alone; therefore, policymakers and curriculum implementers must coherently work hand in hand on common curriculum goals to implement the curriculum function. Further exploration of the case study with reliable reasoning is advised on why compact accountability was less operational in line with the Ethiopian government proclamation and education management guidelines for making the implementation of the curriculum effective.

## **Recommendations**

In 21st-century education reform, many countries have emphasized a compact accountability relationship for curriculum implementation. Hence, there should be a clear and working system of compact accountability relationships that involve policymakers and curriculum implementers to have a shared vision and goals to improve the implementation of the curriculum. The local regional education bureau, in collaboration with the Ethiopian government's Ministry of Education, should design a new contractually compact accountability policy that helps drive implementers to the actual implementation of primary school curricula. The study further recommends that regional policymakers should make their compact accountability free from political and frictional roles with school implementers, and they should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the curriculum. By establishing a compact accountability relationship based on comprehensive relationship accountability principles; policymakers should work closely with curriculum implementers to ensure that school curricula are effectively translated into practice for the benefit of students' engagement in the curricula. Based on the school guidelines, the study recommends that curriculum implementers should primarily be accountable to policymakers for implementing the school curriculum rather than preparing superfluous and observable numerical reports.

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### **Author (s) Contribution Rate**

Feyera Beyessa: Crafting, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing the original draft, Reviewing the reviewers' comments, and editing the final draft.

Ambissa Kenea: Supervision, Methodology, Reviewing and editing.

### **Ethical Approval**

Since this study is part of my dissertation, it was conducted with the permission of the Institutional Review Board of the College of Education and Behavioral Studies (CEBS), Addis Ababa University with protocol number: CEBS\_C & I\_006/2024 dated May 20, 2024.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### **Declarations Competing for Interests**

The author declares that he has no competing interests concerning the research.

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