

ORIGINAL ARTICLE**The Practice of Decentralized Education Service Delivery: An Impact Assessment
(The Case of Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda*- Eastern Zone of Tigray State)**Alene Agegnehu¹

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Abstract

This study was conducted to assess the impacts of decentralization on education service delivery in Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda* of Tigray National Regional State. Descriptive research design with mixed research technique was employed. An in-depth interview with zonal and *Woreda* officials and focus group discussion with teachers and students were held. The data collected from various sources was thoroughly organized, triangulated and narrated. The study revealed that the *Woreda* Education Office has been empowered to plan and implement annual school plan, to hire and fire teachers, and to build new schools through mobilizing the community to support the school. There are community based local institutions like Kebele Education Training Board and Parent Teacher Student Association that play important role for effective function of the school. These can link the school with the community and represent the people surrounding. They can mobilize the community so that they contribute in kind, cash and labor in fill financial gap of the *Woreda*. This brought room for community participation in planning, constructing and managing the school. Nevertheless, the study revealed that community participations via local institutions are hampered because of lack of knowledge and skills about their responsibilities and how to implement annual school plans as well as lack of commitment and interest to attend regular meetings. Inadequate finance, classroom, manpower, little involvement and concern of the community in their children's learning, and little interest of the learners in their education are the common challenges of WEO.

Key terms: /Decentralization/ Decentralization Education Service/ Education Service Delivery/

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1. Introduction

1.1. Back ground of the Study

Decentralization can be defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to lower or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector (Rondinelli, 1999). The transfer of powers includes political, administrative or managerial and fiscal authority from the center to lower levels of governments (World Bank, 2000). Currently, decentralization emerged as a fashion policy choice, whereby every country is inclined towards decentralized government system with the intent of administering and providing public services effectively and efficiently and ensuring good governance (Bernard, 2011). This is because the center has increasingly proved to possess neither the capacity nor the time to deal with all issues of services provision and local development, which could be better handled at the local level. Consequently, regardless of difference in the levels of socio- economic and political development, both developed and developing countries have embarked on a dramatic change on the government system; from a very centralized government to a decentralized one (OECD, 2004).

Historically, Ethiopia in the previous two successive regimes was characterized by a tight centralization of all socio-economic, political and administrative spheres where the centre overwhelmingly control the authority, and in the most extreme cases, decentralization was considered as a threat to the central administration (Dickovick & Tegegn, 2010). However, since 1991, the Ethiopian government has undergone decentralization process and adopted a federal form of government and divided the country into 9 self-governing regional states and two city-governments, namely Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Settlement pattern, consent of the people concerned, language and identity criteria were used to demarcate regions (FDRE constitution, 46 (2)). Considerable political, fiscal and administrative powers were devolved from the center to the regions with the objectives of keeping the country from disintegration via addressing a long standing nationalities' question (Tegegn, 1998). Moreover, the 1995 FDRE constitution under Art.39 guaranteed to the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia:

To have unconditional rights to self-determination, including the right to secession, to have the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, develop and promote its culture; and preserve its history; to have the right to take full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in their respective territory that it inhabits and have equitable representation in state and Federal governments.

The FDRE constitution also notes that the state government shall establish other administrative levels if they find it necessary and adequate power shall be granted to them to enable the people to participate directly in the administration of such units (FDRE constitution Art.50/4). Accordingly, the regional governments have established local governments in a way that fits their specific circumstances. Heterogeneous states have formed Zones or special *Woredas* (districts) on ethnic bases. The relatively homogenous states established *Woreda* governments. The powers and functions of local

governments (Zonal, *Woreda* and *kebele*)², therefore, derive from the states' functions and powers. The objectives of *Woreda* level decentralization is to improve service delivery, to have more participatory governance, and to promote economic development through empowering local communities by shifting meaningful decision-making powers down to the grass-root level (Hashim, 2010; Dickovick & Tegegn, 2010).

The Tigray national regional state as per the federal constitution has established its own state structure to administer regional socio-economic development and to improve public service efficiency. Accordingly, the revised constitution of the Tigray regional state provides that the administration of the regional state is arranged at zonal, *Woreda* and *kebele* levels. Article 73 (2) of the Tigray National Regional State constitution formally legalized the existence of District administration in its own jurisdictions. As per the constitution, the *Woredas* are supposed to perform range of tasks such as formulating and implementing socio-economic development policies and strategies.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Education service provision under a decentralized system necessitates transferring certain functions to the local levels so as to meet the education needs of the citizens (Bossert, 1998; Kwoyiga, 2010). Because the fact that decentralization promises the betterment of local education service provision for a better quality of life (UNICEF, 2009). In line with this, education service responsibilities in Ethiopia have been separated among the Federal, State, Zone, and *Woreda* administration. Accordingly, the *Woreda* echelon of government is empowered to administer schools found under its jurisdiction.

The *Woreda* levels of governments are assigned to provide educational services and are empowered to plan, finance, and monitor education services rendered at district level. However, the performances of the *Woreda* to discharge their responsibilities were constrained by interrelated factors. Financial problems like inadequate funding for basic services provided to lower tiers of government is a major constraint (WB, 2008). Inadequate institutional and administrative capacity and inefficient resource allocation and mobilizations are problems that the local government of Ethiopia has experienced (Meheret, 2007; and WB, 2008). Indeed, such inadequacies of the district government affect the quality and quantity of service delivery largely. Comparatively speaking, the problems become worse in rural *Woreda* because of inefficient infrastructure and lack of adequate experience to administer the overall affairs of the district. Consequently, there is a gap between the intended objectives of decentralization and the implementation at the ground. Ganta-Afeshum is one of the rural *Woreda*, which has seriously faced the above stated problems. There are few researches done at national level and other parts of the country to evaluate the performance of the *Woreda* echelons of governments. For instance, Meheret (2002) has done a research in one *Woreda* of Amhara and Oromia region. Tadesse (2006) also put a comparative study to assess the effectiveness of the

² Zonal government-is a functional third tier of government right from federal government. It serves as the bridge that links the regional and *woreda* level of government. *Woreda* government is the fourth level of government next to the nearest zonal government.

Woreda in rendering services in Amhara and Oromia regional states. Abraham G/Selassie (2011) also did a case study to assess the implementation of *Woreda* decentralization in Gambella regional state. As far as the researcher's reading is concerned, so far no scientific research has assessed the performance of *Woreda* education office in eastern zone of Tigray State. This research is, therefore, intended to fill this research gap.

1.3. Objectives of the research

1.3.1. General objective

The general objective of the study is to assess the impacts of decentralization on the education service delivery at Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda*, Eastern Zone of Tigray State.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

1. To identify powers entrusted to the study *Woreda* in relation to education service delivery;
2. To assess the level of community participation in the provision of education services;
3. To identify institutions and their performances involved in decentralized *Woreda* education service; and
4. To investigate the major constraints that hinder quality education service provision.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Definitions and Concepts of Decentralization

Decentralization is frequently and commonly referred to as the shift of powers from center to the lower units of government (Yuliani, 2004). In other words, decentralization involves the process of transferring responsibilities, functions and tax power from a higher level of government to a lower one. According to Rondinelli and World Bank, decentralization is defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility from the central government to lesser or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector for public functions purpose (Rondinelli, 1999; WB, 2003). Economists define decentralization in terms of resource allocation efficiency. For them, decisions about public expenditure that are made by lower levels of government are more likely to reflect the demand for local services than decisions made by a far-off central government (Treisman, 2002). According to the UNDP, decentralization is the process of the reshuffling or reorganizing authorities based on the principle of subsidiarity (people are the sources and the very basis of the legitimacy of all) and improving the authority and capacity of local governments so as to enhance the quality, co-responsibilities, and efficiency of the government at different levels (UNDP, 1999).

Regarding the role of decentralization, there has been wide-range of contradictory views. The common rationale for decentralization is to increase the efficiency of local public services provisions and resources mobilization and allocation. Furthermore,

decentralization helps to have more participatory and democratic governance, to reduce poverty, to promote economic development, to enhance equitable access to public services, and to improve government accountability and responsiveness; these are some of the reasons behind the demand (UNDP, 1999).

However, there are arguments against decentralization. Collins (1994) viewed some of the possible difficulties of decentralization in the service delivery. He attempted to verify that decentralization by itself is not a guarantee for the service delivery to be more responsive to local needs; because local elites just like central level officials and politicians, need to pursue their own interests. If local governments are dependent on once locally generated revenue, the advantages gained from improved health care through decentralization will be questionable. This is because local units considerably differ in resource endowment; hence the benefit depends on where peoples actually live. People who reside relatively in resource well-offering regions by far can enjoy better health care service than those who live in resource scant areas (Collins, 1994).

Decentralization in the service provision process also involves the issues of deciding who does what? That is, which functions and programs regarding education services are assigned and transferred to sub national government and which remain under central control? Central government has the responsibilities to perform those functions which has national outlook and to realize national educational goals. For example, standardization of the education policy must be executed by the center because the center has the capacity to perform it well. If a task is so significant for the realization of central-level goal that has nationwide implications, it should not be decentralized; instead it should be kept under the shoulder of the center.

2.2. Forms of Decentralization

Decentralization: it refers the shifting of the administrative workload from centrally located officials to offices outside the national capital or headquarters without transferring adequate authority. Under de-concentration, local governments are fully controlled by the center and thereby it serve as the administrative arms of the center (Olsen, 2007).

Delegation: it refers to the transfer of specifically defined responsibility and functions from the center to the periphery units and organizations that are outside regular bureaucratic structures such as non-governmental bodies, but are indirectly controlled by the center. The center determines the types of tasks or functions that can be transferred to and set condition where such powers are taken away from them if the need arises. The centre can take back powers and responsibilities delegated to the lower units if the centre feels discomfort (Pawlose, 2007).

Devolution: it is the most extensive form of decentralization since the real authorities concerning decision making, financing, and task managing are transferred from the central government to semi-autonomous and relatively independent political units of governments that have well-known and legally recognized jurisdictions over which they exercise authority in an everlasting basis, perform public functions, and are accountable to their constituents (Martinsson, 1997). Lower levels of government have discretion to formulate or plan their own policy priorities in accordance with the needs of local populace, to raise their own funds and to elect their representatives.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Source and Method of Collection

The main stakeholders are teachers, students, parents, school directors, and local officials (both elected and appointed). Three primary data collection methods were used: Interviews, FGDs and Field observation. Interview was made with members of parent-teacher- students association and students' parents, using semi-structured questioners. In addition, in-depth interviews were administered to the kebele chairmen, school directors, and *Woreda* education office director. Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) was employed to capture feelings, experiences and diverse perspectives of the residents of the *Woreda* through group interaction that might not be articulated in the one-to-one interview. The participants of the discussions included students and teachers selected randomly. Semi-structured questions were prepared to guide the discussion process. Field observation is another important means of data collection method in qualitative research. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), observation can be defined as “[a] systematic memorandum and recording of events, behavior and artifacts in the social setting chosen for a study.” Observation enabled the researcher to assess the physical or the visible apparatus or equipment of the education institutions. The classroom arrangement and size, school environment, nature of facilities (such as toilet and water), accessibility of the school, which are important for effective teaching- learning process, were observed personally. Further, secondary data sources such as federal and regional governments' education policy documents, proclamations, and quarterly as well as annual reports in Ethiopia in general and in Tigray in particular were reviewed.

3.2. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the schools. The study schools were selected based on their level of performance recorded at *Woreda* education office. In other words, based on the *Woreda* education office records, low performer schools and high performer schools were given equal chance. Accordingly, nine schools among the 33 primary schools of the *Woreda* were purposively selected. Prior to the selection, a very close consultation had been undertaken with *Woreda* Education officials regarding which schools to be taken. Then from each school about fifteen parents were taken for interview. Parents included as interviewees were those who have close relation with the school, those who participated in parent-teacher-student association and those who have overall awareness about government policies and strategies. Hence, a total of 100 parents participated in the interview. Also 16 students who did not involve in the interview were selected from each sample school to be involved in the focus group discussion and hence a total of 160 students involved in the focus group discussion. Interviews were also conducted with 30 key informants who were purposely selected such as *Woreda* education office director, school directors and kebele chairmen and civil society.

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were compiled, expressed and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Different means of interpreting data such as percentage, figures, and tables were employed; primary data was supported by the secondary data.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Description of Study Area

Ganta-Afeshum District is one of the nine Districts found in the East Zone of Tigray state. The astronomical location of the eastern zone is $13^{\circ}43'38''\text{N}$ - $14^{\circ}44'40''\text{N}$ latitude and $39^{\circ}10'0''\text{E}$ - $40^{\circ}0'0''\text{E}$ longitude. It is located at 898 Kms and 120 Kms away from Addis Ababa and Mekelle cities respectively. It is bordered by Gulomekeda District in the North, Saesie-Tseadaemba in the East, Hawzein in the South, Werii-Lekhe in South West, and Adi-Ahferom in the West.

Education. when this study was being conducted, 29.77% of the population were considered literate; 47.64% of children aged 7-12 were in primary school; 8.41% of the children aged 13-14 were in junior secondary school, and 10.59% of the inhabitants aged 15-18 were in senior secondary school. Concerning sanitary conditions, about 83% of the urban houses and 37% of all houses had access to safe drinking water at the time of the census; about 22% of the urban and about 9% of the total had toilet facilities (CSA, 1994).

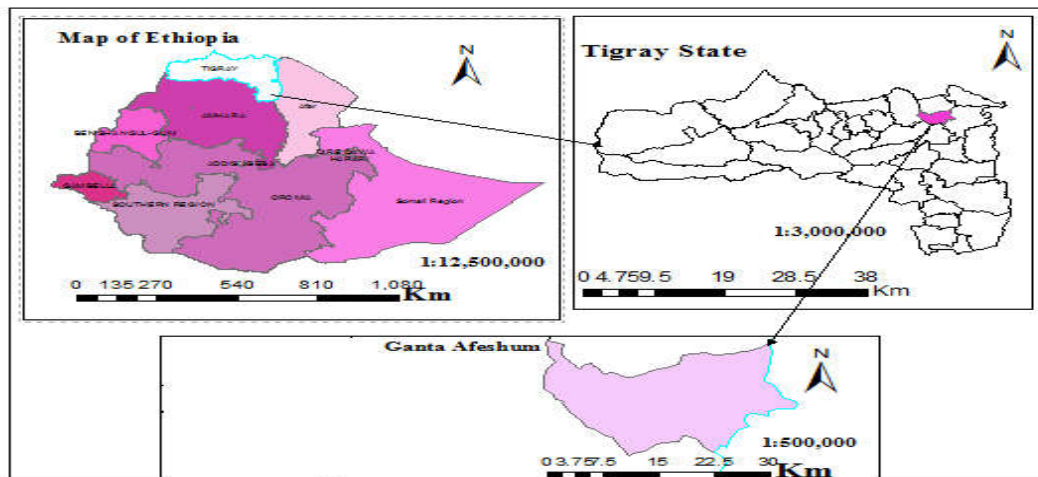


Fig. 1: Map of the study area

4.2. The Current Status of Education Service

G/Afeshum *Woreda* is endeavoring to achieve the accessibility, coverage and qualities of education services. Educational services that are being delivered in the *Woreda* are: 'O' class³, child to child⁴ education, lower and upper primary school (Grade 1-4 and 5-8) respectively, and secondary and preparatory schools. Within these Grade levels, when the study was being conducted, several students were being enrolled. There were then 55 schools that enrolled 21,656 students and 656 teachers. Of these, 18 were lower primary schools (Grades 1-4), 33 schools were upper primary schools, the rest 3 were secondary schools (Grades 9-10) and 1 is preparatory school. Of the total students who were enrolled in 2008 E.C. 10,678 were female and the remaining 10,978s were male implying equal enrolment of boys and girls. While few students (2743) were enrolled in secondary and preparatory school, the majority of the students (equals 18913) were enrolled at primary education (Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda* education office, 2008).

The *Woreda* also provides child to child learning and 'O' class to those students who have not reached school age (7 years). These programs prepare children for Grade one. They enable them to identify letters, colors, and shapes of letter. Furthermore, the *Woreda* renders informal adult education services targeting adults who are illiterate. Its main aim is to reduce illiteracy rate in rural areas. By the end of 2007 E.C., 10,921 (reportedly more than 90 percent) adult students were enrolled.

Access and coverage of basic education services. Regarding access to education, there has been an increment of the expansion of primary and secondary schools. The number of primary and secondary school construction has increased from 33/ in 2005 E.C. to 55 in 2008 E.C. The coverage of primary education (Grades 1- 8) expanded rapidly; in 2005 there were 33 schools and in 2007/2008 the number reached 51. At every kebele; there are three primary schools. According to Ganta- Afeshum education office head⁵, there is no problem regarding the coverage of primary school in the *Woreda*; the coverage obviously reaches 100%. Consequently, school enrollment rates have increased significantly in the study *Woreda*. On average, a seven year old child can easily access a lower primary school (Grade 1-4) and Upper primary schools (Grade 5-8) are accessible at a distance of not more than 2.5 kilometers which exactly equals with national average. There was only one preparatory school, which is 20 km far away from the students' residence, implying further improvement.

³ According to Tigray education statistic Bureau, 'O' Class is part of pre-primary education system which involves children of age 6 that do not have access to kindergarten. The children of this program are coached by selected teachers from the respective primary school. It is therefore by this process the pre-school children get ready for Grade one.

⁴ See at page 6 of the Tigray regional education bureau special statistical document, which tried to define it as part of the pre- primary education system which operates through older brother or sisters (Younger facilitators of Grade 5/6 students) [who] play with their younger siblings and neighbor children. The playing becomes learning as the benefiting child gets to know how for instance, to count or to differentiate colors and identifying letters. Through this process the pre-school child gets ready for school.

The same document also defines the concept Kindergarten- as one element of pre- primary education in which children aged 4-6 are learning. The program has its own curriculum, trained teachers, administrative staffs, and separate compound. Kindergarten however is not provided in the study *woreda*.

⁵ Name anonymous

However, as the grade level increases, the accessibility and coverage of education service faces problems. The coverage of secondary education is found to be below the national standards. There were merely three secondary schools (Grade 9-10) with a total of 2435 student (of this, 1189 are boys and 1246 are girls) by the year 2008 E.C. indicating lagging behind when compared to the required minimum national standards which is one secondary school for one cluster⁶. One cluster is supposed to have seven primary schools; the G/Afeshum *Woreda* which has 51 primary schools needs at least seven additional secondary schools. Consequently, students at secondary school are forced to go far distance in search for secondary education. The problem worsens as grade level ascends. In the upper secondary school level, in the *Woreda*, there is only one preparatory school that enrolled 308 students. Of this number, 136 were boys and 172 were girls with the gross enrollment rate of 6.6%, and this number is three times lower than the regional GER, which was 18.52% by the fiscal year of 2008 EC (Tigray region education bureau, 2008). The average distance the students walk to reach the school is 20 kilometers indicating that more tasks needed to be done to shorten the distance as the education office head illustrates.

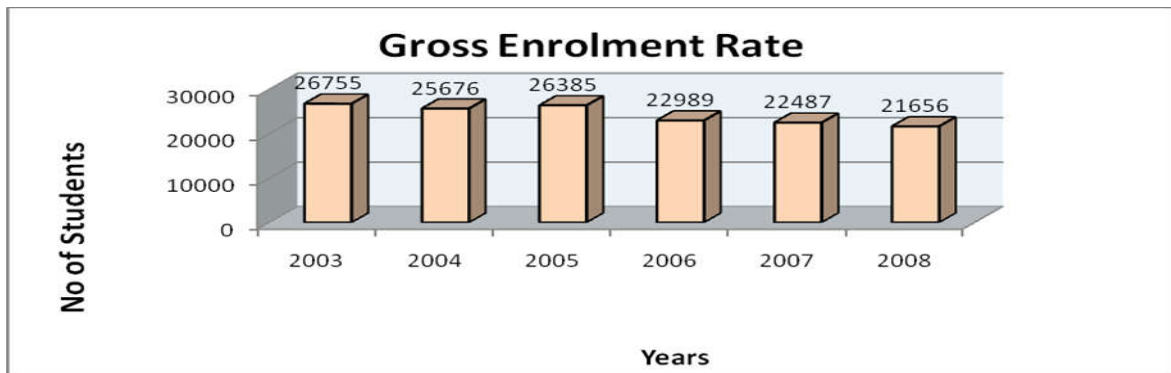
The pupil –to- textbook ratio has now become better; it has reached a proportion of 1:1, and the achievement is similar with that of the region except for a few subjects: Amharic and Tigrigna where the ratio is 1:3. This ratio, however, narrowed when the grade level increases; it was 1:2 at secondary and preparatory school.

Student-teacher and student-section ratio. Student teacher ratio (STR) is one of the determinants of quality of education. The lowest the STR, the higher the opportunity of quality of education is, and the vice versa is true. Both student teacher and student section ratios, for primary grades 1-8, have been improved significantly. Even though the average STR, which is 40, at G/Afeshum *Woreda* has been improved, it is lagging behind the regional STR level, which is 37. When the study was being conducted, 18,913 students and 656 teachers (Male=312, Female=342) were enrolled at primary school in 2007 E.C. indicating that females were found to be more participant in the *Woreda*. The improvement of student teacher ratio and student section ratio is due to an increment of the accessibility of teacher in the market and the construction of additional primary schools in the *Woreda*. Hence, the number of teachers increased rapidly from year to year. For instance, the numbers of teachers' was 654 in 2007 and to 613 in 2008 E.C.⁷, which made the teacher- student ratio better.

When we contrast the achievement of *Woreda* regarding Student- section ratio against the minimum standard, which is 45 students per class, it met the standard even better at primary school. However, it failed to meet the standards of Student- section ratio at secondary school and preparatory schools 1:45 and 1:40 respectively. As far as teacher- student ratio is concerned, it recorded better results at higher level education, in which a teacher is assigned to 33 and 27 students in grade 9-10 and 11-12, which is better than lower level schools. The gross enrollment ratio had shown improvement after the introduction of comprehensive *Woreda* decentralization in 2000s. Similarly, the net enrollment rate improved by 81 percent by the year 2008 E.C.

⁶ The name Cluster indicates the combination of seven primary schools. One secondary school that serves seven surrounding primary schools is required.

⁷ 613 in 2007 and 654 in 2008 (?) noted by managing editor

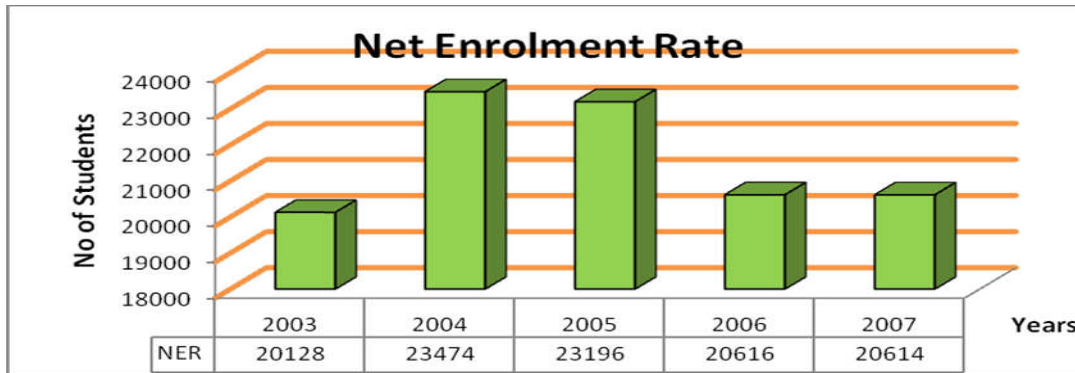


Source: compiled from the *Woreda* education office, 2008 EC.

Fig. 2: The Gross enrollment rate of the education at *Woreda* level

According to Figure2, the number of students declines as the year of enrolment increases. The reason behind the decline is that students and parents' low attitude towards education, as it was mentioned by Ahazera school director during interview. He further elaborated that students' parents prefer their children to engage more in irrigational agriculture than to spend their time in school. Students' parents compare just the immediate economic return of irrigation with education in the long run. This response, however, was discarded by the *Woreda* education office (WEO) head. He argued that this is not the result of the students themselves but the failure of the teachers to be role model and lack of awareness creation by the teachers as well as the parents nearby. Teachers are the immediate responsible body to aware their students to have optimistic attitude towards education. The argument of the head officer, however, seems less plausible for the researcher. This is because, in the absence of satisfactory livelihood, how can the teachers become role models and how can the students have visionary future as they always observe the less attractive life standard of their teacher?

The Net Enrollment Rate of the *Woreda* like GER is also declining. According to Ganta-Afeshum WEO head, the main reason for the reduction trend of the gross and net enrollment rate in the *Woreda* are: 1) the effective implementation of family planning in the rural household reduced the number of new born child and hence, it largely reduced the number of new entrance students; 2) As the geographical location of Ganta-Afeshum is near to Adigrat town, students are attracted to Adigrat town to attend their education. As far as NER is concerned, disparity is observed between male, which is 82.96%, and female, which is 80.76, by an average of 2% in the primary school. This shows that the participation of male students is higher than female students. However, in the secondary and preparatory schools, the reverse is true; the net participation of female students (28.44%) is higher than male students (26.80%) by 1.64 %.



Source:- Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda* education office, 2008 EC.

Fig. 3: Net enrolment rate at *Woreda* level

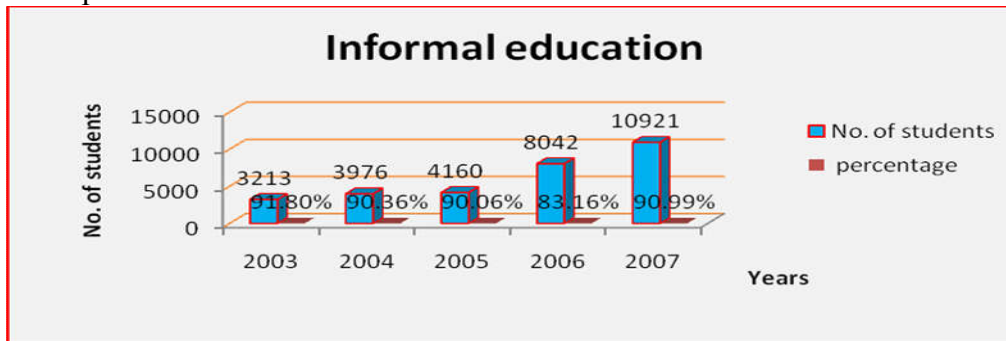
As shown in Figure 3, the gross enrollment rate of the total students declined in 2006 and 2007 E.C. as compared to the previous period. According to the head of Education office, the reason behind is that the *Woreda* is located adjacent to Adigrat town, the town of the zone. Students who are found in kebeles around Adigrat town are not willing enough to attend their education in the school of the *Woreda*; rather they attend their education in Adigrat town. Hence, the decreasing of gross enrollment rate in the near past consecutive years are due to flow of many students from the surrounding kebele to Adigrat town.

Repetition rate: Literally it means students who are enrolled at least twice in the same grade. The rate of repetition affects the efficiency of the whole education system. The lower the repetition rate, the higher the efficiency of education service is, and the vice versa is true. The GER, NER, and Dropout rate have been changed over time. It has not the same pace of increment and decreases. For example, the gross enrollment rate was highest since 2005 whereas dropout rate and NER became the highest since 2003 and 2004 respectively. The repetition rate, on the other hand, is found to be in a decreasing pace. It was 2.8 percent in 2003 and was reduced to 0.99 since 2007. The dropout rate greatly varies between male and female. Females registered less dropout rate than male students, almost a variation of 50%. In 2003, 300 and 153 male and female students were dropped out respectively. The general trend, though it is irregular in its pace, shows a decreasing rate of dropout rate.

Informal education: In the *Woreda*, this type of education is provided to people who cannot write and read. The objectives of this program are to make kebele residents able at least to read and write, and to create awareness about their mode of life. The program is provided to the needy people in collaboration of various sectors, including education, agriculture, water, and health. Each sector is supposed to have its own program to raise awareness about the aim of its institution. For example, health sector can inform the students how to protect their personal hygiene and safety of their house and village. However, regardless of its novel objectives, this program could not meet its goals. The WEO head of Ganta-Afeshum, explain the reason as follow:

The nature of the program, for its implementation requires the collaboration, coordination and close integration of different sector offices. Other sectors however show less commitment and are reluctant to take action. They leave it for education office only. Hence, [because of] the absence of coordinating body and little sense of ownership by different sectors, it does not meet the stated objectives of the program⁸.

The researcher also found similar response from zonal officials. According to the zonal social affair advisory, the intended objectives and the practice on the ground are varying considerably⁹. Students who registered to be enrolled at informal adult education are expected to attend the class three times a week but their enrollment is not accordingly.



Source: Researcher's own completion from data available at Woreda Education Office, 2008 EC.

Fig 4: The trends that show Informal education in Ganta- Afeshum Woreda

4.3. Division of Educational Power

Powers and responsibilities bestowed to the Woreda education office. Tigray National Regional State is one of the nine regional governments; by its constitution it established *Woreda* administrations which have necessary legal, administrative, institutional and financial powers. This was aimed at making them effective and efficient institutions of local government for democratic governance and economic development. The constitution also allows the local people to elect directly *Woreda* and *kebeles* administrations (the council) and recognizes *Woreda* and kebele institutions as they are closer to the people. Article 76 of the Tigray regional constitution lists down the powers and the functions of *Woreda* council; it empowers the *Woreda* to administer all elementary schools found in the *Woreda*, to approve *Woreda* social service delivery, economic development, and administrative plans and programs. Like any other *Woredas* in the country, the *Woredas* in Tigray region are empowered to undertake the following duties and responsibilities:

- Preparing and approving of annual *Woreda* development plans and budgets,
- Collecting local taxes and levies, administering fiscal resources available to the *Woreda*,

⁸ An in-depth interview with WEO head

⁹ Interview with an official at zonal department of social affairs, 2008 EC (anonymous).

- Constructing and monitoring low-grade rural tracks, water points and *Woreda* level infrastructure (offices, houses), managing agricultural development activities and protecting natural resources from irrational use and depletion, and administering primary schools and health institutions (Tigray regional state education Bureau manual,2008).

Based on the above legal ground, the office has the following powers and responsibilities:

1. *Undertake Building of schools*: construction of primary and secondary schools are devolved to the *Woreda* education office. The *Woreda* education office has the mandate to construct new schools and rehabilitate old one by mobilizing and organizing the community.
2. *Administrative power*: it has power to administer, supervise, coordinate, follow-up and monitor all schools found in the *Woreda*. It can also supervise the proper implementation of school curricula, and monitor the provision of instructions in schools. Developing inter-school integration and coordination are also devolved at district level in the study *Woreda*.
3. *Teacher Recruitment power*: the mandate to hiring and firing of teachers is devolved to *Woreda* level. It can also decide teacher's carrier promotion and transfer from one school to another. Cross- checking teachers' performance evaluation and handling of disciplinary cases of the teacher as well as the students are the key role of the *Woreda* education office.
4. *Prepare annual plan of the school*: the study *Woreda* has the power to prepare annual plane of education sector for the pre- primary up to secondary school level. Ensuring standards, the accreditation of institutions and implementation and evaluation of fund raising projects of the *Woreda* via mobilizing local resources for the meaningful operation of the schools are the functions of the *Woreda* education office.
5. *Financing Schools found in the Woreda*: Schools have various source of income. According to Oumer (2009), schools can generate resources from income-generating activities, through government, families, the community and non-governmental organizations. Schools may also generate funds from different resources in different type such as in cash, in kind or in labor financed for routine schools' activities and inputs. Generally speaking, there are three main sources of finance at the study *Woreda* education office and school level.
 - *Federal Grants (GEQIP)*: sometimes called school grant. It is the major source of the *Woreda* education office. The federal government directly grants funds to *Woreda* education offices in the form of GEQIP- (General Education Quality Insurance Program) for ensuring quality education. The major aim of this grant is to improve quality of education at *Woreda* level. In other words, the money granted by GEQIP is spend only for improving quality of education, not expend for per-diem, monthly salary and for other recurrent expenditure. This budget can be utilized by the WEO to have capacity to purchase quality centered equipments like books, laboratory materials, to organize pedagogical center and other educational equipments. With

this important objective, GEQIP is funded by the Government, World Bank, USAID (United States Agency for international Development) and many others.

The Education service delivery program (ESDP III and IV) largely emphasizes on the urgent need of improving the school management and administration which is one of the tools for improving education service delivery at *Woreda* level. Hence, this specific purpose of GEQIP, which is largely derived from external loans and assistances, is mainly transferred to Local Governments via the State to achieve the broad Federal Government goals. It also gives more power to school head and administrators to coordinate the roles of communities, parents, students and local administration in the overall school management. The Line Ministries often approved a distribution formula which is designed for the unconditional grant. The magic formula for division of this money is run according to the number of students, 50 birr for 'O' class and Grade 1-4; 55, 60, 70 and 86 birr per students for Grade 5-8, 9-10, 11-12 and for special need like disability students respectively.

- *Woreda Block Grants*: every school has block grant funds allocated/ funded to the *Woreda* taking the number of students in each school in to consideration. In other words, this kind of fund is allocated to each school based on the number of students, i.e. it is divided by a special formula- based on the number of students per school. The division and amount of birr per a student are greatly differing by grade level. For instance, it is 15 and 20 and 30 birr per a student, from Grade 1-4; 5-8 and 9-10 respectively. But for Grade 11-12,¹⁰ *Woreda* Block grant is allocated. This minimum amount of money, however, is not fully funded in each school (see Table 2). The justifications of intergovernmental transfers are to provide minimum standard public services like education, health, clean water etc, addressing vertical fiscal gap, reducing horizontal fiscal imbalance, and compensating inter-jurisdictional externality effects (Gebre-Hiwot, 2013).

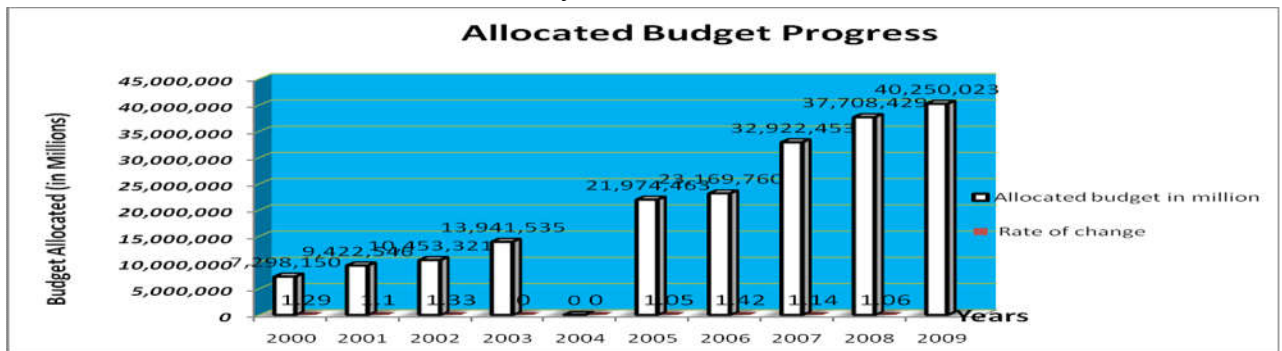
- *Internal revenue*: it is the third source of *Woreda* education office- which is raised internally by the schools. The amount of internal revenue generated is greatly varying from school to school depending on the commitment of the leaders and the level of the awareness of the communities. The more the community leaders are committed and the community is aware, the more the possibility of rising more internal funds and the reverse is true. Hence, there are schools which collect more money than others- other things remain constant. For example, Bizet¹¹

¹⁰ According to the Ethiopian education system, free education ranges from Grade 1-10 only. Students under these grade level can learn free of any educational fee. The government is a responsible body to make available all the necessary educational equipments and to provide equal opportunities for all regardless of the economic status of the societies. However, in Grade 11-12, free education is cut automatically. This is because this grade level is assumed to be preparatory school or pre-university that prepares students for university. Hence, students access their education by their own payment in the form of cost sharing principle. Students cover their educational fees.

¹¹ Sample school

secondary school has recorded better internal revenue generation capacity, whereas Ahazera¹² secondary school has recorded less community involvement due to biased attitude towards the school; accordingly it collects little money per annum. The above source further added that the effectiveness of schools depends on the following factors: whether elected school committees reflect their communities or are dominated by political elites as well as whether ministry of education provides adequate technical and information support for the school.

Source of internal revenue. The internal revenue of the school is generated from the selling of grass found in the school; from the students who transfer to the other school (ten birr per students), and from community contribution and other related sources. Community contribution can be done in terms of cash, in kind and in physical labour. The degree of community participation and the amount of communal contribution varies from school to school depending on the commitment of PTS (Parent- Teacher- Students) association and awareness of the community.



Source: Ganta-Afeshum Woreda finance Bureau, 2008EC

Fig.5: Budget allocation of the *Woreda* from 2000-2009 E.C

4.4 Community Participation

Community participation and decentralization are inseparable. The broad objective of decentralization is to empower communities to involve and to have a say in their local issues. Therefore, decentralization can promote the formal and informal participation of parents in the overall operation of the school. Formally, communities participate in local meetings to select their representatives who run the school management as a committee. Informally, parents are kind enough in donating money to the school, in gaining a stronger interest, in monitoring the school's finances and in involving more in their children's education. Involving parents directly in the education of their children may also lead to changed behavior of the learners. The effectiveness of the school is determined by the degree of communal participation in the operation of the school and follow up of their children's learning (Tesfaye, 2007; Obsaa, 2010).

Currently, community participation in the management of education services is considered a crucial aspect due to the fact that, the immediate beneficiary of the service provision is the people themselves. Their active engagements in the operational and

¹² Sample school taken by the researcher

implementation of education service delivery is so vital to attain the accessibility and quality of education services at community level. Moreover, it has also improved the performance of educational institutions by strengthening the accountability of service providers to the patrons and by scaling up of sense ownership (World Bank, 1994). According to the response of school directors and education office head, communities can involve in various ranges of activities. These are:

(1) Members of the community contribute financial, material and labor support for the school they belong to. According to *Woreda* education office head, out of 51 primary schools found in the *Woreda*, 33 schools were constructed by full sponsorship of the community. Only 13 schools were financed and constructed by the government budget. The amount of communal contribution to school, however, greatly varies from kebele to kebele depending on the number of kebele households, the awareness of the community and the commitment of the kebele chairman, PTSA and KETB of the school. In this regard, teachers and students' FGD revealed as following:

The more the local institution (PTSA and KETB) and chairman of the kebele (since he is the chair of both associations) is strong, the more schools that the kebele has. In some kebele, there are more than three primary schools due to the fact that communities are more active; while some other kebeles are merely has[have] one school as a result of administrative weakness of the kebele and little participation of the community¹³.

The community therefore actively engages in the affairs of their school by the help of Kebele Education and Training Board so that they can contribute financial and material support for school construction, expansion and maintenance.

(2) Community also involves as a member of PTSA and KETB – Four members who represent the community are elected among the community PTSA. PTAs on the other hand are composed of members who are elected by parents or the community. PTAs represent more the community than KETBs. Through their representatives, they can decide matters that directly touch the school on behalf of the community. Those members who represent the community at both associations can play an intermediary role between the communities and the nearby schools. Since they live with the community, they can inform the decision of the meeting and try to convince the community to contribute and create awareness about school's problems. According to the deputy head of the *Woreda*, by the active engagement of the community, seven alternative basic educations [schools] were upgraded in to regular schools by the beginning of 2008 E.C. and other new schools have been constructed and made operational. Moreover, to overcome the shortage of class room, additional class rooms have been constructed. The fence of the school was under construction by full sponsorship of the community¹⁴. By 2007 EC, around 136,000 birr was collected in cash from the community. Contradictory result has been observed at Ahazera secondary school. The director responded that the community around the school have biased attitude about the school.

¹³ Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted with Teachers and students at selected sample schools, 2008EC.

¹⁴ An in-depth interview with the director of Bizet secondary and preparatory school (name anonymous).

Since the school was constructed by private investor, (who was born and grow in the kebele), the people of the community believed that the school is not belong[ing] to them but for[to] the investors and their nearby relatives. As a result, people were reluctant to take part in the operation of the school and have little or no sense of ownership. Currently, however, the attitude of the people is changing.

He further stated that community contributes 60 birr per a student to subsidize the school expenditure. The *Woreda* education office head also stated that even though there were biased attitude of people towards the school due to the above reason, now a day there is a dramatic change of attitude and a strong sense of ownership of the school. It is plausible to recommend the concerned stakeholders to encourage and mobilize the community to develop sense of ownership on the school. Once they believe that the school is their own, they will give attention to the school's functions. Hence, one can see from the above discussion that the sense of ownership becomes stronger when the community contributes for the construction and rehabilitation of the school as empirical studies show (Tesfay, 2007). Though there is a wide- range of community participation, majority respondents reported that still there are pitfalls in this case. Still there is awareness problem among some parents with regards to the importance of sending their children to school. This is evidenced in the following Teacher FGD:

Even though community participation in our Woreda is found to be good, it still needs much to be done. There are parents who do not send their children but hold them for domestic and agricultural works. Still they force them to drop. Some parents need to engage their children in irrigational activities¹⁵.

They also added that though communities are involved in the school decision making process via PTSA and KETB, most members do not attend the meeting and rarely visit the school and follow up their children's learning. Members of PTSA need incentives for the service they render. Usually, majority of parents come to school rarely when the school prepares bi-annual parents' day.

4.5 Local Institutions and their Performance

Dealing with school decentralization is nothing but all about the involvement of the community at all stages of school development planning and implementation. Through decentralization, the community has been empowered in the relevant decision making events and in increasing their as well as other stake holders' sense of ownership. It also improves the motivation of parents to have greater interest in their children's education and to contribute financial support to their school. Hence, the engagement of parents, teachers, local councilors and education officials in school management can help promoting decision-making at school level, which largely improves the quality of schooling and students' achievement. The most prominent and legally established local institutions in Ethiopia that are engaged at local schools level are Kebele Education and

¹⁵ Teachers focus group discussion at Qe'at primary school, 2008 EC.

Training Boards (KETBs) and parent teacher associations (PTAs). Both institutions were established and operating at the study *Woreda*.

Parent –Teacher- Student Associations (PTSA). The PTSA is an association of parents, teachers and students whose members ranging from seven to nine and are elected for serving for three years term unless they are removed from the position because of their low performance. The composition of the association are: four elected members from the community, two people (one male and one female) from teachers, two people (one male and one female-who are members of student parliament¹⁶) from students, and the director of the school who act as a secretary and the chairman of the kebele and who serves as the chair of the association. The association is accountable to the KETB. The KETB has the power to appoint as well as to remove the PTSA members from their positions. The association is supposed to strengthen school-community linkage and to create close relationships, to create conducive teaching and learning environment, to foster a good academic relationship between teachers and student, and to lead and administer schools on behalf of the community in collaboration with local government bodies. A PTSA is responsible for leading and administering the affairs of a single school, making/developing projects that uplift and capacitate the school financially. Hierarchically, PTSA is accountable to the nearby upper institution- KETB. Any decisions and annual school plans are implemented if they are approved by KETB.

Generally speaking, the established PTSA are operational in all schools. They have meeting once a month so that they can evaluate the strength and weakness of the schools' activities. Doing so has enabled the community to own and administer schools, to contribute in cash, labor and skill for the betterment of schools. The roles of PTSA and school administration focused on preparing annual plan and project proposals that should be submitted to KETBs for final approval with or without modifications.

¹⁶ Student parliama [parliament] means- an assembly of students in school where its members are elected directly by the students by means of universal suffrage. Four students are elected from each section that is supposed to serve better for the improvement of the school at large and for the students in particular. Students become members of the parliama from Grade 5-12. i.e. parliama members who represent students from grade 1-4 are not eligible to participate in PTSA

Kebele Education and Training Boards (KETB). The *Woreda* education office is supposed to organize *Woreda* Education and Training Board within its jurisdiction. KETB is established in every school. The rationale for creating KETB is to fill the information gap resulted from distance barrier between the remote and inaccessible rural schools and the *Woreda* education office. To overcome such bottlenecks, establishing KETB, which serves as bridge for information barrier, at each school level is the potential remedy. The KETB is composed of 11 appointed members and a few directly elected members by the community. These are a kebele administrator as a chairman of the board, the school director as a member and secretary of the board, three representatives from parents, two representatives from youth and women associations, and one representative from the kebele Teachers Association. Hence, KETB is a legally nominated body found below the *Woreda* education office, which is empowered to undertake educational planning and management tasks at the community level.

Moreover, the board is expected to alleviate physical distance between rural schools and *Woreda* and to enable schools to get decisions made promptly. It is also intended to coordinate the community in a school catchment area and to solve educational problems of a kebele, to identify and bring school aged children to school, to promote girls' education, to investigate factors that blocked girls and other children from going to school and to facilitate expansion of private schools. The KETBs have fewer responsibilities in educational planning, but play an important role in the implementation of educational policies. It comprises of two to five teachers usually selected among the school teachers. The KETB is accountable to the council of the Kebele where the school is located. The office term of the Board would be the same with that of the kebele Council. Powers and responsibilities of KETBs as ministry of education (2002) illustrated:

Manage schools exist in the district; evaluate schools directors' performance; organize and facilitate community participation and investigate disciplinary issues of teachers and students. It can decide to approve annual schools budgetary and follow up the implementation, expand and establish new schools. Increase the awareness of the community to send their school age children to schools and ensure the proper utilization of the schools' property, and create smooth teaching-learning environment through supervising and control of the director, teachers and the support staff of the school work together etc

The KETB is an intermediary between school, community and *Woreda* education offices. The Board gives final decision at school level on matters like construction of additional classrooms, purchase of materials for the school.

The performance of KETB and PTSA. KETB is empowered to perform a range of tasks and likely to play a leadership role in the overall school management. According to the *Woreda* education office head, it is the most important body which is regarded as the supreme and final authority in administering school and mobilizing local residents to assist the school in the form of cash or in kind. In spite of these pivotal roles, the members of KETB show less commitment and consider school responsibilities as secondary tasks. This is emanated from the fact that they engage in government offices, and perceive school administration as an extra ordinary task that makes them overburden. In this regard, PTSA are more important and effective than members of KETB.

An interview with members of **KETB** indicated that most of them do not yet know their duties and responsibilities but usually are concentrated on mobilizing the community for school construction purposes merely. The knowledge, skills and experience that members of KETB have is not in line with their assigned duties and responsibilities. According to the *Woreda* education office head, members of KETB have weakness. Especially the chairman of KETB remained absent and delayed from attending regular meetings when key school matters are decided. The reason behind his failure to perform properly the tasks assigned to him is that he also serves as the chairman of kebele council that made him busy or overburden. The nature of his administrative responsibilities and political duties limited him to give focus to the regular day to day activities of the board. In other words, he has additional extra-ordinary tasks and meeting with kebele administration and *Woreda* council. Not only the chairman but also other members who are from other sector office regularly do not attend meetings and are not enthusiastic to discharge the assignment entrusted up on them by the pretext of regular office works.

Consequently, the members of PTSA and school directors are pressurized to exercise supplementary responsibilities which are supposed to be performed by KETB. Even though KETB is assigned a very important function and is assumed to be the key institution of the school, pragmatically, it has faced pitfalls in the overall operation and follows up of the schools' tasks. Its members lack adequate knowledge about their duties and responsibilities, as well as leadership, educational planning and management skills at KETB, PTSA and school level. Also they are short of supervising skills and creating strong school community bonds so as to mobilize them. Accordingly, the delay in implementation of school plan, collection of money and other material support promised by the communities, and inability to uplifting the level of community participation for the betterment of schools are the concrete limitations of the KETB as it was rightly illustrated by the director of Ahazera primary school¹⁷. Research studies in other area also showed that the chairman of a kebele, as he is overburdened usually, had delayed the approvals of school plan and had weakened community involvement in schools (Tadesse, 2007 and Obsaa, 2010).

¹⁷ An in-depth interview with school director of Ahazera primary and secondary and Millennium Primary School reveal this facts in the same way. The Ahazera secondary school director disclosed that the tight control and little commitment of school administration by kebele chairman made the school not to get the needed amount of resources from the community. For him, if he strongly convinces the community and does the necessary things, the school will be beneficial from the contribution of the community.

Unlike to KETB, members of PTSA have no additional government responsibilities i.e. they are not engaged in other governmental offices, and this simplifies their works; hence they are relatively more useful and effective in the promotion of educational development of the school. Their meaningful contribution and effective realization of assigned tasks is the result of assistance that comes from teachers, directors students, and parents who are the immediate beneficiaries of a school. This does not mean that PTSA are absolutely effective. They sometimes request per-diem for their work and are reluctant and lack concentration. Some of its members are criticized for not having adequate capacity and for giving less attention to their duties. Usually they are not willing to attend monthly meeting of the association without payment; especially farmers who are members of PTSA fail to appear in meeting especially during harvesting season as they are engaged in farming and irrigational activities to win the daily bread of their family. The strength of PTSA varies from one school to another. The director of Ahazera primary school states:

PTSA are not committed enough to influence the community to do the required things, though it has key role. It cannot do more on the quality of education and usually request payment in the form of per-diem to compensate their missed work¹⁸.

All in all, the powers and responsibilities associated with those local institutions in the study *Woreda* do not match with their educational background. To enable such institutions to discharge effectively their responsibilities, the researcher recommends urgent training.

4.5 The Challenges of Decentralized Educational Service

The school has faced various challenges which affect the smooth teaching-learning process. The federal government of Ethiopia, under Art 90(1), granted all Ethiopian people to have the rights to access to public health and education, clean water, housing, food, and social security as much as the state's resource permits. Accordingly, Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda* registered better success on the accessibility and coverage of primary school; yet, it has impediments that jeopardize the intended educational responsibilities of the *Woreda*. Some of the impediments are:

1) **Lack of adequate manpower.** Although there are improvements on the number of teacher in the *Woreda*, still there are problems in some schools. These problems are very severe on the side of administrative staffs. In most schools there is lack of adequate personnel such as laboratory technicians, librarians, guards, and finance experts. For example, the national standard of the number of guards per a school is three- each serving eight hours per day. However, in the majority of sample schools, there is/are only one or two Guards serving 24 hours without considerable payment for their work. Interview with director of Ahazera exposes the problem:

¹⁸ An interview with directors of two schools- millennium and Ahazera (Name is anonymous)

There are no adequate teachers as compared with the number of sections. Teachers are forced to teach 30 hrs per week. Moreover, there are no deputy school director, pedagogy leader, laboratory technician, and finance administrator¹⁹.

He [the director] also reported that to deploy enough human resources including the teachers in the school, neither the *Woreda* nor the school has adequate budget.

(2) Inadequate finance. Though the *Woreda* education office has three source of finance: federal fund, *Woreda* block grant, and community contribution, it has faced serious financial problem. There is no adequate fund to purchase text books and reference books, and other teaching aids with the available fund. Hence, students have been forced to learn without text book in some subjects like Amharic and Tigrigna; the library has no or little reference materials.

To fill this financial gap, the schools get block grant from the *Woreda* depending on the number of the students; 50 and 15 birr per students for secondary and elementary schools respectively which is insufficient. Also the community's contribution is insufficient to cover the expenditure needs of the school. The number of tasks (assignment of expenditure) supposed to be performed by the schools and the revenue capacity of the school is imbalance. In true decentralization, the expenditure needs and the revenue capacity of local government should be balanced so as to perform their tasks properly and to ensure their autonomy (Bird, 2002). Similarly, Dafflon noted that the autonomy of local government is largely determined by its abilities to obtain revenue through its own means of financial resource (Dafflon, 2006). High degree of financial autonomy of regional government, therefore, implies minimum constraint imposed from above to mobilize one's own-revenue so that they could adequately provide the needy public with quality and quantity services provision (Bahl, 2009).

The reality in the study *Woreda*, however, tells us that the *Woreda* level administration is highly dependent on the above level government and hence, it affects its autonomy and quality service provision. Therefore, it requires an appropriate intergovernmental transfer to meet its intended tasks. In other words, without designing appropriate intergovernmental transfer system, the *Woreda* level government cannot properly perform its assignment and discharge its responsibilities.

3) Lack of sufficient classroom. Majority of the schools in the study *Woreda* have no enough classroom and adequate offices to all of the professionals. There are no tutorial, '0' class and students parliama office. The director office, pedagogical, secretary and staff rooms are found in one office. Facilities like tables, chairs and cabinets are either poor or missing. To the worst case, there is no toilet room in some sample schools like Ahazera secondary school which affect the smooth teaching-learning environment of the school as it was explained by the Ahazera and Millennium school directors. During his field work, the researcher observed that in some schools like Qe'at²⁰, classrooms were not well furnished, students attended class sitting on ground, stone and horizontal flat

¹⁹ Key informant interview with school director of Ahazera primary and secondary school, 2008 EC. He further notice that in his school there is shortage of civic and ethical study's teachers, deputy director and librarians. There is also inadequate toilet, separate staff rooms and in sufficient class rooms.

²⁰ It is one kebele that has primary school, which the researcher selected it as a sample school for his study.

wood. In this regard, as empirical studies suggest, the availability of adequate resources at the local level is vital for the success of educational decentralization (Welsh & McGinn, 1999). The researcher's personal observation in various schools indicated that the classrooms are full of holes and broken windows, broken tables, chairs and black boards. There is also shortage of rooms for resource centers and offices.

4) *Inadequate Teaching aids.* Important teaching materials such as students' text books specially Amharic and Tigrigna are very scarce to the extent of total unavailability in some schools in particular and throughout the *Woreda*. The ratio of the above mentioned books to the students are 1 to 3. Other reference books, chairs, tables, printer, photo copy machine and computer are not adequately furnished. Lack of standardized sport place, laboratory and library room etc., are some of the challenges of the *Woreda*. In addition, overcrowded classes, shortage of both text and teacher guide books and other reading materials are prevalent almost in all schools. The libraries are constructed and furnished poorly and are not supplied with the required reference books.

5) *Very little learning interest of the students.* There is a decline of students' interest in learning; low value is attached by students to education, and inadequate preparation of students for learning at different grade levels. This is attributed to the cumulative effect of the system, school leadership, teacher and parent related failures. On the side of the students, according to the head office of the *Woreda* education, they lack commitment, have narrow vision, and have been involved in situations that spoil good behavior. They always disrespect schools rule and regulations, insult teachers and even parents, destroy (unwise use of) school property etc., are always observed and are at increasing rate.

6) *Limited involvement of the community in the school management.* In some selected schools, the role of parents and the local community in terms of collaborating with schools to enhance the quality of education for their children is limited. This may be related to the poor socio-economic status of many parents and the value they have attached to education (Ahazera).

7) *Poor standard of the schools.* According to the *Woreda* Education office director, majority of the schools (31) were constructed directly by the communities and all of them lack standards. He added that they are not well furnished with relevant educational equipments. They lack standardized laboratory equipments and separate room for it, computers, text books, library, teacher residents, and class room. In some schools, though they have plasma television (for instance Birhane Giday primary school, Ahazera), it is not functional due to lack of electric power.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The Ganta-Afeshum *Woreda* education office is legally empowered to recruiting, hiring and firing teachers. It has also power to fill efficiency evaluation of teachers, to decide handling any disciplinary cases of teachers and students, teacher's carrier promotion, and transfer from one school to another within the *Woreda*. It can administer and coordinate pre-primary, primary and first cycle school management. Prepare and approve annual *Woreda* education plans by collecting contribution from community, donors, and government. Financing and opening of new low-grade schools, rehabilitation of the old one, and up- grading of lower schools in to upper class school are devolved to the *Woreda*. The WEO also has power to distribute the required schools' materials based on the specification of the schools autonomously; whereas educational policy formulation, its curriculum development, administration of tertiary level educational institutions, standardization of training center, and national examination are under central authority. As to the researchers, the powers and functions entrusted to the *Woreda* are believed to be adequate enough to run its functions.

Concerning decentralization of education service provision and community participation, the community highly involved in the *Woreda* in the area of financial and labor contribution. More than 67 percent of primary schools in the *Woreda* were constructed directly by the direct contribution of the community. In 2007 E.C., the total communal contribution (in cash, kind and labor) was 6, 687,204 EB which was two times of the contribution of the 2006 E.C. Sometimes, the amount of payment imposed on the people to pay does not consider the actual economic capacity of the people. It is therefore important to consult people and get their consent prior to implementing it. Furthermore, though communities do involve in the school management affairs, evidence from the result shows that it not adequate or below expectation. Most members are illiterate so that they lack basic knowledge and skill of managing and monitoring the implementation of annual school plan and are unable to mobilize the community. Still within the community, there are people who have low parental involvement and little awareness about education of their children.

As far as the local institutions found at school levels is concerned, KETB and PTSAs are established in all schools to be important community based institutions at school level that are supposed to operate the function of the school. They serve as a bridge and channel of communication between the school and the community. The *Woreda* education office bestowed them with very important functions and empowered them to run these functions autonomously. KETB, which consists of members from various sector offices, plays a leadership role, while PTSA, which is a very closely attached to the school and its member, plays greater role in the functions of the school. Pragmatically, however, both KETB and PTSAs are affected by inter-related factors. The problems come from within the association and from the other external actors. Internally, members of both institutions are not committed enough to perform the tasks assigned to them and lack necessary knowledge and skills to discharge their responsibilities. Externally, no sufficient capacity building training program is provided to capacitate members of both PTSA and KETB. Such problems are also associated with

the members as they are busy with their private life and other governmental affairs. In spite of this limitation, these institutions are more vital in running the school, mobilizing community and planning projects for school fundraising purposes.

The institutionalization of decentralized education service improves the accessibility and coverage of school. The construction of new schools, by mobilizing local communities, is increasing and hence, it shortens the distance between the pupil-and the school by an average of 2.5 Kms, for primary schools. According to the *Woreda* education officials, when the data was being collected, there was at least one school in every Kebele; this in turn enabled the *Woreda* to achieve 100% school coverage. Basically, this increased primary education students' school enrollment. However, as the grade level increases, the accessibility and coverage of schools are lagging behind; hence it remains the future tasks of the WEO. As far as the secondary school students is concerned, now, they do not have options other than walking 2-3 hours to reach schools which are, on average 20km far away from their residence. Concerning GER, NER, dropout and repetition rate of students are now improving. The dropout rate of the *Woreda* is found to be less than 1% which exactly meets the regional standards.

Finally, the finding of the study revealed that inadequate finance and man power, shortage of class room and other relevant teaching aids, little interest of the students to learn, weak involvement of the community in the management of the school and lack of commitment, inadequate knowledge about their school based responsibilities and capacity deficiency of PTSA and KETB to execute school plans etc. are the challenges that the *Woreda* is facing.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the above research findings, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- i. The finding of the study reveals that PTSA and KETBs lack adequate experience and knowledge that enable them to perform their assignments effectively. It calls for improving the planning, implementing, evaluating, and supervising capacity of these institutions. Hence, the *Woreda* education office shall provide necessary capacity building training and awareness creation campaign.
- ii. Education service cannot be effective unless it is support by other stakeholders. Hence, the *Woreda* education office should work strongly in collaboration and cooperation with other sector offices such as health so as to improve the accessibility and enrollment rate of the *Woreda*.
- iii. One of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of PTAS and KETB is that they are filled by political party members who have other tasks. As they gave priority to their political administration, they made education secondary task. Hence, for effective realization of the school's program and regular follow up, it seems reasonable to detach kebele educational functions from such people.
- iv. Though the participation of the community is better in the area of financial contribution, their involvement in identifying the problem and managing schools is insignificant. Hence, further new discussion with the community is needed to make them more active in all activities of the school and to create sense of ownership.

- v. The increasing trend of construction of schools is one step forward for realizing quality education. However, majority of the schools are not well furnished. Therefore, more attention shall be given to overcome class room and other educational aid shortage by designing projects and searching potential investors who can invest on this area to improve schools' infrastructures.

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